

A HEARER IN DISGUISE

NO. 584

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said,
Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another?
for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.”*

1 Kings 14:6

AHIJAH the prophet was blind. Did I not tell you this morning that God’s servants could be happy without the light of the sun? If God should be pleased to deprive their natural eyes of the pleasures of light their souls would not be without joy, for as in the New Jerusalem, so in the renewed heart, “The glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

Doubtless this was the case with that venerable prophet. He was not like Moses, whose eye did not wax dim, and whose natural strength did not abate. But his eyes were set with age, the organs of vision had so decayed through the multitude of his years, that he could not see so much as a ray of light. Yet doubtless when he could not look out of the windows, God looked in, and when there was no beam coming in from the sun, much light was darted in from heaven.

What man of modern times saw more than blind Milton? It were well for us to feel the influence of that “drop serene,” and close our eyes forever, if we could but see such visions of God as Milton has penned in his *Paradise Lost*, and *Paradise Regained*.

Here is a fine picture for you. Behold the venerable prophet sitting alone in his humble cottage, and yet not alone, because his God is with him. Blind, but yet in the highest sense a seer, looking into the invisible, and by faith beholding things which we blind men who have our sight can never see, beholding what eye hath not seen, and hearing what ear hath never heard.

This then may furnish a word of comfort at the outset, to any who are suffering under infirmity, Jesus can recompense you. You are not the only persons who have been called to suffer, full many of your humble guild—the company of the blind—have been gifted with spiritual sight. If you have lost hearing, or the use of any of the members of your body, remember that no strange thing has happened to you but such as is common to man.

There is a way by which, in proportion as your tribulations abound, so your consolations may abound through Jesus Christ. Nay, these very privations which you feel so sadly, which so loudly demand our sympathy, may by God’s love be transmuted into mercies, by a holy alchemy which really turns iron into gold. He can turn your losses into gains, and your curses into blessings.

Mark well this venerable prophet—a man so old as to have survived the senses which give life its charm—is it not time for him to die? Has he not outlived his usefulness when he is made entirely dependent upon his fellow creatures and a burden to himself? Why does not the prophet’s Master send a convoy of angels to take the good man home?

There he sits without any apparent perception of the scenes transpiring around him. Surely, surely it is time for the Master to call him away! But no, He does not. Ahijah must not die, he has another message to deliver, and he is immortal till his work is done. I have no doubt he sweetly slept after he had delivered his last message, but not till then.

Brethren and sisters, you and I have no right to want to go to heaven till our work is done. There is a desire to be with Christ which is not only natural but spiritual. There is a sighing to behold His face, which if a man be without I shall question if he be a Christian at all. But to wish to be away from the

battle before we win the victory, and to desire to leave the field before the day is over, is but lazy and listless. Therefore let us pray God to save us from it.

Whitefield and a company of ministers were talking together and expressing their desire to go to heaven. Good Mr. Tennant was the only man who differed from them. He said he did not wish to die, and he thought that if his brother Whitfield would but consider for a time, he would not wish to be gone either. For he said, if you hire a man to do a day's work, and he is saying all the day, "I wish it were evening, I wish it were time to go home," you would think, "What a lazy fellow he is," and you would wish you had never engaged him. "So," he said, "I am afraid, it is nothing but our idleness that often prompts us to desire to be away from our work."

If there be a soul to win, let me not stop until I have won it. Truly some of us might summon up courage enough to say, "I would fain barter heaven for the glory of Christ, and not only wait twenty years out of heaven if I may have twenty years of glorifying Him the better, but wait out altogether if I may outside heaven sing to Him sweeter songs, and honor Him more than I can inside its walls, for outside heaven shall be heaven to me if it shall help me to glorify my Lord and Master the better."

You have heard, I dare say, that anecdote of good Mr. Whitefield, in his early ministry, lying down as he thought, to die in a high fever, and a poor Negro woman sitting by his side and tending him. In his sad moments, Whitefield thought of dying, but the black woman said, "No, Master Whitefield, you are not to die yet, there are thousands of souls to bring to Christ, so keep up your spirits, for you must live, and not die—your Master has yet work for you to do."

All this comes to my mind as I think of that venerable old prophet, sitting in his chair, waiting until he shall have spoken to Jeroboam's wife, and then after that ascending to his Father and his God—but not until his work was done.

We have introduced to you Ahijah, the venerable prophet. We must now address you upon an incident connected with his closing ministry.

In our text we have before us *an occasional hearer*. Secondly, we observe *a useless disguise*. And thirdly, we *listen to heavy tidings*.

I. We have before us, first of all, THE OCCASIONAL HEARER.

Jeroboam and his wife did not often go to hear Ahijah. They were not people who went to worship JEHOVAH. They neither feared God nor regarded His prophet. There may be some such here tonight. You do not often come to a place of worship. I am glad you are here now. It may be my Master has sent me with tidings for you. Give earnest heed, I pray you, that the tidings may be received and blessed.

I am sometimes tired of preaching to those who hear me every Sunday, for I fear some of them never will be saved. They get hardened by the Gospel. All the blows of the hammer have only tended to weld their hearts to their sins, and make them harder instead of melting them. May God grant, however, that my fears may be removed, and that some who have long resisted the wooings of the Gospel may yet yield.

I have more hope of you occasional hearers. I know that when my Master has helped me to cast the net on the right side of the ship I have taken some of you. There are amongst those numbered with us some of the best in the church, and the most useful men in our society, who were brought in by dropping into the place just as stray hearers—passing by perhaps, or coming out of curiosity. But God knew who they were, knew how to adapt the sermon to the case, and affect the heart with the Word.

Now, here was an occasional hearer, and we make the observation that *this occasional hearer was totally destitute of all true piety*. Most occasional hearers are. Those who have true religion are not occasional hearers. You will find that truly gracious persons are diligent in the use of the means. Instead of thinking it a toil to come up to the place of worship, I know there are some of you who wish there were two Sundays in the week, and the happiest times you ever have are when you are sitting in these seats and joining in our sacred songs.

"Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love."

There is no verse which gives *you* a better idea of heaven as a place than that—

*“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”*

Gracious souls love the place where God’s honor dwells, and the assembling of themselves together is always a blessed thing to them. But occasional hearers are generally graceless persons. I know how you spend your Sunday. There is the morning, you are not up very early. It takes a long time to dress on a Sunday morning. Then follows the Sunday paper with the news of the week, *that* must be gone through.

The wife has been toiling hard all the morning with the dinner, what do you care? Then there is the afternoon, when there is a little more lolling about. Then in the evening, there is the walk. But the day, after all, is not very happy and comfortable, and sometimes you have wished there were no Sundays except that they give your body a little rest.

You do not fear God, nor do you care for His service. Nevertheless, I am glad you have come here tonight for, who can tell?—my Lord, who found Jeroboam’s wife, can find you out. And though it is many a day since you darkened the walls of God’s sanctuary, this shall be the beginning of many such days to you, and who can tell?—this may be your new-birthnight, when you shall turn over a new leaf—nay, not turn over a new leaf, but get a new book altogether, and find your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.

The second remark about these occasional hearers is that when they do come, *they very generally come because they are in trouble*. When Jeroboam’s wife came and spoke to the prophet, it was because the dear child was ill at home. I know some occasional hearers who go to a place of worship as people go to a chemist’s shop, that is, when they want something because they do not feel quite right. Yes, your child is very sick. You have been watching all day, and you have thought, “I cannot stand it any longer, I will just walk out and go to a place of worship tonight. I want something to cheer me.”

You have had such trials lately that your wife said to you, “John, we must not keep on in this way any longer. It is clear all we do ends without any prosperity. We put our money into a bag which is full of holes. We spend it for that which is not bread. We labor for that which does not profit.”

So you have come here to see if the Lord may have a word of comfort through His servant who speaks to you. I can only say you are very welcome to come in, you wife of Jeroboam. We are as glad to see you as though you always came, and we do hope that this sorrowful affliction may be overruled by God for your lasting good.

There are persons who profess to be atheists, but their atheism is not very deep. Addison tells us of a man who, on board ship in a storm, knelt down to pray and expressed his firm belief in a God. When he got ashore someone laughed at him for it, and he challenged the man to a duel.

They fought together and the atheist fell wounded. When the blood was flowing he believed there was a God and he began to cry to God with all his might to save him. The physician bound up the wound. The man put the question to him—“Is it mortal?” “No,” he says, “it is only a flesh wound.” Then said the man, “There is no God. I am a thorough atheist.” He believed in God when he thought he was going to die. The moment he felt himself better he returned to his unbelief. A pretty religion that to live in, and a pretty religion to die with!

Your absence from God’s house will do very well when things go well with you, you can go out with a young wife to dissipate in frivolity hours which should be sacred to worship, but when sickness shall come—and when affliction shall fall heavily upon you—when you have trial after trial, and you yourself begin to get grey with many cares, and feeble and helpless with many years; and death comes near and casts his pale shadow across your cheek; and strange thoughts, oblivious of all around, come over you by day; and singular dreams which throw you into the company of the long since dead, surprise you by night; and fears and frights, and signs and calls, and bodings of imagination, prove the

wanderings and weakness of your brain—then, but possibly not till then, you will think of going to the house of God.

I am glad, therefore, if this trouble has visited you early or ever “the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,” and I am very glad that you have come to the house of God. Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, for I bear thee tidings from the God of heaven tonight.

There is a third point. *This woman would not have come but that her husband sent her on the grounds that he had heard Ahijah preach before.* It was this prophet who took Jeroboam’s mantle and rent it in pieces, and told him he was to be king over the ten tribes. That message proved true. Therefore Jeroboam had confidence in Ahijah.

There are some of you who at times used to hear the Gospel. You have not been of late, but there were seasons when you did come up to God’s house—ay, and times when you used to tremble under God’s Word. If I am not mistaken, there are men and women here tonight who once were conscience-stricken. The Word of God used to come home to you with exceeding great power, and make you tremble.

Did you not even profess faith in Christ? Why, some of you were very busy at revival meetings, trying to bring others to the Savior. But your religion was like smoke out of the chimney, it has all blown away. Like early mist it was soon scattered when the sun had risen. Yet the remembrance of these things sticks by you now. You cannot help it—you feel there must be something in religion. The old stings which were in your conscience have not been quite extracted. Therefore at the present moment you are quite willing to listen to the Word, perhaps even hoping that it may come with true power now, and that you may after all be saved.

I wish I could wake the echoes of the slumbering consciences of some of you! O that I could recall the days of your youth, the times of your boyhood and girlhood, when you went up to the assembly of the saints to keep holy day. Those things you cannot quite forget. I pray that such remembrances may often turn your feet towards the place of worship.

We have brought out three points of character. *They were persons of no piety, in trouble they sought the prophet, and they had confidence in him because they had heard him preach before.* But there is one more point, *they had one godly member of their family, and that brought them to see the prophet.* Their child was sick and ill, and it was that which led them to inquire at the hands of the Lord. I hope there is no family here which has the misfortune to be without a believer in it.

You, man, have no fear of God, but strange to say, the Lord has taken one out of your family to be a witness for Him. That daughter of yours, you sometimes jeer at her, but you know you value her. You used to send her to the Sunday school just to get rid of her, but the Lord met with her, and what a comfort she has been to you! how glad she has made your heart, though you do not tell her so!

Perhaps, the godly one in the family is like this young Ahijah in the text, he is sick and near to die. You can recollect, though you do not fear God, how the darling boy was sick! how you sat by his little bed and took his hand in yours, when it was scarcely anything but skin and bone! how he prayed for you at night, that God would save father and mother, and take them to heaven! and how, just as he died, he looked out on you with those bright eyes so soon to be filmed in death and said, “Father, will you not follow me?”

Since that time you have often felt that something is beckoning you up yonder, and though you have gone on forsaking God and despising holy things, yet still there is a little link between you and heaven which is not snapped yet, and you sometimes feel it tugging at your heart. I pray God it may tug so hard tonight, that your heart may go up to God and lay hold of Jesus the Savior of sinners.

What joy it causes me to think that God does call one out of a godless household, because where there is one there is sure to be another before long. It is like putting a light into the midst of stubble, there will soon be a blaze. I have hope of a family when one child is converted, for grace is like precious ointment, it spreads a perfume all around. When a box of fragrant spice is put into a room, the perfume

soon fills the entire chamber, then creeps silently up the stairs into the upper rooms, and ceases not its work until it has filled the whole house.

So when there is true grace in a house, the Holy Spirit blesses its hallowed power, till even the lodgers and family acquaintances begin to feel the influence of it. Is it your one praying child that has brought you here tonight? May God grant that he may be the means of bringing you to heaven as well.

But there is one sad reflection which should alarm the occasional hearer. Though Jeroboam's wife did come to the prophet that once, and heard tidings, yet *she and her husband perished after all*. Oh! if there were the register kept of the many thousands who come inside the Tabernacle gates and listen to our voice, I am afraid—I am sadly afraid it would be found that there were many who did hear the tidings, and did tremble at them too, who nevertheless contemned the counsels of the Most High, turned not at His rebuke, went on in their sin and perished without hope.

Shall it be so with any of you? Are you to be kindling in hell? Will you make your bed among the flames? My hearers, will you die without God and without hope? Will you leap into the black unknown with no bright promise of the Savior to cheer you in the thick darkness? May God prevent it! May He be pleased to bring you to Christ the rock of your salvation that you may depend upon Him with your whole heart.

While thus speaking about the occasional hearer, an idea haunts my mind that I have been drawing somebody's portrait. I think there are some here who have had their character and conduct sketched out quite accurately enough for them to know who is meant. Do remember that if the description fits you, it is meant for you, and if you yourself have been described, do not look about among your neighbors and say, "I think this is like somebody else." If it is like you, take it home to yourself, and God send it into the center of your conscience, so that you cannot get rid of it.

II. Our second consideration is the USELESS DISGUISE.

Jeroboam's wife thought to herself, "If I go to see Ahijah, as he knows me to be the wife of Jeroboam, he is sure to speak angrily, and give me very bad news." Strange to tell, though the poor old gentleman was blind, she thought it necessary to put on a disguise. So she doffed her best garment, and put on a countrywoman's russet gown, and away she went. She left the scepter and crown behind, and took a basket, as though she had just come from market. In this basket she did not put gold, jewels, and silver, but a present such as a farmer's wife might bring. There were loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey. And as she went along, she thought, "The old gentleman will not know me."

She traveled through her own dominions, and nobody knew her. She went into the neighboring dominions of Judah as far as Shiloh, and she pleased her imagination with the thought, "How I shall deceive him. I will ask him a question, as if I were a ploughman's wife. He will not know who I am, he will be pleased with my present, and prophesy soft things concerning my child."

How great was her surprise! No sooner did the blind prophet hear her footsteps, than he said, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." How she started back with astonishment! She had deceived hundreds who were blessed with eyes, but here was a man who could not be deceived, but found her out before she had opened her lips, and recognized her before she had time to test her sorry artifice or tell her subtle tale—"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam."

I do not suppose there is anybody comes here disguised as to dress tonight, though such things may happen. The working man, who is afraid he shall be laughed at if he be known, may come here in disguise. Now and then a clergyman may come in, who would not be very comfortable in his conscience if it were known he did such a thing, and so he does not show himself exactly in his wonted garb.

Notwithstanding whoever you may be, disguised or not, it is of no use where God's Gospel is preached. It is a quick discerner, and will find out the thoughts and intents of the heart. It will search you out and unmask your true character, disguise yourself as you may.

Many who come to God's house not disguised in dress, but still disguised in manner and appearance. How good you all look! When we sing and you take your books, how heavenly-minded! And when we

pray, how reverent you are! How your heads are all bowed!—your eyes covered with your hands! I do not know what you all say in your hats when you come in, and I should not like to know.

I do not know how much praying there is when you sit in a devout posture, though you assume the attitude and compose your countenance as those who draw near to supplicate the Lord. I am afraid there are many of you who do not pray a word or present a petition, though you assume the posture of suppliants. When the singing is going on there are many who never sing a word with the spirit and the understanding.

In the house of God I am afraid there are many who wear a mask, stand as God's people stand, sit as they sit, pray as they pray, and sing as they sing, and all the while what are you doing? Some of you have been attending to your children while we have been singing tonight. Some of you have been casting up your ledger, attending to your farms, scheming about your carpentering and bricklaying, yet all the while if we had looked into your faces we might have thought you were reverently worshipping God.

Oh! those solemn faces, and those reverent looks, they do not deceive the Most High God. He knows who and what you are. As you are in His house, He sees you as clearly as men see through glass.

As for hiding from the Almighty, how can you hide yourself from Him? As well attempt to hide in a glass case, for all the world is a glass case before God. When you look into a glass beehive, you can see the bees and everything they do, such is this world, a sort of glass beehive in which God can see everything. The eyes of God are on you continually, no veil of hypocrisy can screen you from Him.

There may be some among you who occasionally sit here, some members of this church who after all may feign to be other than they are. It is a melancholy and a most solemn reflection that there are many who profess to be Christians who are not Christians. There was a Judas among the twelve, there was a Demas among the early disciples, and we must always expect to find chaff on God's floor mingled with the wheat.

I have tried, the Lord knows, to preach as plainly and as much home to the mark as I could, to sift and try you. But for all that the hypocrite will come in. After the most searching ministry, there are still some who will wrap themselves about with a mantle of deception. Though we cry aloud and spare not, and bid you lay hold on eternal life, yet, alas! how many are content with a mere name to live and are dead. Many come here and even hold office in the church, yea, the minister himself may even preach the Word, and after all be hollow and empty.

How many who dress and look fair outside, are as John Bunyan said, only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinder box, for they are all dry and sere within! God save us from a profession if it is not real. I pray that we may know the worst of our case. If I must be damned, I would sooner go to hell unholy than as a hypocrite. That backdoor to the pit is the thing I dread most of all.

Oh! to sit at the Lord's table, and to drink of the cup of devils! to be recognized among God's own here, and then to find one's own name left out when He reads the muster roll of His servants! Oh! what a portion for eternity. I bid you tear off this mask, and if the grace of God is not in you, I pray you go into the world where will be your fitting place, and abstain from joining the church if you are not really a member of the body of Christ.

You see why I urge this, because no dressing up, however neatly it may be done, can conceal us from God. Oh! how some who have been fair on earth have been startled when they thought they were going into heaven! They had their foot almost on the doorstep, but the angel came and said, "Get thee gone, thou wife of Jeroboam, I know you whom you are, you could deceive the minister, you could deceive the deacons, you could get baptized and join the church, but you cannot enter here. Get you gone, your portion is with the filthy in the pit of hell."

O, may He never say this to you and me, but may we all be so real here that He may say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Thou, God, seest me!" Write that on the palm of your hand, and look at it. Wake up in the morning with it. Sleep with it before you on your curtains. "Thou, God, seest me!"—

*“O may this thought possess my breast,
Where'er I rove, where'er I rest;
Nor let my weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there!”*

III. Now we come to a close with a few words upon the HEAVY TIDINGS.

The woman stood amazed as the prophet proceeded to expose the iniquity of her husband's house, the certain judgment which God would execute, and the terrible disgrace with which the name of Jeroboam should be execrated, because they had revolted from God and set up for themselves the calves of Baal.

As for the child, respecting whom she had come to inquire, he should die. That death was the quenching of a bright spark in the heart of the parents, but none the less a mercy for the youth. “All Israel shall mourn for him and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.”

Let me linger on this part of the narrative a moment. In that wicked house there was one bright gem upon which the Lord put a high value. The lad was taken from the evil to come. The kindness of the Lord appeared in his death, while all the judgments were reserved for his father's family. Do I not speak to some of you, ungodly persons, who have lost your little children, and while you wept bitter tears as you carried them to the grave, you said, “Well, he is better off,” or “she sleeps in Jesus”? Did you never think that as for you, you are worse off? You have no hope, and are living without God in the world.

Let us picture Jeroboam and his wife at the tent of their son, Ahijah. There was everything to cheer the heart as to him who had departed, but everything to fill the soul with gloom concerning those who remained. The like has been the case at the funerals of your gracious little ones. We need shed no tears over the bier. Let us keep our lamentations for the mourners who attend the funeral.

Ah! but you may make the reflections all your own. You too, have been outside the gates of the city to carry your offspring to the spot in God's acre where they now slumber. Did you think in that mournful hour that the first fruits of your household was holy unto the Lord?

We never cease to wonder that the young should die. Yet it has ever been so, and well indeed can I believe that mercy of a sweet-smelling savor is to be found in those dispensations of God's providence which so often darken the windows of our heart and wither the fairest buds in our garden.

Where of old did death strike its first dart? Did it pierce the heart of Adam the sinner, or smite down the relentless Cain? Nay, but righteous Abel was the first of men who departed from earth, to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Even so have you, full many of you, committed your children to the dust, in an assured hope for them, according to the Word of the Lord, a hope which you cannot cherish for yourselves.

O sinners, be chary of your tears, your sighs, and your groans. Pour them not out with such profuseness as a libation at the graves of those who sleep in Jesus and are blest. You will need them all for your own souls presently. Take you up a lamentation for your own doom. Except you repent, your funerals, O ungodly ones, will call for shrill notes of endless despair.

Let me pause. I have glad tidings to preach to some of you before I yet again deliver these heavy tidings to those who despise the Word.

Is there one soul here who desires to be saved? Sinner, I have glad tidings for you. Here are the words, “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.” Though you have been a drunkard or a swearer, though you have been a whoremonger or a thief, yet there is salvation for any who come to Jesus Christ for it. And if the Spirit of God moves you to come now—

*“Let not conscience make you linger;
Nor of fitness fondly dream:
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him:*

*This He gives you;
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam."*

You say, "How can I go to Christ?" It is no great effort. It is in fact, the absence of all effort. You have not to climb to heaven to reach Him, nor to travel to the ends of the earth to find Him. Never doubt, if the Holy Spirit be with you, you may find Him tonight. The way to be saved is simply to trust Christ. Jesus Christ took the guilt of His people and carried it Himself. If you trust Him, you shall have peace, for Jesus took your sin.

An old servant was once carrying a large bough of a tree to have it cut into pieces to make a fire. A little boy, one of the family, seeing the end of it dragging along the ground and making it very heavy, came and took hold of the end, and the burden grew light. Then said the servant, "Ah! master Frank, I wish you could take hold of one end of the greater burden that I have to carry—I have a burden of sin, the more I drag it about, the heavier it becomes. I wish Jesus Christ would take hold of one end of it."

The little boy said, "My mother told me yesterday that Jesus Christ carries all our sins, therefore, you do not want Jesus Christ to carry one end of it, He will take the whole of it." The poor woman, who had been long seeking rest, found it by that remark of the child. Yes, Jesus does take your sins. If you trust Christ, this is the evidence that all your sins are laid on Him.

*"Sinner, nothing do,
Either great or small;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."*

Your salvation is finished by Christ if you believe. Not only the first strokes, but the finishing touch Christ has given. The bath you shall wash in, He has filled it. The robe you shall wear, He has woven it. The crown you shall wear, He has bought it. The heaven you shall inhabit, He has prepared it. "It is finished!" All you have to do is to wear it. Take it and wear it. Accept it as a gift of His free grace.

May God bring you into such a mind that you may be willing to receive it. And if you are willing to receive it, take it, take it, and go your way rejoicing. Thus you see, I bring good tidings to seekers.

But I have a heavy message for some of you. Let me deliver it as in the sight of God, with deep solemnity of purpose. Sinner, unrepentant sinner, I have heavy tidings for you. You are now under God's wrath. The wrath of God abides on you. It is not as though a tempest hovered in the sky, it has gathered round your devoted head! "God is angry with the wicked every day."

Sinner, God has bent His bow and made it ready, and fitted His arrow to the string, and He has pointed it at you. He has furbished His sword and made it sharp, and it is sharp for you. O barren fig tree, the axe is laid at your root! God even now looks upon you with anger, as you do offend against Him and sin with a high hand. Turn thee! Turn thee! for it is either turn or burn! and God give you to turn lest you burn forever.

I have worse tidings still, as you will think. There is speedy death for you. I know not how long you may live, but out of this vast assembly there is every probability that one or two of us will be in eternity before next Sunday. You can calculate that as well as I can. There is a certain number of deaths in the population every week. Here are several thousands gathered here, some six or seven thousand immortal souls, and we may die, but there are some of us who *must* die.

It is rarely a week passes without a death of someone in this church, much more in the congregation. I suppose I never did address the same assembly twice, and never shall, and though you were all willing to come next Sunday, yet there would be some of you who could not come because you will have appeared at the bar of God.

Prepare to meet your God. There is no cholera abroad, but death has other weapons. The fever sleeps, but the gates to the grave are many, and you may pass through one of them before ever you are aware of it. Prepare! Prepare! because He will do this. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" I have heavy

tidings for some of you. I give you warning to set your house in order, for you must die and not live. I speak now prophetically, of some here present, let them take heed unto their ways lest the day of grace pass and they die ere they have thought of Christ.

I have heavier tidings still. After death the judgment. First comes the skeleton king, and then hell follows him. Oh! is it true that some of us may be in hell before another week? True! alas! too true! I do conjure you then—since there is this possibility, nay, since there is an absolute certainty that ere long, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish—I do conjure you think upon your eternal state.

By the wrath of God, and by the love of God, by your own soul, and by the value of it, by heaven and its joys, which you will lose, by hell and its torments, which you must endure, by the blood of Jesus, by the groans and sweat of that Redeemer who delights to receive sinners, and who declares that any who come to Him He will in no wise cast out. I beseech you, as your brother and your friend, fly, fly, fly to Jesus!

May the Lord help you to trust Him now. There, just as you are, flat before the cross sinner, no stopping, no waiting, no preparing, come to Jesus in all your dishabille, all black and filthy, just as you are. “Mercy’s gate is never shut, Jesus’ heart is never hard.” His blood shall never lose its power. Do you trust Him, trust Him, trust Him, and we will meet in heaven to praise His name, world without end. Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.