

MOAB IS MY WASHPOT

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A SERMON
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“Moab is my washpot.”
Psalm 60:8

MOAB, which had threatened Israel, was to be so completely subdued, and become so utterly contemptible as to be likened to a washpot or basin in which men wash their feet. More than this, however, may have been intended—nay, we feel sure was intended by the expression. Let us explain exactly what the language literally means.

In the East the general mode of washing the hands and the feet is with a basin and ewer. Water is poured upon the hands or feet from the ewer and it falls into the basin. No Oriental, if he can help it, will wash in standing water. He prefers to have it clear and running. He puts his feet into the washpot, into the bath, into the basin, and then the clear, cool liquid is poured upon his feet. The washpot answering the sole purpose of holding the dirty water which has already passed over the man's flesh.

Wearing no completely covering shoes, as we do, but only sandals, the feet of an Eastern traveler in a long journey become very much defiled. The water, therefore, when it runs off from them, is far from clean and the washpot is thus put to a very contemptible use by being only the receptacle of dirty water.

When Moab thus became a washpot, it was far other than when it was said, “Moab has been at ease from his youth, and he has settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.” “We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceeding proud), his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.”

What does Moab represent to you and to me? We are the children of Israel by faith in Christ and in Him we have obtained by covenant a promised land. Our faith may cry, “I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.” All things are ours in Christ Jesus. “Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine.”

Now Moab was outside of Canaan. It was not given to Israel as a possession, but in course of time it was subdued in warfare and became tributary to the Jewish king. Even thus our faith overcomes the world and enables us to say, “This world is ours”—ours for a useful, needful purpose. We set but small store by it. It is nothing but our washpot, but we are content to use it as far as we may make it subserve a holy end.

The best possessions we have, outside of the spiritual heritage, we put under our feet, desiring to keep them in their proper inferior position. They are not the crown of our head, nor the comfort of our heart, nor the belt of our loins, nor the staff of our support. They are put to baser uses far. They yield us some comfort, for which we are grateful to God, but it is only for our feet or lower nature. Our head and heart find nobler joys.

The whole world put together, with all its wealth, is but a mess of potage for Esau and nothing more. God's Jacob has a better portion, for he has the birthright. Our worst is better than the world's best, for the reproach of Christ is greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

*“We tread the world beneath our feet,
With all that Earth calls good or great.”*

“Moab is my washpot,” nothing more—a thing contemptible and despicable as compared with the eternal realities of covenant blessings. Yet, for all that, there was a use for Moab, a use to be rightly understood. A washpot has its necessary function, and even this base world may be made by faith, in the hands of God, to be the means of aiding the purity of the saints. Its afflictions and troubles may work for our present and lasting good. The world and its trials can never be compared to the water which cleanses our feet. For that purifying stream we look to a far higher source, but it may be likened to the basin in which our feet are placed while they are being washed.

If we regard Moab as representative of the unregenerate people among whom we dwell, we do well, like the children of Israel, on their march to Canaan, to leave them alone, for their heritage is not our heritage—neither are their joys our joys. The less communion we have with them the better. If we ask of them, as Israel did of Moab, simply to be allowed to go on our way in peace, it is all we need.

Moses sent his messenger, who said, “Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the Lord our God giveth us.”

Like the pilgrims in Vanity Fair, we only ask a clear passage through the place, for we have no inheritance in it, no, not so much as we can set our foot upon. Yet, inasmuch as we cannot altogether separate ourselves from the sinful—for then must we go out of the world—we are compelled to feel the influence of their conduct, and it will become our wisdom to watch that this become not injurious to us, but be made under God rather to be of service to us than a hindrance.

My object will be to show that, contrary to the ordinary course of nature, but not contrary to faith, even this ungodly world may be made to assist our advance in holiness. As of old the men of Israel went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his axe and his coulter, so may we derive some sharpening from our enemies. We may gather honey from the lion, take a jewel from the toad’s head, and borrow a star from the brow of night. Moab may become our washpot.

While this is contrary to nature, it is also unusual in history. In the Book of Numbers, we read that Balak, son of Zippor, desired to vanquish Israel, and therefore he sent for Balaam, the son of Beor, saying, “Curse me Israel, and peradventure I shall prevail against them.” Balaam was not able to curse Israel by word of mouth, but he cursed them in very deed when he counseled the king to make them unclean in God’s sight by sending the daughters of Moab among them, who not only led them into lasciviousness, but invited them to the sacrifices of their gods.

Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and the plague would have devoured them, had not the holy zeal of Phinehas turned away the divine anger. Thus it is clear that Moab of old was foremost in polluting and defiling Israel. It is a great feat of faith when the thing which naturally defiles is turned into a washpot.

Behold the transformations of grace! This ungodly world outside the church—the world of wicked men—would naturally pollute us, but faith turns them into a washpot, and finds in them motives for watchfulness and holiness. We sigh, in the words of the old Psalm—

*“Woe is me that I in Mesech am
A sojourner so long;
That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.”*

As we cannot sing the Lord’s song in a strange land, so neither can we very readily keep our garments unspotted in a land deluged with uncleanness. With difficulty do we save ourselves from this untoward generation. And yet faith learns the secret of overcoming the ordinary tendency of things, and of making that which might injure us subsidiary to our advantage, fulfilling that ancient promise, “And

strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.”

The defiling world may be made helpful to us in the following ways.

I. First of all, ungodly men, if we are in a gracious spirit, may be of solemn service to us, because WE SEE IN THEM WHAT SIN IS.

They are beacons upon the rocks to keep us from danger. The lives of many men are recorded in Scripture, not as excuses for our sins, much less as examples, but the very reverse. Like murderers in the olden times hung in chains, they are meant to be warnings. Their lives and deaths are danger signals, bidding those who are pursuing a career of sin to come to a pause and reverse the engine at once. They are our washpot in that respect, that they warn us of pollution, and so help to prevent our falling into it.

When we learn that pride turned angels into devils, we have a lesson in humility read to us from heaven and hell. When we read of profane Esau, obstinate Pharaoh, disobedient Saul, apostate Judas, or vacillating Pilate, we are taught by their examples to shun the rocks upon which they made eternal shipwreck.

Transgressors of our own race are peculiarly suitable to act as warnings to us, for we ought ever to remember when we see the sins of ungodly men, that “*such were some of us.*” Whenever you see a drunkard, if you were once such, it will bring the tears to your eyes to remember when you too were a slave to the ensnaring cup, and you will thank God that His grace has changed you. Not as the Pharisee will you pretend to thank God, while you are flattering yourself, but with deep humiliation you will confess what grace has done.

When we read in the newspaper a sad case of lasciviousness, or any other breach of the laws of God and man, if we were aforesaid guilty of the like and have now been renewed in heart, it will make us blush. It will humble us, and cause us to admire the power and sovereignty of divine grace. Now the blush of repentance, the shamefacedness of humility, and the tear of gratitude are three helpful things, and all tend under God’s grace to set us purging out the old leaven.

Remember, O believer, that there is no wretch upon earth as bad, but what you were once his equal in alienation from God and death in sin. In untoward acts there may have been much difference, but in the inner man how little! The seed of all the sin which you see in him lies in your corrupt nature, and needs only a fit season to bring forth and bud.

You were once in that fire of sin in which he is consumed by his passions. You have been plucked as a brand from the burning, else had you been there still. Yonder is a prodigal, all bespattered from head to foot—but we also were once plunged into the ditch until our own clothes abhorred us—and we should be sinking in the mire even now, if the mighty hand of grace had not lifted us up from the horrible pit and washed us in the Savior’s blood.

We were “*heirs of wrath even as others.*” “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Our sins are different, but we were all without exception shapen in iniquity, and as in water, face answers unto face—so the heart of man to man. When you see the wickedness of an ungodly man, make him your washpot, by remembering that *you also, though you are regenerate, are encompassed with “the body of this death.”*

Remember the words of the apostle, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

The old nature so remains in us, that if we were to be deserted by God, we should even yet become such as the ungodly are. Need I quote to you the speech of John Bradford, one of the godliest of men? When he saw a wretch taken out to Tyburn to be hanged, the tears were in his eyes, and when they asked him why, he said, “There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God.”

Ah, and when we see a prodigal plunging into excess of riot, there goes the best among us, if we are not preserved in Christ Jesus. Ay, and when the damned go down to hell, there must I go, unless the same grace which restrains me now from sin, shall uphold me to my last day and keep me from falling.

Brother Christian, you carry much combustible matter in your nature, be warned when you see your neighbor's house on fire. When one man falls, the next should look to his steps. You are a man of like passions, remember yourself, lest you also are tempted.

In these days of epidemics, if we knew that a certain house was tainted with disease, and if we saw a person who had come from it with the marks of the disease in his face—what should we feel? Should we not take it as a warning to stay clear, both of the house and of him, because we ourselves are as likely to take the disease as he was?

So when we see a sinner transgressing, we should say to ourselves, "I also am a man, and a fallen man, let me abhor every evil way, and guard myself jealously, lest I also fall into sin." In this way Moab may be a washpot. By remembering what we are and what we were, we may, by taking warning from the evil courses of others, avoid the like condemnation.

There are certain sins which we readily detect in others, which should *serve as loud calls to us to correct the same things in ourselves*. When a man sees the faults of others and congratulates himself that he is far superior to such, he evidently knows not how to extract good from evil. He is proud and knows nothing.

But when we perceive errors in others and immediately set a diligent watch against falling into the like, then Moab is rightly used, and becomes our washpot. For instance, as to the matter of bodily indulgence, the sinner is a man who puts his body before his soul and his head where his feet should be. He is therefore a monster in nature.

Instead of the world being under his feet, as it is with every good man, he inverts himself and places his head and his heart in the dust. He lives for the body which is to die and forgets the soul which lives forever. When therefore you see a drunkard or an unchaste person, say to yourself, "I must mortify my members and give my spiritual nature the predominance. For this I must cry mightily to God, the Eternal Spirit, lest the body of this death prevail over me. I must keep under my body, as the apostle says, and bring it into subjection, lest I too become a prey to the same animal passions which lead sinners captives."

I see the ungodly man putting this poor fleeting world before the eternal world to come—therein he is a fool. But let me take heed that I in no measure imitate him. Let me never in my business live as though to make money, to get a competence, to earn the wherewithal to eat and drink, were the first thing with me. Let me not fall into his error, but always seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and believe that other things shall be added to me.

The ungodly man disregards God. God is not in all his thoughts. He says in his heart, "No God." Now when I know that the ungodly man does that, it should be a warning to me not to forget the Lord or depart from Him in any measure. Alas, we are all of us more or less atheistic. How little of our life is given to God!

You who love and fear Him are not always near to Him, though He is always near to you. Do you never enter upon your enterprises without Him? When you begin your business with Him, are you not apt to forget Him in the middle passage of it? Or when you have gone on to the very center of a work with Him, are you not liable to leave Him ere you close?

Is not this to learn the way of the wicked and to be like them in wandering away from the living God? To have God always with us, to lean hourly upon Him, and to feel each moment that He is all in all to us—this is the true condition in which our minds ought to be continually. The atheism of the outside world should warn us against the inward godlessness of our naturally atheistic hearts.

We select these sins as specimens of the general principle, but it is applicable to all forms of evil. Did you ever meet with a vain man, who boasted loudly and always talked about his own beloved self? Was not that a lesson for you? Surely it will help to preserve you from acting so ridiculous a part. Did

not I hear you, the other night, laughing at the boaster for his folly? Let us hope, then, you will never set others laughing at yourself.

You know another person who is morose, he always speaks sharply and makes enemies. Be you of another spirit. Be courteous, cultivate the grace of cheerfulness and good temper as a Christian. The moroseness of the churl should enforce upon you the duty of godly gentleness. Moab will be your washpot.

You know a certain person whose hands appear to be paralyzed if they are asked to bestow a contribution. How unlovely his meanness makes him! Will not the miserable exhibition of stinginess, which he presents, lead you to avoid all covetousness?

Another person of your acquaintance is very soon irritated. You can hardly say a word to displease him, but he makes a crime of it immediately and falls into the temporary insanity of anger. Well, then, learn yourself to be slow to wrath. Seek that charity which is not easily provoked, thinks no evil. May be your friend's blood is warmer than yours, and there is some excuse for him. But since you see how unwise and wicked it is in him, seek much grace wherewith to overcome the propensity in your own case.

If a man should fall into a pit through walking unwarily along a dangerous path, his fall should be my safety, his experience should be my instruction. There can be no need for me to roll over the same precipice in order to know experientially how dangerous it is. How sad a fact it is that very few of us ever learn by the experience of other people!

Dame Experience must take each one of us into her school and make us personally smart under her rod—otherwise we will not learn. Warnings are neglected by the foolish. The young sluggard sees the huge thorns and thistles in the older sluggard's garden, and yet he follows the same lazy habits. One sheep follows another into the shambles. Flies see their brethren perishing in the sugared trap and yet rush into it themselves.

The Lord make us wise and prudent, and from the errors of others may we learn to steer our own course aright. Then may we truly say, "Moab is my washpot."

II. Another illustration of this practical principle lies in the fact that WE SEE IN THE UNGODLY THE PRESENT EVIL RESULTS OF SIN.

We frequently have the opportunity of beholding in them not only sin, but some of its bitter fruits, and this should still further help us to shun it, by God's grace. Evil is now no longer an unknown seed of doubtful character. We have seen it planted and have beheld sinners reaping the first sheaves of its awful harvest. This poison is no longer an uncertain drug, for its deadly effects are apparent in those around us. If we sin, it is no longer through the lack of knowing what sin will lead to, for its mischief is daily before our eyes.

First, are you not very certain, those of you who watch unconverted and ungodly people, *that they are not solidly happy?* What roaring-boys they are sometimes! How vociferous are their songs! How merry their dances! How hilarious their laughter! You would think that there were no happier people to be found under the sun.

But as, on many a face, beauty is produced by art rather than the sun, and a little paint creates a transient comeliness, so often the mirth of this world is a painted thing, a base imitation—not so deep even as the skin. Ungodly men know nothing of heart-laughing. They are strangers to the deep, serene happiness which is the portion of believers. Their joy comes and goes with the hour.

See them when the feast is over—"Who hath woe? Who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; the men of strength to mingle strong drink." Mark them when alone—they are ready to die with dullness. They want to kill time as if they had a surplus of it and would be glad to dispose of the superfluity.

A man's face must be very ugly when he never cares to look at it and a man's state must be very bad indeed when he is ashamed to know what it is. And yet in the case of tens of thousands of people who say they are very happy, there is a worm inside the apple. The very foundation stone has been removed

from the edifice. And you may be sure it is so, for they dare not examine into matters. Ungodly men at bottom are unhappy men. “The way of transgressors is hard.” “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

Their Marah is never dry, but flows with perennial waters of bitterness. What says their great poet Byron—

*“Count o’er the joys thine hours have seen,
Count o’er the days from anguish free;
And know whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better not to be.”*

Now then, if things be so—if sin brings after all an unsatisfactory result to the mind, if a man is not rendered happy by an evil course—then let me choose another path, and by God’s grace, keep to wisdom’s ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, into which my Lord by His love has drawn me and by His grace has led me.

I am happy in His bosom, I drink living waters out of His fountain. Why should I go to those broken cisterns, which I clearly see can hold no water? Why should I wish to wander over the dreary waste of waters? Noah’s hand is warm and the peaceful ark is near, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.”

When I read of aching hearts and hear that great worldling, who had all the world could give him, sum it all up with this sentence, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,” does not my heart say at once, “Oh, empty world, you tempt me in vain, for I see through the cheat.”

Madam Bubble we have seen with her mask off and are not to be fascinated by so ugly a witch. We follow not after yonder green meads and flowing brooks, because they are not real and are only a mirage mocking the traveler. Why should we pursue a bubble or chase the wind? We spend our money no more for that which is not bread. Moab is our washpot. If others have found earthly things to be unsatisfactory, we wash our hands of their disappointing pursuits. Dear Savior, we would follow You whithersoever You go, till we come to dwell with You forever.

But it is not merely that ungodly men are not happy. *There are times when they are positively wretched through their sins.* Sometimes fear comes upon them as a whirlwind, and they have no refuge or way of escape. I have been now and then called to witness the utter anguish of a man who has lost his gods.

His great idols have been broken and he has been in despair. His darling child is dead, or his wife is a corpse, and he knows not how to endure life. Did you ever see a godless man when he had lost all his money in a speculation which once promised fair? Did you mark his woe?

Did you ever see the countenance of a gambler who had staked his last and lost his all? See him in an agony which can find no alleviation. He rises from the table, he rushes to imbrue his hands in his own blood. Poor soul, he has lost his all! That never happens to a Christian—never! If all he had on earth were gone, it would be only like losing a little of his spending money, but his permanent capital would be safe in the Imperial Treasury, where Omnipotence itself stands guard.

Even when no very great calamity puts out the candle of the worldling, yet as years revolve, a gathering cloud darkens his day. Hear again the world’s master songster. The confession will suit many—

*“My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief—
Are mine alone.*

The fire that in my bosom plays

*Is as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.”*

This is the world’s treatment of its old servants—it dishonors them in old age. But it is not so with aged believers, “They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the LORD is upright.” When all our wealth on earth is gone, our treasure is still safe in heaven, where moth corrupts not and thieves break not through nor steal. When we think of the despair of men—of blasted hopes—Moab may become our washpot and may keep us from setting our affection upon their fleeting joys.

Here and there, in the Moab of sin, you meet with men who are in their garments, their trembling limbs, their penury, and their shame, living monitors and standing proofs that the way of transgressors is hard. There are sins whose judgment hastens as a whirlwind—sins of the flesh which eat into the bones and poison the blood; sins of appetite that degrade and destroy the frame.

If young men knew the price of sin, even in this life, they would not be so hot to purchase pleasurable moments at the price of painful years. Who would coin his life into iniquity to have it returned to him in this life, red-hot from the mint of torment!

Mark well the spendthrift, void of understanding! I have seen him at my door. I knew his relatives, people of reputable character and good estate. I have seen him in rags which scarcely covered him, piteously weeping for a piece of bread. Yet a few short years ago he inherited a portion which most men would have thought wealth.

In a mad riot, into which he could not crowd enough of debauchery, he spent all that he had. He was soon penniless, and then loathsome and sorely sick. He was pitied by his friends, but pity has been lost on him, and now none of his kith or kin dare own him. I too fed him, clothed him, and found him a place of labor.

The garments which charity had supplied him, within the next few hours, were sold for drink and he was wallowing in drunkenness. The work was deserted almost as soon as attempted. He will die of starvation, if he be not already dead, for he has abandoned himself to every vicious excess, and already trembles from head to foot, and looks to be on the borders of the grave.

Nothing keeps him sober but want of another penny to buy a drink. Not even that can restrain him from uncleanness. Hunger, cold, and nakedness he knows full well—and prefers to endure them rather than earn honest bread and abandon his licentiousness. Tears have been wept over him in vain and many must have been his own tears of misery when he has been in want. The workhouse is his best shelter and its pauper clothing his noble livery. Away from that retreat he is a mass of rags and indescribable filth.

Young Christian professor, if you are tempted by the strange woman, or by the wine which moves itself aright in the cup, look on the victims of these destroyers ere you dally with them. See the consequences of sin even in this life, and avoid it, pass not by it, look not on it, but flee youthful lusts which war against the soul. Thus make filthy Moab to become your washpot from this time forth.

The unconverted, when they go not thus far, may yet be beacons to us. Observe, for instance, the procrastinating hearer of the Gospel, how certainly he becomes hardened to all rebukes. Early sensibility gives way to indifference. Let us also beware lest we, by trifling with convictions and holy impulses, lose tenderness of conscience.

They advance in evil, and at last commit with impunity sins which, years ago, would have struck them with unaffected horror. Let us be cautious lest a similarly blunting process should be carried on upon our hearts. But time would fail me to show you in detail how readily the evil results of sin in others may preserve us from falling into the like—how in a word, Moab may be our washpot.

III. A third point suggests itself. Men of this world are made useful to us since they DISCOVER IN US OUR WEAK PLACES.

Their opposition, slander, and persecution are a rough pumice-stone to remove some of our spots. When young men come to college, one of the chief benefits they obtain is the severe criticism to which they are subjected from their tutors and fellow students. Sharp ears hear their slips of speech and they are made conscious of them.

Now in a certain sense the outside world often becomes a college to the Christian. When we are with our dear Christian brethren, they do not look for our faults—at least, they should not—neither do they irritate us and so bring our infirmities to the surface. But they treat us so lovingly and gently that we do not know our weak side.

Young Christians would be like plants under glass cases in a conservatory, and become tender and feeble, but the rough world tries them, and is overruled by God to their strengthening and general benefit. Men's lynx eyes see our shortcomings, and their merciless tongues inform us of them, and for my part, I see much advantage brought out of this maliciousness of theirs. They are our monitors and help to keep us humble, and make us careful. If we cannot bear a little shake from men, how shall we bear the shaking of heaven and earth at the last day?

The world often tries us as with fire, and the things which we reckoned to be gold and silver perish in the ordeal if they are but counterfeit, but we are gainers by such a loss. In the world our temper is tried and too often we become irritated. What then? Why just this. If sanctification has regulated our emotions, patience will have her perfect work and charity will suffer long.

But if we are soon angry and find it hard to forgive, let us not so much find fault with those who try us as with ourselves, because we cannot bear the ordeal. Our pride must go down. We must become slow to wrath. We must be content to be as our Lord—the meek and lowly Savior. These irritations show us how far we are from the model and should excite in us a desire for progress towards His complete image.

Perhaps you had fondly said in your heart, "I can bear a great deal. I could act the Christian under the worst abuse." But now you sing another song and find how great your weakness is. Moab thus again becomes your washpot, for now you will go to God in prayer and ask to be subdued to His will.

Do not worldly men in some cases frighten professors out of their testimony for Christ? I mean, has it never happened that our cheek has blanched and our tongue failed us in the presence of cavilers, and blasphemers, and skeptics, and have we not been silent when we ought to have avowed our Lord? That also shows how cowardly we are at heart and how cold is our love. We are to blame for not having more courage. If we were strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, as we ought to be, we should be ready to go with Christ to prison and to death, and never think of shunning His service.

Do you not find that ungodly men, when you are obliged to be in their company in business, will occasionally utter remarks which shake your faith about truths which you imagined you firmly believed? Too many are content with a superficial creed. Their faith is not rooted deep in their hearts, and therefore a little wind rocks the tree to and fro, but ere long the very motion of the tree tends to root it, and it becomes all the more firm.

God overrules for good the cavilings of men against the truth. Besides, do not ungodly men drive us from loving the world? We might think of finding our rest here below, but when we hear their tongues cruelly and unkindly slandering us, then we are sick of their company.

*“My soul distracted mourn and pines
To reach that peaceful shore,
Where all the weary are at rest,
And troubles vex no more.”*

An extreme case of the way in which evil treatment may tend to our sanctification may be found in the life of one of the old ministers in the north of Scotland. "A cold, unfeeling, bold, unheeding, worldly

woman was the wife of Mr. Fraser, one of the ministers of Ross-shire,” writes my beloved friend, Mr. John Kennedy, in his interesting book entitled, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*.

“Never did her godly husband sit down to a comfortable meal in his own house and often would he have fainted but for the considerate kindness of some of his parishioners. She was too insensate to try to hide her treatment of him, and well was it for him, on one account, that she was. His friends thus knew of his ill-treatment, and were moved to do what they could for his comfort.

“A godly acquaintance arranged with him to leave a supply of food in a certain place, beside his usual walk, of which he might avail himself when starved at home. Even light and fire in his study were denied to him on the long, cold winter evenings. And as his study was his only place of refuge from the cruel scourge of his wife’s tongue and temper, there, shivering and in the dark, he used to spend his winter evenings at home.

“Compelled to walk in order to keep himself warm, and accustomed to do so when preparing for the pulpit, he always kept his hands before him as feelers in the dark, to warn him of his approaching the wall at either side of the room. In this way he actually wore a hole through the plaster at each end of his accustomed beat, on which some eyes have looked that glistened with light from other fire than that of love, at the remembrance of his cruel wife.

“But the godly husband had learned to thank the Lord for the discipline of this trial. Being once at a Presbytery dinner, alone, amidst a group of moderates, one of them proposed, as a toast, the health of their wives, and turning to Mr. Fraser, said, as he winked at his companions, ‘You, of course, will cordially join in drinking to this toast.’ ‘So I will and so I ought,’ Mr. Fraser said, ‘for mine has been a better wife to me than any of yours has been to you.’

“‘How so?’ they all exclaimed. ‘She has sent me,’ was his reply, ‘seven times a day to my knees, when I would not otherwise have gone, and that is more than any of you can say of yours.’” Ah, this is the way to make Moab our washpot, that is to say, to make those who grieve us most, act but as rough waves to hurry us on to the rock or as biting winds that drift us the faster into port. If the birds of paradise will keep to the nest, their ungodly relatives or neighbors shall be a thorn therein to make them mount into their native element—the heaven of God.

The attacks of the ungodly upon the church have been overruled by God to make His people leave the camp and forsake ungodly associations, so as to be separate. I know a beloved Sister in Christ who was baptized. She had moved in high circles, but they told me that after her baptism she received the cold shoulder.

When I heard it, I said, “Thank God for it,” for half her temptations are gone. If the world has turned its back upon her, she will be all the more sure to turn her back on the world and live near to her Lord. The friendship of the world is enmity to God—why should we seek it?

“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” If any man will follow Christ he must expect persecution, and one of the cardinal precepts of the Christian faith runs thus, “Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters.” “Let us go forth, therefore, unto him, without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

IV. Lastly, IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD TO COME, the terrible doom of the ungodly is a most solemn warning to us. My heart fails me to speak concerning the destiny of the ungodly in another world. Dying without hope, without a Savior, they go before the throne unclean, unforgiven, to hear that awful sentence, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Pursue them for a moment in your thoughts, down to the deeps of wrath, whither God’s judgment shall pursue them. My Lord, I pray You of Your grace, save me from the sin which brings such a result at the end of it. If the wages of sin be such a death as this, Lord save me from so accursed a service.

Will not the sight of their destruction drive us to watchfulness, and cause us to make our calling and election sure? Will it not make us anxious lest we also come into this place of torment? O the wrath to come! The wrath to come whereof this Book speaks in so many terrible tones and dreadful images!

Remember Lot's wife! "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

In this way Moab becomes our washpot, by showing us what sin grows to when it has developed itself. This consideration will surely cause us more heartily to love the Savior, who can deliver us from it.

Dear friends, if you are not in Christ, much of what I have said bears upon you. Bethink yourself and pray to escape from the wrath to come. I would not have you be made a mere washpot to be used and broken as a potter's vessel. Neither should you wish to be a vessel without honor, a thing of no esteem.

But may you have faith in Jesus—life in Him—and then you shall be a royal diadem, a crown of glory in the hand of our God. May you have a heritage among those who fear the Lord and are reconciled to Him by faith in the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 60

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.