

GOD'S FIRST WORDS TO THE FIRST SINNER

NO. 412

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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where are you?”
 Genesis 3:9.*

IT will be interesting to the members of this Church to know that it was under a sermon delivered by Mr. William Wallin from this very text that my honored and venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, was converted to a knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. I looked with some degree of curiosity to his interpretation of this passage. I had half hoped to find there some allusion to his own conversion, but I did not, although I was edified by his clear and methodical comment upon it to which I am under obligations for suggesting the present discourse.

May I hope that, as this text has been the means in the hand of God of conferring upon the Church of Christ a man who valiantly defended the Truth of God and was the means of expounding the doctrine of grace with great clearness, that there may be here present today someone at least who like John Gill may hear the Word with power and may receive it in its quickening influence into his soul. No, let us pray that not one alone but that many may hear the enquiry of God as it rings through the multitude and while it reaches the ear may it reach the heart, too. And may some be brought before God in answer to the question, “Where are you?” and receive the assurance of pardon and go on their way in peace.

It is not necessary that I should, in expounding this text, enter at all into the circumstances which led to the enquiry. Man had sinned against God. Mark the *alienation of heart* which sin causes in the sinner. Adam ought to have sought out his Maker. He should have gone through the garden crying for his God, “My God, my God, I have sinned against You. Where are You? Low at Your feet Your creature falls and asks mercy at Your hands. My Father, You have placed me in this lovely Paradise. I have wickedly and willfully eaten of the fruit of which You said that I should not eat of it, since in the day I ate thereof I should surely die.

“Behold, my Father, I submit to the penalty. I confess Your justice and beseech Your mercy, if mercy can be shown to such an one as I am.” But instead thereof, Adam flees from God. The sinner comes not to God—God comes to him. It is not, “My God, where are You?” but the first cry is the voice of grace, “Sinner where are *you*?” God comes to man—man seeks not his God. Despite all the doctrines which proud free will has manufactured, there has never been found from Adam’s day until now a single instance in which the sinner first sought his God. God must first seek him. The sheep strays of itself but it never returns to its fold unless sought by the Great Shepherd.

It is human to err, it is Divine to repent. Man can commit iniquity but even to know that it *is* iniquity so as to feel the guilt of it is the *gift* of the grace of God. We have and are nothing but what is vile. Everything which is God-like, everything which aspires towards righteousness and true holiness comes from the Most High.

And while the text manifestly teaches us the alienation of the human heart from God, so that man shuns his Maker and does not desire fellowship with Him, it reveals also *the folly* which sin has caused. Sin made man a fool. He was once in God’s image, wise. Now, since the trail of the serpent has passed over his nature he has become an arrogant fool—for is not he a fool who would cover the nakedness of sin with fig leaves? Is not he indeed mad who would hide from the Omniscient Jehovah beneath the spreading boughs of trees? Did not Adam know that God fills all space and dwells everywhere? That from the highest Heaven to the deepest Hell there is nothing that is hid from His understanding?

And yet so ignorant and stupid is he that he hopes to escape from God and make the trees of the garden a covert from the fiery eyes of Divine Wrath. Ah, how foolish we are! How we repeat the folly of our first parent every day when we seek to hide sin from conscience and then think it is hidden from God. Fools when we are more afraid of the gaze of man than of the searching of the Eternal One—when because the sin is secret and has not entrenched upon the laws and customs of society—we go to our beds with the black mark still upon us—being satisfied because man does not see it, that therefore God does not perceive it.

O sin, you have made man ask the question, "Where shall I flee from Your presence?" And you have made him forget that if he ascend to Heaven, God is there. If he makes his bed in Hell, God is there and if he says, "Surely the darkness shall cover me," even the night shall be light about him.

But now the Lord Himself comes forth to Adam and note how He comes. He comes *walking*. He was in no haste to smite the offender, not flying upon wings of wind, not hurrying with His fiery sword unsheathed—but *walking* in the garden. "*In the cool of the day*"—not in the dead of night when the natural glooms of darkness might have increased the terrors of the criminal. Not in the heat of the day, lest he should imagine that God comes in the heat of passion. Not in the early morning, as if in haste to slay, but at the close of the day—for God is long-suffering, slow to anger and of great mercy.

In the cool of the evening, when the sun was setting up Eden's last day of glory, when the dews began to weep for man's misery, when the gentle winds with breath of mercy breathed upon the hot cheek of fear. When earth was silent that man might meditate and when Heaven was lighting her evening lamps that man might have hope in darkness—then and not till then—came forth the offended Father. Adam flees and seeks to avoid that very God whom he had once met with confidence and with whom he had the sweetest fellowship, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend. And now hear the voice of God as He cries, "Adam, where are you?"

Oh, there were two truths in that short sentence. It showed that *Adam was lost*, or God would not have needed to ask him where he was. Until we have lost a thing we need not inquire about it. But when God said, "Adam, where are you?" it was the voice of a shepherd enquiring for his lost sheep. Or better still, the cry of a loving parent asking for his child that has run away from him, "Where are you?" There are but three words, but they contain the dread doctrine of our lost estate. When God *asks*, "Where are you?" man must be lost. When God Himself inquires where he is, he must be lost in a more awful sense than you and I have as yet fully known.

But then there was also mercy here, for it showed that God intended to have mercy upon man or else He would have let him remain lost and would not have said, "Where are you?" Men do not inquire for what they do not value. There was a Gospel sermon, I think, in those three Divine words as they penetrated the dense parts of the thicket and reached the tingling ears of the fugitives—"Where are you?" Your God is not willing to lose you. He is come forth to seek you, just as by-and-by He means to come forth in the Person of His Son, not only to seek but to save that which now is lost. "Where are you, Adam?"

Oh, had God meant to have destroyed the race, He would have hurled His thunderbolt at once and burned the trees and let the ashes of the sinner lie beneath His angry gaze. He would have rushed in the whirlwind and in the storm and tearing up the cedars and the pomegranates by their roots, He would have said, "Here you are, you rebel! Traitor, take your due deserts! Let Hell open before you and be you swallowed up forever." But no, He loves man. He cares for him and therefore now inquires where he is in tones of calmness, "Adam, where are you, where are you?"

The question which the Lord asked of Adam may be used in five different ways. We are not sure in what precise sense the Lord intended it—perhaps in all—for there is always in the utterance of the Divine One a great depth which couches beneath. Our words, if they give one sense, do well. But the Lord knows how to speak so that He shall teach many Truths in few words. We give little in much—God gives much in little. Many words and little sense—this is too often the rule of *man's* speech. Few words and much meaning—this is the rule with God.

We give gold beaten out into leaf—God gives ingots of gold when He speaks. We use but the filings of gems—God drops pearls from His lips each time He speaks to us. We, perhaps, even in eternity, know how Divine are God's words—how like Himself, how exceeding broad, how infinite.

I. We believe that the enquiry of God was intended in an AROUSING SENSE—"Adam, where are you?" Sin stultifies the conscience, it drugs the mind so that after sin man is not so capable of understanding his danger as he would have been without it. Sin is a poison which kills conscience painlessly by mortification. Men die by sin as men die when frozen to death upon the Alps—they die in a sleep. They sleep and sleep and sleep and sleep on, till death closes the scene and then in Hell they awake in torments.

One of the first works of grace in a man is to put aside this sleep, to startle him from his lethargy, to make him open his eyes and discover his danger. One of the first deeds of the Good Physician is to put sensibility into our flesh. It has become cold and dead and mortified. He puts life into it and then there is pain—but that very pain has a salutary effect

upon us. Now I think that this question from the Lord was intended to set Adam thinking. "Where are you?" He had perceived in some degree into what a state his sin had brought him but this question was meant to stir the depths of his spirit and wake him up to such a sense of danger, that he should labor to escape from the wrath to come.

"Adam, where are you?"—look at yourself now, naked, a stranger to your God, dreading the presence of your Maker, miserable, undone. "Adam, where are you?"—with a hard heart, with a rebellious will, fallen, fallen, fallen from your high estate. "Adam, where are you?" Lost! Lost to your God, lost to happiness, lost to peace, lost in time, lost in eternity. Sinner, "*where are you?*" O that I might, by the earnest words which I shall now utter, stir up some callous, careless sinner to answer the enquiry for himself! Man, where are you?—where are you this morning?

Shall I tell you? You are in a condition in which your very conscience condemns you. How many there are of you who have never repented of sin, have never believed in Christ! I ask you, is your conscience easy?—Is it always easy? Are there not some times when the thunder is heard? Are there not seasons when the watchman lights his candle and searches the secret parts of your soul and discovers your iniquity? Where are you, then?—For conscience is to God what the hook is to the fisherman.

Conscience, like God's hook, is in your jaws today and He has but to draw in the line and you are in the consuming fire. Though conscience makes you smart, Justice shall be far sterner with you than your poor imperfect conscience. If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart and knows all things. Your conscience tells you you are wrong—O how wrong, then, must you be!

But man, do you not know you are a stranger from your God? Many of you seldom think of Him. You can spend days and weeks without a mention of His name, except, perhaps, in some trivial language, as in an oath. You cannot live without a friend but you can live without your God. You eat, you drink, you are satisfied. The world is enough for you. Its transient pleasures satisfy your spirit. If you saw God here you would flee from Him. You are an enemy to Him. Oh, is this the right case for a creature to be in? Let the question come to you—"Where are you?" Must not that creature be in a very pitiable position who is afraid of his Creator?

You were made to glorify Him. You were made to rejoice in His presence and to delight in His goodness. But it seems you love not the very food which was meant to sustain you. You must be sick—you must be sick, indeed! "Where are you?" Remember, the Almighty God is angry with you. His Commandments, like so many guns are all pointed against you this morning. And it needs only the uplifted finger of the Divine One and they shall soon destroy you and break you in pieces. Would a man be comfortable with his neck upon the block and the axe gleaming above his head?

It is your case today. You are in the position of the courtier at the feast of Dionysius, with the sword over your head suspended by a single hair. Condemned already! "God is angry with the wicked every day." "If he turn not, He will whet His sword: He has bent His bow and made it ready." Where are you, man? O God, help the man to see where he is! Open his eyes. Let the question startle him. Let him start in his sleep a little—yes, let him wake and discover where he is—obnoxious to Your wrath and the object of Your hot displeasure!

"Where are you?" Your life is frail, nothing can be more weak. A spider's line is cable compared with the thread of your life. Dreams are substantial masonry compared with the bubble structure of your being. You are here and you are gone. You sit here today—before another week is past you may be howling in another world. Oh, where are you, Man? Unpardoned and yet a dying man! Condemned, yet going carelessly towards destruction! Covered with sin, yet speeding to your Judge's dread tribunal! Lost here, yet hurrying on, each moment bearing you on eagle's wings to the place where you shall be lost eternally!

How hard it is to bring ourselves to know ourselves! In other matters if a man is a little sick he seeks his doctor and would know his position. But here a man says, "Peace, peace. Let well enough alone." If we fear that our personal estates are at all in jeopardy we have anxious nights and toilsome days. But, oh, our souls—our poor, poor souls—we play with them as if they were worthless counters or bits of platter which a child might pick up in the streets and cast away!

Sinner! Sinner! Sinner! Is your soul so poor a bauble that you can afford to lose it, because you will not break your sleep and stop your pleasurable dreams? Oh, if a brother's heart can move your heart and if a brother's voice can wake your sleeping eyes, I would say, "What ails you, O Sleeper? Arise and call upon your God! Awake! Why do you sleep?! Awake to answer the question, 'Where are you?'—lost, ruined and undone! O sinner where are you?"

II. Now, secondly, the question was meant to CONVICTS OF SIN and so to lead to a confession. Had Adam's heart been in a right state he would have made a full confession of his sinfulness. "Where are you?" Let us hear the voice of God saying that to us if today we are out of God and out of Christ. "Where are you, Adam? I made you in My own image. I made you a little lower than the angels. I made you to have dominion over the works of My hands. I put all things under your feet—the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatsoever passes through the depths of the sea. I gave this whole garden of delights to be your home.

"I honored you with My presence. I thought of your welfare. The moon did not hurt you by night. The sun did not smite you by day. I tempered the winds for you. I clothed the trees with fruit for your nourishment. I made all things minister to your happiness. Where are you? I asked of you but that little thing that you would not touch one tree which I had reserved for Myself. Where are you? Are you in the room of a thief, a rebel, a traitor? Have you sinned? O Adam, where are you?"

And now, Sinner, hear me. "Where are *you*?" To many of you the Lord might say, "I gave you a godly mother who kept over you in your childhood. I gave you a holy father who longed for your conversion. I gave you the gifts of Providence—you never wanted for a meal. I clothed your back. I put you in a comfortable position in life. I raised you up from a bed of sickness. I overlooked ten thousand follies. My mercies like a river have flown to you. When you opened your eyes in the morning it was to look upon My goodness. And till the last moment of the night I was your helper and drew the curtains about your defenseless head.

"I have covered you with My feathers. Under My wings have you trusted and now where are you? Have you not forgotten My Commandments, abhorred My Person, broken My Laws, rejected My Son? Are you not at this day a disbeliever, content to trust to your own works but not to take the finished righteousness of My Beloved Son, the Savior of the world? What have you done for Him who has done so much for you? What are you? Have you not been a cumber-ground—a tree that sucks the soul but bears no fruit—that drinks in the genial rain of Heaven but yields no grateful fruit? Where are you? Are you not today in the camp of My enemy? Are you not on Satan's side, defying Me and lifting up the puny arm of your rebellion against the Lord that made you and that keeps the breath in your nostrils—in whose hand your life is and whose are all your ways? Sinner, where are you? After all God's goodness—still a sinner!"

Read the question again thus, "Where are you?" The serpent said you should be a god. You thought to be made exceedingly glorious. Is it so, Adam? Is it so? Where is your boasted knowledge? Where the honors? Where the vast attainments that rebellion would bring to you? Instead of the clothing of angels you are naked. Instead of glory you have shame. Instead of preferment you have disgrace. Adam, where are you? And Sinner, where are *you*? Sin said to you, "I will give you pleasure"—you have had it. But what of the pain which followed the pleasure? Sin gave you its cup full of mixed wine. But what of the red eyes and of the woe? Sin said to you, "I will make you great," but what has it done for you?

Drunkard, what has it done for you? Given you rags and poverty. Adulterer, Fornicator—what has it done for you? Filled your flesh with leprosy and your soul with agony. Thief! Cheat! What has it done for you? Disgraced you and branded you before the eyes of men. Sinner in secret! Polite sinner! What has it done for you? Soured your sweets and poisoned all your joys. Where are you? Where are you? In every case sin has been a curse. Without exception, rebellion, if it has not yet brought its due deserts will do so and sinners shall be filled with their own ways.

And then to add to the conviction, the Lord asks of Adam, "Where are you," as if He asked him, "How did you come there?" Adam, you came there of yourself. If you had been upright Eve had not cast you down. Eve 'twas not the serpent with whom the main guilt must lie. Had you not given ear, he might have tempted long if you had been deaf. And so today God says to the sinner, "Where are you?" You are where you have brought yourself. That you have sinned is your own fault and none else's but your own.

Oh, it is hard to make a sinner see that sin is his own property. It is the only thing we have. There is only one thing *we* created and that is sin and that is our own. If I permit anything that is evil, I must confess it is a child that has sprung from my own heart—it has its origin in myself. If we talk of the Fall men will throw their sin on father Adam. They speak of the depravity of nature and then they think they are to be excused, as if depravity of nature did not prove the man to be desperately bad—as if it were not saying that sin is essentially man's own thing—that he has it in his very bones and is his blood.

If we are sinners there is no excuse for us whatever. And if we live and die so, the guilt shall lie at our own door and nowhere else. "Adam, where are you?" You are where you have willfully put yourself and you remain willfully in the same desperate state of rebellion against God and of alienation from Him. I would God that something would not only arouse the sin-

ner this morning but work conviction in him. It is easier to make a man start in his sleep than to make him rise and burn the loathsome bed on which he slumbered—and this is what the sinner must do—and what he *will do* if God is at work in him.

He will wake up and find himself lost. Conviction will give him the consciousness that he has destroyed himself and then he will hate the sins he loved before. He will flee from his false refuges, forsake his joys and seek to find a lasting salvation where alone it can be found—in the blood of Christ.

III. This brings me to the third way in which we may regard the question of the text. The Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, “Where are you?” We may regard this text as the VOICE OF GOD BEMOANING MAN’S LOST ESTATE.

Some have even ventured to translate the Hebrew, “Alas for you, alas for you!” It is as if God uttered the words of the Prophet, “How can I give you up? How can I utterly destroy you? How can I set you as Admah, How shall I make you as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled, My heart is moved for you. Where are you, My poor Adam? You did talk with Me, but you have now fled from Me. You were happy once, what are you now? Naked and poor and miserable. You were once in My image glorious, immortal, blessed—where are you now, poor Adam? My image is marred in you, your own Father’s face is taken away and you have made yourself earthy, sensual, devilish. Where are you now, poor Adam?”

Oh, it is wonderful to think how the Lord felt for poor Adam. It is taken for granted by all theologians that God can neither feel nor suffer. There is no such thing in the Word of God. If it could be said that God could not do anything and everything—we should say that He was not Omnipotent. But He can do all things and we have not a God that cannot be moved—we have one who feels and who describes Himself in human language as having a father’s heart and all the tenderness of a mother’s heart. Just as a father cries over a rebellious son, so does the eternal Father say, “Poor Adam, where are you?”

And now have I here this morning any soul on whom the former part of the text has had some effect? Do you feel yourself to be lost and do you discern that this lostness is the result of your own willful folly? Do you bemoan yourself? Ah, then, God bemoans you. He is looking down upon you and He is saying, “Ah, poor drunkard, why will you cling to your cups? Into what misery have they brought you?” He is saying to you who are now weeping over sin, “Ah, poor child, what pain you suffer from your own willful folly!” A father’s heart moves, He longs to clasp His Ephraim to His breast.

Do not think, Sinner, that God is stony-hearted. *You* have a heart of stone, God has not. Do not think that He is slow to move—you are slow to move—*He* is not—the hardness is in yourself. If you are straitened anywhere, it is in your own heart, not in Him. Soul, Soul convicted of sin! God loves you and to prove how He loves you, in the Person of His Son He creeps over you and He cries, “O that you had known, even you in this, your day, the things that make for your peace. But now are they hid from your eyes.”

I hear Him saying to you, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!” I pray you, let this mournful wailing voice of the Eternal God come to your ear and move you to repentance! “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but had rather that he would turn unto Me and live.” Oh, does your heart feel ready to burst because of your sin and the misery into which it has brought you? Pray, poor sinner, “I will arise and go unto my Father and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Your sight and am no more worthy to be called Your son.”

He sees you, Sinner. When you are yet a great way off, He sees you—ere are *eyes* of mercy! He runs—Here are *feet* of mercy! He clasps you—ere are *arms* of mercy! He kisses you—ere are *lips* of mercy! He says, “Take off his rags”—here are *words* of mercy! He clothes you—here are *deeds* of mercy! Wonders of mercy—all mercy! O did you know what a reception a God of mercy gives to sinners? You would not stay away if you did!

As John Bunyan says, when the besieger hangs out the black flag, then those within the walls say they will fight it out. But when he runs up the white flag and tells them that if they will open the gates he will have mercy upon them, no, he will give a charter to their city, then says Bunyan, they say, “Fling open the gates,” and they come tumbling over the walls to him in the readiness of their hearts. Soul, let not Satan deceive you by telling you that God is hard, unkind, unwilling to forgive! Try Him, try Him! Just as you are—black with sin, filthy, self-condemned and if you need anything to make you come to Him, hear again the Lord’s plaintive cry, as it rings through the trees of Eden, “Adam, poor Adam, My own creature, where, where are you?”

IV. But now I must turn, lest time should fail us, to a fourth way in which no doubt this verse was intended. It is an arousing voice, a convincing voice, a bemoaning voice—but, in the fourth place—it is a SEEKING VOICE.

“Adam, where are you?” I am come to find you wherever you may be. I will look for you till the eyes of My pity see you. I will follow you till the hand of My mercy reaches you and I will still hold you till I bring you back to Myself and reconcile you to My heart.

Again—if you have been able to follow me through the three parts of the discourse, I can speak confidently to you. If you have been aroused, if you have been convicted, if you have some longings toward God, then the Lord has come forth to seek you and to seek you this morning. What a thought it is, that when God comes forth to seek His chosen He knows where they are and He never misses them. And though they may have wandered ever so far yet it is not too far for Him. If they had gone to the gates of Hell and the gates were half opened to receive them the Lord would get them even there.

If they had so sinned that they had given themselves up and every Christian living had given them up, too—if Satan had counted upon them and had made ready to receive them—yet when God comes forth to seek them He will find them and He will have them after all. You who are lost, perishing sinners, hear the voice of God, for it speaks to you, “Where are you?” for I am come to seek you. “Lord I am in such a place that I cannot do anything for myself.” “Then I am come to seek you and do all for you.” “Lord, I am in such a place that the Law threatens me and Justice frowns upon me.” “I am come to answer the threats of the Law and to bear all the wrath of Justice.”

“But, Lord, I am in such a place that I cannot repent as I would.” “I am come to seek you and I am exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins.” “But, Lord, I cannot believe in You, I cannot believe as I would.” “A bruised reed I will not break and a smoking flax will I not quench, I am come to give you faith.” “But, Lord, I am in such a state that my prayers can never be acceptable.” “I am come to pray for you and then to grant you your desires.” “But, Lord, you do not know what a wretch I am.” “Yes, *I know you*. Though I asked you the question, ‘Where are you?’ it was that *you* might know where you are, for *I* knew well enough.”

“But, Lord, I have been the chief of sinners—none can have so aggravated their guilt as I have.” “But wherever you may be I have come to save you.” “But I am an outcast from society.” “But I am come to gather together the outcasts of Israel.” “Oh, but I have sinned beyond all hope.” “Yes, but I have come to give hope to hopeless sinners.” “Yes, but then I deserve to be lost.” “Yes, but I have come to magnify the Law and make it honorable and so to give you your deserts in the Person of Christ and then to give you *My* mercy because of *His* merits.”

There is not a sinner here conscious of his lost estate who can be in a position out of which he cannot be brought. I will conceive the worst of all the worst, the vilest of all the vile—we will bring up those who have taken high degrees in the devil’s synagogue and become masters of iniquity. But still if with the tearful eye they look *alone* to the wounds of Him who shed His blood for sinners—He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

Oh, I cannot preach this morning as I would, nor can you perhaps hear as you would wish, but may the Lord speak where I cannot and may He say unto some despairing sinner here, “Soul, your hour is come. I will pluck you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and this day and at this very hour, I will set your feet upon a Rock. I will put a new song into your mouth and I will establish your goings.” Blessed, blessed, be the name of the Most High if such may be the case.

V. And now, lastly, we feel sure that this text may be used and *must* be used, in another sense. To those who reject the text as a voice of arousing and conviction—to those who despise it as the voice of mercy bemoaning them—or as the voice of goodness seeking them—it comes in another way. It is the voice of JUSTICE SUMMONING THEM.

Adam had fled but God must have him come to His bar. “Where are you, Adam? Come here, Man, come here, I must judge you—sin cannot go unpunished. Come and your guilty spouse with you. Come here. I must put questions to you, I must hear your pleadings and since they will be vain and void I must pronounce your sentence.” For though there was much of pity in the question, there was something of severity, too. “Adam, Adam, where are you? Come here to be judged.”

Today you hear not that cry—it is mercifully postponed. You *shall* hear it soon. You shall hear it for the first time like mutterings of thunder when the storm begins. You shall hear it when sickness casts you on your bed and death looks through his bony eyes upon you and touches you with his ghastly hand and says, “Prepare to meet your God.” You may put off the question today—you will *have* to deal with it when God Himself shall come into closer contact with your nature than He does today.

Then shall your bones be as a jelly and your ribs shall quake and your very heart shall melt like wax. You shall contend with the pains of sickness or disease—but there shall be a direr pain than these. You shall have to look on death—but death shall not be the most terrible of all your terrors—for you shall see *behind* death the *judgment* and the *doom*. Then you will hear it—when the room is silent—and voices of wife and child are hushed. When only the clock is ticking you shall hear the footfalls of God coming to you in the eventide of your life, saying to you, “Where are you? Now you shall meet Me. Gird up your loins! No more invitations of mercy for you! Your day of mercy is gone. No warnings from the minister again. Now you shall meet *Me* face to face.”

“Where are you?” Can you brag and boast now, when your nerves have become loads for the hot feet of pain to travel on and your strength has gone ended and you are as a candle ready to die out? Where now are your oaths? Where now your merry-makings and your jests? Where are you now? You may toss and turn. But you will not be able to escape the question. You will try to look back to this life but you will be compelled to look forward to the life or the death to come. And still will the Lord whisper into your ears, “Where are you? Where are you?”

Then shall come the last struggle when the strong man shall be bowed. When the bright and glittering eye shall be covered over with film and the tongue shall cleave to the roof of the mouth and the hand shall lie strengthless on the bed—and the feet shall no more be able to support the body. When the pulse shall fail and the clammy death-sweat shall stand upon the brow and in those last moments there will still be heard that awful voice, rising with the gathering storm till it reaches the full grandeur of the awful tempest—“Where are you?”

In the Jordan without God, nearing the grave without hope. Dying, but no Christ to help you. Launching upon eternity, but no hope of eternal salvation. It is over and the last pang has passed and the thread is snapped that bound the spirit to the body and you are gone into another world. But the question follows you—“Where are you?” Your Spirit is now awake, it sleeps no more. It is rid of the dull flesh that kept it sullen, stolid, stupid, dead. Now it hears that voice indeed and it thrills through and through the spirit, for the soul is brought before its God. “Where are you? Where are you?” cries the quickened conscience. And God answers it, “Depart, you cursed one!”

The spirit departs from God, not to hide itself among the trees of the garden but to plunge itself into waves of agony. And how many years have passed and the body—though the soul has been alive and has suffered—has been sleeping in the grave and the worms have devoured it. But hark, the Day of Judgment, the day of thunder has arrived. Shrill above all thunders sounds the awful trumpet. After the trumpet comes the voice—“Awake, you dead and come to judgment!” Amidst that awful tumult is heard the cry, “Where are you?”

The angelic messenger has found *your* body and from the grave your body starts, from underneath the green sward. Up it leaps in answer to the question, “Where are you?” and to its horror its ghastly spirit comes back. Its soul, that long has suffered, returns into the resurrection body and they two, comrades in sin, are now comrades in *judgment*. The cry rings forth once more and that very ear shall hear it that now listens to me—“Where are you?”

Then comes the Great White Throne and those very eyes shall see it that now gaze on me. And then comes the commencement of the dread assize—and that heart shall quail then which moves not now. Then shall come your own personal trial. And oh, Sinner! Sinner! It is not for me to describe your terror. I could not give even the faintest picture of that death-sound and of the death of your immortal spirit while you hear it—“I was an hungered and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these My Brethren you did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Oh, earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the Word of the Lord! I pray each of you to hear it for yourselves. I have not talked to you of dreams. You know they are realities. And if you know it not now you shall before long. I do beseech you by the blood of Him that died for sinners—and what stronger argument can I use?—think of the question, “Where are you?” May God show you where you are. Hear the bemoaning voice of God, as pityingly He weeps over you. Seek His face for He seeks you. And then you need not dread to hear Him say at the last, “Where are you?” But you will be able to say, “Here am I and the children You have given me. We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And, Father, here we are, hoping to dwell in Your presence forever and ever.”

Oh, that I could plead with you as a man pleads for his life! Would that these lips of clay were lips of fire and this tongue no more of flesh but a live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar! Oh, for words that would burn their way into your souls! O Sinner! Sinner! Why will you die? Why will you perish? Man, eternity is an awful thing and an angry God is a *dreadful thing*! And to be judged and condemned—what tongue can tell the horror?

Escape for your life! Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain. Escape to mount Calvary, lest you be consumed. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Trust Him *alone* with your soul. Trust Him with it *now*, “and you shall be saved and your house.”

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