

TODAY! TODAY! TODAY!

NO. 1551

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.”
Psalm 95:7, 8.*

THIS Psalm is a burst of praise. It resounds with the joyful noise of hearty thanksgiving unto Jehovah and yet before it closes you hear the solemn tones of exhortation to men to hearken to the voice of their God. Alas that it should be true, but true it is, that the Canaanite still dwells in the midst of Israel. In every gathering of the faithful there is a mixture of those who know not the ways of God. When Israel came out of Egypt, a mixed multitude came forth with the people of God. That mixed multitude did them great damage and often brought them under great sin and consequent sorrow, but they were always there and they are always here too, in the church and around it, dishonoring us by their evil behavior. Not only in the great congregations, but even in little gatherings of believers, we meet with the unworthy ones. Scarcely are 12 met together without a Judas in the midst of them. Thus it comes to pass that in our loudest praises there is always a measure of discord, and when we have lauded the Most High with our best hallelujahs, we shall be called upon to listen in humble silence to His warning voice addressed to the unbelieving and disobedient among us. Such characters are here this morning and it is well for us to know the fact. It is well for us to examine ourselves, whether we belong to this class and whether the words before us may not be addressed to ourselves, “If you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” But supposing us to have hearkened to the Lord ourselves, and to have found peace like a river in consequence, it is well for us to think of those who are sitting side by side with us who are living in unbelief, that we may bless God the more for distinguishing grace manifested to ourselves and that we may offer our earnest prayers for them all through the service that God may bring them to His feet and save them by His grace.

In the spirit of hearty love to men's souls I shall try to preach and in that spirit I beg of you to hear the Word today. If saints are thus moved to pity sinners and to pray for them, the Holy Spirit will bless the Word and it will be quick and powerful to search out the thoughts of men's hearts and awaken them from their indifference to the voice of God. He is a happy minister who while he preaches is surrounded by a praying people. Joshua in the plain is sure of the victory while Moses pleads upon the mountain with God. Borne up by your supplications, I advance to an earnest conflict with the hard hearts of the unsaved.

Yet the sermon will not be altogether and only for the unbelieving, for, alas, even in God's people there is a measure of unbelief and deafness of ear. Even God's children do not hear their Father's voice so readily as they should. We are sometimes so taken up with other things that God speaks again and again and we do not regard Him. The still small voice of His love is too apt to be altogether unheeded while the thunders of this world's traffic fill our ears. Take heed therefore, brethren, lest there be *in any of you* an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Lest this should be the case, let each of us take home to himself so much of what shall be spoken as may fairly be applicable to himself and let us all hear God saying to us, even to us, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation.”

Let us come at once to the text. The simple plan of our speaking this morning shall at once be laid before you. We have here, first, *a time specified*—the Holy Spirit says, “Today.” Secondly, *a voice to be regarded*, “If you will hear His voice.” And then, thirdly, *an evil to be dreaded*, against which we are warned, “harden not your heart.” There is a sad tendency in man to harden his heart even when God speaks and therefore says the Holy Spirit to us, “Harden not your heart, as in the provocation.”

I. First, then, THE TIME SPECIFIED, “Today if you will hear His voice.” This is the uniform time and tense of the Holy Spirit's exhortations. He says nothing about tomorrow, except to forbid our boasting of it, since we know not what a day shall bring forth. All His instructions are set to the time and tune

of “Today, today, today.” He speaks of pressing and immediate necessities requiring to be supplied “to-day” and of urgent duties which must be fulfilled “today.” He says, “Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord.” “I command you this thing today.” “Son, go work today in my vineyard.” Therefore, “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.”

“Today” is a *time of obligation*. Every man is under a present necessity as a subject of God to obey his Lord today and having rebelled against his God, every sinner is under law to repent of sin today. “Repent you therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,” is the cry of Scripture to every one who has sinned against the Most High (Acts 3:19). What if I should repent tomorrow, yet it will be a sin to remain impenitent today. What if I should believe in Christ next year, yet will it be a heinous offense to have been an unbeliever this year. I have no more right to continue to disobey than I ever had to disobey at all. When the law of God has been broken, it is still binding and every fresh offense against it is reckoned to our charge. We are bound to confess and forsake sin now and delay increases our sin. I met with a striking sentence in the works of William Mason, which is well worthy to be written among your memoranda, “Every day of delay leaves a day more to repent of and a day less to repent in.” What if this day shall be the last I live? Shall it be spent in refusing to hear the Word of my Maker? Shall my last breath be spent in rejecting my Savior? God forbid! I see that I am bound as His creature to obey Him and as His sinful creature to seek pardon of Him. Help me therefore, blessed Spirit, to attend to these things this day without delay.

Remember also that today is a *time of opportunity*. There is this day set before us an open door of approach to God. This is a very favored day, for it is the Lord’s day, the day of rest, consecrated to works of grace. Today our Lord Jesus rose and left the dead that He might declare the justification of His people. This is a day of good tidings, therefore, beloved. I pray you seize the golden moments. On what better day can you seek the Lord than on that day which He has hedged about and set apart that you might spend it in His fear? Is it not our Sabbath? No day can be more fit for ceasing from your own works that you may rest in the work of Christ. Is it not the first day of the week? This day creating work began, why should not the new creation begin in you at this good hour? Today the fiat of the Lord went forth and there was light. O for that fiat to be heard within your souls that you might have light. It is a day of grace today, a day of gospel preaching, a day of an open Bible, a day of promises, a day in which the Spirit of God comes to work with men, a day in which Jesus Christ is set forth evidently crucified among you, a day in which the mercy seat is approachable, a day in which justice is God’s strange work, but in which mercy is His joyful occupation. These are days which kings and prophets waited for and saw not—blessed days when mercy keeps open house for all hungry souls and when whoever will, may come and him that comes shall in no wise be cast out. You cannot have a better time for coming to Christ than the season prescribed in the text—namely, “today.”

With some of you it is a time of choice opportunity, for you are in good health and possess the powers of clear connected thought. How much better is such a day than the gloomy period when you will lie sick and near to death! That poor brain will be distracted with a thousand cares and fears, how will you, then, be able to grasp the solemn truths of revelation for the first time? It is ill to be setting your house in order at the moment you are leaving it. You may have enough to do even to draw your breath, while those who watch you will need to wipe the clammy sweat from your brow. It will be a poor time for these weighty matters then. It may be you will be low, or faint, or delirious, and it will be hard to be without God then. Many have said to me, when I have seen them dying, “If I had a Christ to find now what should I do?” Do avail yourselves, dear hearers, of the time when your reason is yet upon its hinges and the windows of your minds can yet admit the light. Seek the Lord while yet your health is continued to you. The day of strength should not be wasted, nor should our youth be thrown away, but while vigor lasts we should press into the kingdom. Today, then listen, for today is an opportune time.

Remember also that you are sitting in the place where God has saved thousands of souls and you are listening to one who, though in himself is utterly unworthy, God has used for bringing many to Himself. Perhaps you have come from some distant part of the country where the preaching has not been a power to your soul. The very change and novelty of the minister’s voice may be helpful to you and you may this day be more inclined to attend to the gospel than you have been on other occasions. It is therefore a time of opportunity. Hoist sail while the wind blows. Men say, “Make hay while the sun shines,” and I say the same to you. While the rain of grace is falling, set your souls under the sacred shower. He who goes into a battle and wishes to be wounded will soon meet with a wound and he who wishes the truth of God to lay him low will not be long untouched by it. Everything around seems today agreed to help the

soul that will at once come to Jesus. The day, the place, the people, the preacher, all make it a time of opportunity to many of you.

Remember how Paul tells us plainly that it is *a time limited*. He says, "Again He limits a certain day, saying in David, today if you will hear His voice." Today will not last forever; a day is but a day. When days are longest, shadows fall at last and night comes on. The longest life soon wanes into the evening of old age and old age hastens to the sunset of the tomb. It is a limited day. A day, but only a day. How very limited life is in many instances! How many are born but never reach complete manhood! How many pass away before they have fulfilled one half the allotted age of man! How many lives are extinguished as a candle is suddenly blown out. This thought ought to make us listen to the divine voice which cries, "Today." "Today." The thought of death has often brought men to decision. They tell us in the old histories that Peter Waldo, a certain eminent merchant, had lived a thoughtless, careless life, but as he walked the streets of Lyons, his friend, who was apparently in good health, fell dead at his side and Waldo at once sought the Lord, believed the gospel and preached it to others. According to certain writers, he became the founder of that wonderful people, the Waldensians, who maintained the truth of God through many a century when the whole earth was covered with Papal darkness.

Oh that some of you would become so conscious of your own frailty as to perceive that you are standing on the brink of everlasting woe; thus may you be moved to seek your God at once and find your Savior today. Reflections upon death have often driven men to Christ and so have worked life in them by the blessing of the Holy Spirit. In a book entitled, "Wonders of Grace," by a Primitive Methodist minister, I met with a story which pleased me much. A young man in Berlin who was sick with fever was attended lovingly by a young doctor who was his bosom friend. He lived in apartments. His careful friend ordered him to be moved into the darkest part of the room, because the sunlight was too much for his eyes. It was a singular providence that the bed should be pushed close against the wall, which was only a thin partition separating the apartment from the room in which lived the landlord of the house. While the sick man lay there, possibly with his mind somewhat wandering in the fever, he was astonished to hear a voice whisper in his own tongue a verse which may be translated thus—

*"Today you live, yet,
Today turn you to God;
For ere tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead."*

Some other words followed which he did not hear so well, but presently in a louder voice he heard the words repeated—

*"Today you live, yet,
Today turn you to God;
For ere tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead."*

Over and over again those same words were whispered or spoken close to the spot where he was lying. It so impressed him that when his young friend, the physician, asked him how he was, he looked at him earnestly and replied—

*"Today you live, yet,
Today turn you to God;
For ere tomorrow comes
You may be with the dead."*

The physician took his hand and said, "Your pulse is better, but if it were not for that I should think you worse, for you are evidently raving." To this he received no answer but a repetition of the lines. He could get nothing out of his patient but that verse, spoken with an awe-struck look and thrilling voice. The young physician went home thoughtful and when he came next time he found his friend much better, sitting up in bed, reading the Scriptures. The two sought and found the Savior, for those warning words had drawn them across the boundary line and made them decide for God and for His Christ. How came the lines to have thus sounded in the sick man's ears? Was it a dream? Did an angel pronounce the warning? No, it was a little boy who had failed to repeat his lesson to his father and had been made to stand in the corner, with his face to the wall, till he knew the lines. He was saying his task over and over and over to himself, in order to fix it on his memory and God was using his voice through the partition to bring a heart to Himself. How various are the methods of mercy! Dear hearer, there may be something quite as odd and yet as ordinary about your being here this morning. Some simple circumstance may have stranded you on these shores, where divine love waits to bless you. You are not in the place where

you usually attend—perhaps you thought it too far to go on such a wet day and you have turned in to worship nearer home. May God overrule it for your eternal good. May the Lord impress you with the fact that the day of grace is limited. Mark well the truth that today is the only time that any man has and therefore he had need be up and doing—

*“Our time is all today, today,
The same, though changed and while it flies,
With still small voice the moments say,
‘Today, today, be wise, be wise.’”*

A word, however, of encouragement before we leave this point. It is *a time of promise*, for when God says to a man, Come to Me at such a time, He, by that very word makes an engagement to meet him. One asked me this morning, “When can I call upon you?” I said, “At ten o’clock next Tuesday.” Of course I shall then be ready to receive him if nothing unforeseen prevents. I should not have made the appointment for him to come if I had meant to refuse him when he comes. And when God says, “Hear My voice today,” He means that He will meet you and speak with you today. David said to Solomon, “If you seek Him, He will be found of you.” This is true of you, dear hearer, if you will seek Him today. He has made no appointment with you to meet with you tomorrow, but He has engaged to speak with you today, if you will hear His voice. Never shall one wait and say, like young Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears,” without God’s speaking in words of love before long. There is so much to encourage in the text that I would gladly hope and pray that many of my dear hearers who have never sought the Lord will at this moment cry, “The time past shall suffice me to have worked the will of the flesh and now today let others do as they will, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord and seek His face.”

II. Secondly, let us think of THE VOICE TO BE REGARDED. “Today if you will hear *His* voice.” Place the emphasis upon the word HIS. Reading the psalm, as we have done, we could not help noticing that its first verses are the voice of the Church of God, “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.” Throughout the first seven verses we have the voice of God’s people pleading with all that are mingled with them to bow in joyful, humble, believing worship before the Most High. Shall not these pleadings influence our minds? Surely attention should be paid to the voices of godly men and women. The entreaties of pious parents, teachers, relatives, and friends ought not to fall to the ground. When the Bride says “Come,” her voice is worthy of your attention, especially when you remember that the Spirit speaks in her. We, who serve God, implore you to have regard to our entreaties. When we unselfishly love you as we love our own souls and long for your salvation, you ought to regard our earnestness. When you know that our hearts break at the thought of your being lost and that we would give our eyes if we might but give eyes to you which with you should see Jesus, there ought to be some power about our love and you should give earnest heed to our entreaties. I thank God there often is a force in the love of believers to their friends, but if in our case there is none, if you think our appeals too insignificant, yet I beseech you listen to the voice of God, for surely His voice may not be slighted. Today hear His voice, for indeed the gospel is *His* voice. Is not the Bible His book? Are not the truths which we preach, truths which He has revealed? Is not the plan of salvation of His own ordaining? Is not Christ the unspeakable gift of *His* own giving? Is not pardon according to *His* promise? Therefore, though the preacher will be quite willing that you should pour contempt upon him, he implores you not to do despite to his Master. Despise not God! Reject not Christ! “Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.”

Remember that the voice of God is *the voice of authority*. God has a right to speak to you. Shall the creature refuse to hear the Creator? Shall those who are nourished and fed by Him turn a deaf ear to the Preserver of men? When He says, “today,” who among us shall dare to say that he will not listen today, but by-and-by? It is disobedience on the part of a child when he says to his father “I will not obey you today.” He might as well say “I will disobey you,” for that is what he means. If you had a summons from the court to attend at such an hour, would you send a message to say that it was not convenient, but you would attend at your own pleasure? If the Queen were to command you into her presence at such an hour, I guarantee that you would be there before the time rather than after it. It is an insult to superiors when we take no notice of their appointed times, but keep them waiting our will and pleasure. The Lord has a right to fix His own time for doing deeds of grace and favor. He is giving away His free mercy to undeserving subjects and if He says, “I will open the gates today and I will answer prayer today,” it

would be the height of impertinence if we reply, "You must wait my time. Go Your way. When I have a more convenient season I will send for You." Is God to wait as a lackey upon you? You deserve His wrath, will you slight His love? He speaks in amazing tenderness, will you exhibit astounding hardness? Be not so daring, so profane, so cruel as to talk of delay when the divine message lays such stress on your immediate attention, saying, "Today if you will hear His voice."

If this strain should not affect the conscience, let me try another. The voice here spoken of is *the voice of love*. How wooing are its tones! The Lord in Holy Scripture speaks of mercy and of pardon bought with blood, the blood of His dear Son. O man, He calls you to Him, not that He may slay you, but that He may save you. He does not summon you to a prison, but He invites you to a banquet. God speaks not as judge, but as father. Not as from Sinai, but from Calvary, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Do not be cruel to almighty love! Be not ungenerous to eternal pity! When the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you will hear His voice," oh, I pray you, hear and your soul shall live and He will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Personally, I can resist harshness, but love subdues me. I hope that you are cast in even a softer mold than I am. Even human love is hard to resist, but, oh, the love of God, who can withstand it? Base is the spirit that can harden itself against the boundless love of God in Christ Jesus.

Remember, too, that this is *the voice of power*. This is a sweet thought for those of you who are without strength. You will perhaps say, "I cannot turn to God," but He can turn you. You lament that you cannot feel as you would wish. He can give you every gracious feeling. God's voice alone created the world. He spoke the universe out of nothing and when darkness enwrapped it, He said, "Light be," and light was. He who spoke thus in nature can thus speak in grace and work salvation in you. The text warns you against hardening your heart and if you will listen to the voice of God, it will soften your heart. "His voice breaks the cedars of Lebanon; His voice makes the hinds to calve." So can His voice break your hard heart and cause your hesitating spirit to decide. Only yield to it. Yield to it now. The day may come when you will never hear it again. It is a pitiful story I once heard told of an old man sitting alone with his little grandchild. Taking the little child on his knee, he said, "My boy, seek the Lord betimes; seek Him now." "Grandpa," he said, "have you sought Him?" "No, child," he said, "no." "But, Grandpa, should you not seek Him?" The old man shook his head and sadly answered, "I would, child, but my heart is hard. My heart is hard. There was a time," and then the old man wept. Oh, but if such an old man is here, I say to him, there was a time and there is a time, for even now, though your heart is hard, is there not the promise, "I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh and I will give them a heart of flesh"? Old man, the Holy Spirit says still, "Today, today," and He that says, "today" can make today for you a day of tenderness and melting till you will be no longer like a stone. How often have I felt the power of that verse—

*"Your mercy is more than a match for my heart,
Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart;
Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."*

The Lord put that new song into all your mouths.

The voice of God, let me add now to close this point, ought to be heard because it is *a pledging voice*. God, by calling you, pledges Himself that He will hear you if you come. When He says to you, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" He pledges Himself that you shall not die if you turn to Him. When He says, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found," He does, as it were, covenant that He will be found of you. Listen, then, to His promising voice, His cheering voice. It will cast all unbelieving fear out of you and drive away Satan better than David's harp drove the evil spirit out of Saul. God help you to do so.

The voice of God should be *easy to hear*, for "the voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness. The Lord of glory thunders." All nature bows before the roll of His voice. Full often during this week, above the roar of the sea, or the clamor of traffic in the street, peal on peal of the voice of God was heard till the mountains trembled to their foundations and the heavens were astonished. What deafness must sin have caused to man that he cannot hear the voice of God! Oh, be willing to let that voice penetrate your hearts; it will do so if you are but willing that it should. May God work in you to will of His good pleasure. I fear that some of you are so very busy that you will not reserve your ear for God even for half an hour. You are too much tak-

en up with the discord of the world to heed the harmony of heaven. Diodorus Siculus says that in Sicily the herbs are sometimes so odoriferous and in certain places there are such thick beds of them, that when hounds pass through them they lose the scent, and I fear that in some men's lives there are so many vanities, so much love of the world, so many poisonous flowers, in fact, that they lose scent of things eternal, if they ever had any. Yet what will it profit you if you gain the world and lose your souls? You will not gain the world in business in these dull times, profits are small now. You will not gain a world, will you? No, nor half a world, nor even a moderate fortune, but whatever your gain is, look at it and judge if it is not a poor compensation for a lost heaven, a lost eternity, a lost soul.

If you lose your soul you have lost all. A bankrupt may begin again if it is but bankruptcy of this world's goods, but what can he do who is bankrupt for eternity and can never start anew? Oh, you that never think of this, if you never have another warning, let this come home to you! You must die, sirs! You must leave your moneys and properties, your shops and your warehouses. You of smaller estate must leave your cozy cottage or your comfortable room and all the little treasures of home. And what will your naked spirit do if it has no resting place beyond the skies? Must it flit forever over a shoreless deluge of woe and find no rest for the sole of its feet? Hearken and consider. "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart." Thus says the Lord, "Incline your ear and come unto Me; hear and your soul shall live." May the Lord bless you now and may His Spirit lead you to hear, to believe, to obey.

III. Now comes our third point and as time presses we must speak in condensed words of THE EVIL TO BE DREADED. "Harden not your hearts," there is really no need, they are hard enough already. "Harden not your hearts." There is no excuse, for why should you resist love? "Harden not your hearts." There can be no good in it. A man is the less a man in proportion to his loss of tenderness of heart. Sensibility is, in many aspects, a high possession. Sensibility of the affections and the heart is rather to be cultivated than lessened, for it may turn out to be the beginning of grace. "Harden not your hearts." You cannot soften them, but you can harden them. There is an awful power for evil about every man. Do not try how far it will carry you. To do good, man needs the help of grace, but to do ill he needs no aid and if he did, the devil is there to lend it to him right speedily. "Harden not your hearts," for this will be your ruin. It is the suicide of soul.

For first, *it will be a serious evil if you do*. To harden the heart in this case is to harden it against God. The voice is that of the Lord of hosts. Be astonished, O heavens. God is speaking in boundless grace and the man is hardening his heart in the presence of God! Under the sound of love's entreaties, within earshot of mercy's imploring tones, the sinner is hardening his heart. Sad work to harden one's heart against one's own welfare! Shall any man do this and go unpunished? What do you think?

He hardens his heart willfully. He feels some drawings to good things and he pulls back. Grace leads and the man starts aside with resolve not to follow. Have you ever done that, my hearer? Did you ever say, "It will not do," and put down the rising emotion? Did you ever, when reading a good book, or at a deathbed side, or when hearing an earnest sermon, do violence to your better self? Take care, take care, they will be lost indeed who of set purpose wander from the right path. O do not perish out of spite to love. Some have resisted conscience frequently. They find it hard to go to hell and yet they push on. Many of the more dissolute kind slide downward from vice to vice. They perform a horrible *descent*, as down a mountain of ice. They give themselves up to iniquity and away they go to perdition. Woe unto such! Others of us have been highly favored, for across our way God has, as it were, cast felled trees and iron chains to stop our downward career. If you do get lost, some of you will have to wade through your mother's tears and leap over your father's prayers and your minister's entreaties. You will have to force a passage through the warnings of godly people and the examples of pious relatives. Why this effort to destroy your own souls? Why so desperately set on self-destruction? It must be a gigantic evil for a man to do this and continue to do it. Will you do it again this morning? Are you resolved to be lost? If so, then there is one thing I would like you to do and that is to put it in writing. I would, daring as it seems of me, challenge you to write out your covenant with hell. I would have you look yourself in the face and say, "I have surrendered myself to a life of sin and I am resolved to take the consequences and to die an enemy to God." If you will put that in black and white I feel persuaded you will stand back from it and say, "It must not be." But you answer, "No, I could not write it." Then why do it? Perhaps this morning one more obstinate fit will end all our hope of you. One more holding of conscience by the throat until it turns black in the face with your grip may be the final action that shall decide your future and you will never be troubled again by compunction or conviction. Ah me, if it should come to this that

you will, from now on, glide down without a jerk into the bottomless pit! God forbid it. Oh Almighty Spirit, suffer it not to be so with any here! To harden the heart is a great evil.

And *it is a greater sin*, let me say next, *in some than in others*, for the Scripture quotes the instance of Israel. The Holy Spirit says, "As in the provocation, when your fathers tempted Me and saw My works forty years." Some of you are the highly privileged as compared with others. Look at the multitudes that live in our back streets and courts and alleys who never heard the gospel, were never trained to go to the house of prayer, and who live and die ignorant of it! How much better your lot! Many of you cannot recollect when you first came to a place of worship. You were brought here when you were children. You know the gospel thoroughly, though you know it not in your hearts. What guilt must be yours to sin against such light and such special advantages! Some of you have often been warned. You have frequently twisted about on those seats most uneasily. You have gone home and you could not eat. You have felt you must turn, but you have not done so! You are as careless as ever. "He that being often reprov'd hardens his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." Certain of you have also been chastened. You have had a great deal of trouble. You have lost your dearest friend, or you have been sick yourself, and been forced to look into eternity and see how dark it is. On your weary bed you moaned in spirit—

*"Dark is all the world before me,
Darker, yet, eternity."*

Yet affliction has had no good effect upon you. "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more." Already you are as ill as you can be. The whole head is sick with sorrow and the whole heart faint with grief. You have bruises and sores today as the result of God's chastening. Will you revolt more and more? Will you still offend? Yes, and on the other hand, some of you have been greatly indulged by God. You have all that heart could wish. He has prospered you in business beyond your expectation. He has made you happy in your wife and in your children. He has set a hedge about you and all that you have, and yet you are not His. Oh, why can you stand out against love when she multiplies her favors? I pray and beseech you, by the love of our dear God, treat Him not so ill, but confess your fault and seek His face. I know some, too, who have had hard struggles of conscience and are having them now. Which way they will turn I know not. May God cast the weight of time cross into the scale and decide them for heaven! Perhaps I am even speaking to some who have made a profession of religion but do not really know the power of it in their own hearts, and are acting very inconsistently with it and doing much to dishonor the name of Christ. By the vows they have made in baptism wherein they declared that they were buried with Christ, let them hear His voice and hearken to Him before the day of grace shall close.

I must beg your further attention a minute while I say that this great sin, *this dreadful sin, can be committed in a great many ways*. Only one thing can soften the heart and that is the blood of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit, but fifty things can harden the heart. I shall tell you what others do, but I beseech you not to emulate them, "Harden not your hearts." Some harden their hearts by a resolution not to feel. They set their faces like flints and resolve to shake off the Word. I recollect preaching once when my host disappeared about the middle of the sermon and I noticed that a friend who had traveled there with me disappeared, too. Afterwards I found out the reason. I said, "What made So-and-so go out?" He said, "I guessed what it was and I went after him and he said to me, 'Mr. Spurgeon handles me like a piece of India rubber and shapes me as he likes. If I stay in there I shall be converted and that will never do and therefore I slipped out.'" Ah me, many fly from their best friend. While they are plastic they are afraid of being cast into the right mold. Some of you are very much like plaster of Paris, or other cement which will take any shape while it is soft, but oh, how quick it sets and there is no altering it. If you are somewhat affected this morning, do not resist the feeling, but give the full assent and consent of your heart to it. Who knows, you may now be saved. Perhaps if you are not molded while I am preaching, on the way home the plaster will set, hard as a rock, and your shape will be fixed for eternity.

Many harden their hearts by delay, by not yielding today, by wishing to wait. Hundreds harden their hearts by pretended doubts, by making foolish criticisms and caviling remarks. They talk about the speaker's mode of utterance and they get their conscience quiet by remembering a false pronunciation or an ungrammatical sentence. Or else they say, "We cannot be sure of it. Professor Wiseman says differently." Ah, yes, but if infidel professors are cast into hell, their learned observations will not comfort you when you perish in their company. Look to your own souls and let the professors see to theirs. Some of these literary and scientific men will have a great deal to answer for. They gain their eminence by dar-

ing to say presumptuous words which better men tremble to hear and unbelieving souls welcome their wickedness. I have small respect for these advocates of Satan, these decoys of the destroyer. I charge you, do not pretend to be unbelievers if you are not, nor invent doubts for the mere sake of pacifying your consciences.

Too many silence their consciences by getting into evil company and by running into silly amusements, all intended to kill time and prevent thought upon divine things. A number of people harden their hearts by indulging a favorite sin. There is a man here who knows the gospel well and I thought that he was saved, but he loves the intoxicating cup. He drinks every now and then till he is drunken and that one sin is destroying him, though in other respects he is a fine fellow. As sure as he lives, he will commit that folly once too often and perish miserably. When he is sober, he knows his wickedness as well as any man and even weeps over it, but I give very little for his tears now, since they have flowed so many times that we cannot believe in their sincerity. His repentance dries as soon as his handkerchief. Oh that God would create sincerity in him and make his heart weep instead of his eyes. Darling sins are sure destroyers. We must give up sin or give up hope of heaven. John Bunyan in his, "Holy War," describes "Sweet-Sin Hold" as a favorite fortress of Satan, which long held out against the Prince Immanuel. Oh that we could raze it to the ground! My hearer, will you have your sin and go to hell, or will you leave your sin and go to heaven? You can not take sin with you into God's rest, neither can you be Satan's darling and God's favorite. Grace will not permit any sin to be loved. He who loves sin, hates God. I cannot go into further detail, but oh, how many things may be used to harden the heart.

This sin will bring with it the most fearful consequences. Harden not your heart, for by such conduct the last opportunity of entering into the divine rest may pass away. "He swore in His wrath, they shall not enter into My rest!" You wish to rest at last. You long to rest even now. But it cannot be till you yield to God. You are not at peace now and you never will be if you harden your hearts. God is gently drawing some of you this morning. I can feel that He is doing so. I have deep sympathy with you. I know how you are feeling, you want to get alone and fall down on your knees to pray. Pray now! Cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," in the pew, at once. You do not need to wait to get home. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to yield your heart to Jesus Christ at this very time, for, if not, there will surely come one of these days a last time in which you will feel and you will after that be given up to a conscience seared as with a hot iron, never to feel again.

Think in what plight you will be when you come to die without Christ. How would you like to die like Queen Elizabeth, of whom history tells us that she would not go to bed, she would have cushions on the floor, for if she went to bed she would die and she could not bear the thought. This was her frequent cry, "Call time again! Call time again! Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time! Call time again!" Her majesty, whom you have seen decked out with all her ruffles and silks and the like, all haggard and in dishabille upon the ground, shrieked out, "Call time again! A world of wealth for an inch of time!" May God grant that such may never be your lot, for if you so die—there is a something after death more awful still. I will say but little on that alarming theme, but put it in one verse as I learned it when a child and as I believe it after many an anxious thought. Hear the truth, tremble, and turn unto the Lord!—

*"There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains."*

Escape for your life! Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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