

NOT NOW, BUT HEREAFTER!**NO. 410****A SERMON****DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1861,****BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,****AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Have you not asked them that go by the way? and do you not know their tokens, that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath. Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he has done?”
Job 21:29-31.

THE sermon which I preached two Lord’s Days ago upon the accidents, has caused considerable consternation among pious people with weak heads. [See Sermon #408, Volume 7—ACCIDENTS, NOT PUNISHMENTS] Their idea, that all calamities are judgments, is so deep-seated a prejudice, and so favorite a dogma, that our exposure of its absurdity is, in their opinion, eminently calculated to encourage sin and quiet the consciences of offenders. Now, I feel quite at ease in this matter, and am confident that I have done service to our great cause, even though the timid should be alarmed and the superstitious should be annoyed.

Our gracious God and Father has seen fit to give us a whole book of the Bible upon the subject. The main drift of the Book of Job is to prove that temporal afflictions are not evidences of the Lord’s displeasure, and I beg the modern Bildads and Zophars to reconsider their position, lest they too should be found to be “speaking wickedly for God and talking deceitfully for him” (Job 13:7).

In my very soul I feel that if evil days shall come upon me, if poverty, desertion, and disease should place me upon Job’s dunghill, I shall point to that sermon with pleasure, and say to those who will tell me that God is angry with me, and has judged me to be unworthy, “Nay, you know not what you say, for the judgment is not already passed, nor is this the field of execution. Neither disease, nor bereavements, nor poverty, can prove a man to be wicked, nor do they even hint that the chosen are divided from the hearts of Christ.”

O my beloved friends, settle it in your hearts that men are not to be judged according to their present circumstances and learn like David to understand *their end*. It will save you from writing bitter things against yourselves in the time of trouble, and prevent your scanning the works of Providence, and measuring the infinite by line and plummet.

It is mainly my business today to deal with those who may wickedly continue in sin, because their judgment tarries. If the Lord does not in this world visit the ungodly with stripes, this is but the surer evidence that in the world to come there is a solemn retribution for the impenitent. If the affliction which is here accorded to men be not the punishment of sin, we turn to Scripture and discover what that punishment will be, and we are soon informed that it is something far heavier than any calamities which occur in this life—something infinitely more tremendous than the most disastrous accident, the most shocking mutilation, or the most painful death.

I know that there are some in these days who are like those in the time of the royal preacher, of whom He said, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Should I be addressing some this morning who have found a stupid quiet for their consciences in the fact that God does not *here* usually visit men’s sins upon their heads, let me put it to them whether such peace is reasonable.

There is a city which has revolted. A great king has threatened them with entire destruction for the revolt. He does not, in hurried passion, send against them a handful of soldiers to inflict instant and petty chastisement, he waits awhile, and marshals all his hosts till every battalion has been put in array, till

every mighty man has girded on his armor. Fools! Will you draw consolation from the delay of your destroyer? Will you say, because he has not ridden forth against you on the very day of your rebellion, that therefore this is a time of revelry and mirth? Nay, inasmuch as he is gathering his hosts for the battle, let it cause you to tremble, for he shall break down your walls, and give your whole company to the sword.

Imagine yourselves voyagers, far out upon the sea. A black cloud darkens in the sky. You say you fear not the cloud because it is not at present pouring forth the rain-flood. But that is the reason why you should fear it, for the cloud is waiting until it grows and spreads, till under the wing of darkness the egg of cloud has been hatched into the black screaming eagle of the storm. See you, the clouds are hurrying from east and west, mustering for the strife! Mark you not the sea heaving heavily in sympathy with heaven's convulsions? Behold how all the dread artillery of heaven is gathering up for one tremendous shock.

Fools! Do you say you will not fear because the thundercloud has not yet burst, because as yet the breath of wind has not transformed itself into the blast of hurricane? It is gathering, sirs, congregating its forces and accumulating its fury, and the longer that it gathers, the more terrible shall be the moment when it bursts upon your devoted heads.

And so today, God's clouds that float in the sky, the calamities of Providence, are not pouring on you the tempest of wrath, but is this a reason why you should be at peace? Nay! The clouds are gathering, every sin is adding to the mass, every day of God's long-suffering is covering heaven in blacker sable. Every moment that He spares, He does but prepare to punish in more tremendous force, and dread and direful shall be the day, when at last omnipotence itself shall come to the assistance of outraged justice, and you shall feel that God is God as much in punishing sin, as in the making of the worlds.

It was a fable of the old Jewish rabbis, that when the angel Gabriel flew he used both wings, because he always came with good tidings, but that when Michael flew, bearing God's sword to smite through the loins of kings, he always flew with one wing. But Michael arrives as surely at his destined goal as Gabriel himself. The feet of the avenging deities may seem to be shod with lead for tardiness, and their tread may be as noiseless as wool, but they are as sure as the feet of mercy.

I know when God comes to bless, the axles of His chariot are hot with speed, and His steeds are white with foam, and when He comes to curse, He travels slowly, with many a sigh, for He wills not the death of any, but had rather "that he should turn unto him and live." But remember, in judgment, He comes in all His might, and He shall be discovered to be not less a God when He smites than when He gives the kisses of His lips, and lifts the pardoned sinner into acceptance and favor.

We shall now deal with the sorrowful topic of the punishment of sin in the world to come. I have preached less upon this subject than almost upon any other, and yet always it is thrown in our teeth that we delight to dwell upon these horrors. I never come to this subject without the deepest distress of heart, and God alone shall know, how many tears it costs these eyes when I have to deal out as God's faithful ambassador, the thunders of His law. I delight to preach of Calvary, and of divine love, and of grace unsearchable. But this theme is to me *the burden* of the Lord. We must not, we dare not keep it back. Fidelity to conscience, truthfulness to God, love to the souls of men, constrains us to make this a part of our ministry, not keeping back any part of the price.

I will divide the discourse this morning into three parts. First, I shall speak of the *punishment of sin, by way of affirmation* or prove that it must be so. Secondly, *by way of explanation*, of what kind and nature this punishment must be. And then, thirdly, *by way of expostulation*, pleading with those, who are yet in the land of mercy, that they would listen to the voice of wisdom, and that God's grace may turn them from the error of their ways.

I. First, then, by way of affirmation—THERE MUST BE A PUNISHMENT FOR SIN.

Job says, that this is a truth so written upon the very nature of man, that even those that go by the way, the ignorant traveler and wayfarer, dares not for a moment deny that such is the case. "Have you

not asked them that go by the way? and do you not know their tokens?" And truly it is so. If there be one intuitive truth which man perceives without need of argument, it is that sin deserves to be punished, and since sin is not punished here, it follows that the punishment must be endured in the world to come.

Let us, however, very briefly review the argument. Sin must be punished from *the very nature of God*. God is, if God is God, He *must* be just. You can no more separate the idea of justice from the idea of God, than you can omniscience, or omnipresence, or omnipotence. To suppose of a God who was not omnipotent, is to make a supposition which is contradictory in its terms, for the term "God" includes that thought. And to suppose an unjust God, is to imagine an absurdity—you have used, I repeat it, contradictory terms—justice is included in the very thought of God. See how the oppressed always recognize this.

The slave who has long been trampled under the feet of a tyrannical master, with his back fresh from the gory lash, lifts up his eyes to God the avenger, for he feels instinctively that God must be just. Nationalities who have made appeals to arms, but have been subdued again to serfdom, at last in their despair cry out to God, for this is the bottom of man's thoughts, and the one which is sure to come forth when pain has emptied out his lighter notions, that God does execute righteousness and judgment "for all who are oppressed."

So, too, when man would affirm a thing to be true, he calls upon God to be his witness, because in his innermost nature he feels that God will be a just and impartial witness. If he thought not so, it would be ridiculous to call upon God to witness to his statement. Note how the tearful eyes, the groaning mind, the bursting heart, all turn instinctively to the Judge of all the earth. Man feels that God must be just.

But how just? How *just*, if crowned heads who do injustice shall go unpunished? How *just*, if the adulterer, the thief, the liar, and the hypocrite unpunished here, should go unpunished in the world to come? Where is your justice, God, if this world be all? We say, "Alas for love, if you were all and nought beyond, O earth!" And we may add, alas, for justice too, for where could it live, where could it dwell, unless there were a world to come, in which God will right the wrongs, and avenge Himself upon all who have trampled on His laws?

Not only does His very nature show this, but *those acts of God*, which are recorded in Revelation, prove incontestably that He will by no means spare the guilty. There have been judgments. I am not now appealing to the notions and opinions of ill-judging man, but to the inspired chronicles, for I will quote those judgments alone which the Word of God calls such.

Adam sinned. 'Twas but the touching of an apple, Eden was blasted, Adam was exiled. The world sinned. They ate, they drank, they married, and were given in marriage. They forgot the Most High. The fountains of the great deep gave forth their floods, the cisterns of heaven emptied out their cataracts. All the world was drowned, and the last shriek of the strong swimmer, yielding at last to universal death, told us that God is just.

Look across to the cities of the plain. When they had wholly given themselves up to unnatural lusts, God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And when He did so, what did He but write in letters of fire, "God is just, He furiously avenges and terribly punishes sin." Behold too, Pharaoh and all his hosts drowned in the Red Sea. For what purpose was Pharaoh raised up, but that God might show forth His power in him—might prove to the world that there were vessels of wrath, and that God knew how to fill them to the brim, and break them as with a rod of iron?

Look to Palestine, and behold its kings put to death by the sword of the Lord and His servant Joshua. What means a land stained in blood? It means this, that the race had offended much against heaven, and God, that man might have some glimpses of His terrible justice, declared that He would root out the races of Canaan, and would have war with Amalek from generation to generation.

It is impossible to reconcile Old Testament history with the effeminate notion of neological divinity, that God is only a universal father, but not a Governor and a Judge. If these gentlemen will quietly read some of those awful passages in the Old Testament, they cannot—unless they should deny the inspiration of the passage, or attempt to tone down its meaning—they cannot but confess, that they see

there far less a loving parent, than a God dressed in arms, of whom we may say, "The LORD is a man of war, the LORD is his name. Your right hand O LORD, your right hand, O LORD, has dashed in pieces your enemies." A God without justice is what this modern church is seeking after. These new doctrines would fashion a deity destitute of those sublime attributes, which keep the world in awe, and command for Him the reverence of His creatures.

This brings me to my third argument. Not only do the nature and the acts of God prove that He will punish sin, but *the very necessities of the world demand it*. Imagine the contrary. Put in all our Christian pulpits men who should teach sinners that there is no punishment for sin. Let them say to them, "What you suffer here is to be looked upon as God's judgment on your offense, but there is no world to come in which your sins will be visited upon your heads." Friends, you may at once advise the government to multiply the number of our jails tenfold.

If there be no punishment for sin in another world, if it be so light and trifling an offense that the little sufferings of this life are sufficient atonement for it, then you have thrown up the floodgates which have hitherto dammed up the overflowing floods. You will soon see society swept from its moorings, there will be no possibility that men will seek to be honest, when they find that honesty or dishonesty, are terms which have but a trifling difference between them.

If sin be so slight a thing, men will think virtue to be a slight thing too. And if there be so little punishment for crime, they will soon think that there can be but little reason for virtue, and where will be our commonwealths and our social compacts? The best lawgivers, however amiably disposed they may be, find that they must back up their laws with penalties. A State which would be founded upon laws without penalties could not last a week, or if it lasted, you would find that while the laws would be disregarded, there would be more death, and more suffering than there had been before.

When was the guillotine most at work, but when there was loudest boast of liberty, and men's living without law? When would there be the most of murder, but when there should no more be heard the threat of condemnation, and when they who were assassins might be permitted to go abroad untouched? There must be punishment for the world's own good, to say nothing of the nature of God, which for its dignity and holiness necessarily demands that every offense and transgression should receive its just recompense of reward.

But further I affirm the punishment of sin from the *atonement of Christ*. Friends, if there be no necessity that sin should be punished, why did Jesus die? Why, Father, did you send Your only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and lay upon Him the iniquities of us all? Was He needed for an example? He might have been our example without dying, in fact if this were all, virtue, crowned and glorified, might have been quite as noble an incentive to goodness as virtue mocked and crucified.

He was needed that He might take our sins, and having taken our sins, it became absolutely necessary that Jesus Christ should die. In the death of Christ, if sin must not necessarily be punished, I see nothing but the death of a martyr like James, or Peter, or Polycarp, the death of a man murdered for being better than his fellows.

And why do we make this fuss and noise about salvation by the death of Christ if that is all? Why has the Christian church existed to be a false witness, to testify to a fiction? Why has her blood been shed these many centuries to maintain that the blood of Jesus Christ takes away the sin of the world, if the sin could be taken away without punishment? The wounds of Christ have no meaning, His precious blood has no value, His thorn-crowned head is not worthy of worship, nor is His death worthy of daily ministry, unless it be that He suffered "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

God in Christ punished the sins of His people, and if He did it in Christ, unpardoned sinner, rest assured He will do it in you. If the imputed sins of Christ brought Him the agonies of Gethsemane, what will your sins bring you? If guilt that was not His own brought Him an exceeding heaviness, "even unto death," what will your sins bring you, sins, remember, which *are* your own? "He that spared not his own Son" will never spare rebels. He who did not spare His Son a single lash or a single stroke, will certainly make no exemption in your favor, if you live and die impenitent, and reject the Gospel of Christ.

Besides, my dear friends, permit me to say, that those who think that sin is not to be punished, are generally the worst of men. Men hate hell for the reason that murderers hate the gallows. The degenerate Youngman, who was executed on the top of yonder jail, informed the chaplain that he objected on principle to all capital punishment, an objection natural enough when it was his own inevitable doom.

They who dissent from the doctrine of divine justice are interested in forming that opinion, the wish is father to the thought, they would have their sin unpunished, they hope it may be, and then they say it will be. You will not listen to a thief's objection to a policeman, you do not imagine that a criminal's objection to a judge is very valid, and the sinner's objection to hell lies only here, that he will not repent, and he therefore fears the dread certainty that he shall be punished.

Besides, even these worst of men who pretend not to believe, do believe. Their fears betray the secret conviction of their consciences, and on their dying beds, or in a storm, whenever they have thought they were about to see with their own eyes the stern realities of eternity, their fears have proved them to be as strong believers as those who profess the faith.

Infidelity is not honest. It may profess to be, but it is not. I think that our judges are right in not accepting the oath of an infidel. It is not possible that he should be honest in the notion that there is no God. When God is around him in every leaf, in every tree, and in every star in the sky. It is not possible that a man should be honest when he calls himself an atheist. Nor do we believe that any man can speak the dictates of his inmost heart, when he says that sin will never be punished, and that he may sin with impunity. His conscience gives him the lie, he knows it *must* be so, and that God will visit his offenses upon his head.

I shall not enlarge further, except to say in gathering up my thoughts, impenitent sinner, be sure of this, there shall not a sin of yours fall to the ground unremembered, "For every idle word that you shall speak, God will bring you into judgment." How much more for every blasphemous word and for every rebellious act? Do not wrap yourself up in the delusive thought that sin will escape unpunished. Even if it should be so, then the Christian is as well off as you are. But since righteousness will be laid to the line, and judgment to the plummet, what will become of you?

Be wise before it is too late. Believe today what you will find out to be a fact before long. God has revealed it to you, His revelation has tokens and signs which prove its divine origin. Believe what He has revealed, do not say in your heart, "I never will believe there is a hell unless one should come from it." Do you not see that if one should come from it, then you would not believe at all, because you would say, "If one person came from hell, then another may, and I may myself." It would take away all your dread of future punishment if any spirit should come back from it, and therefore it is better for you that you should not have that evidence given you.

Yet I think the shrieks of dying sinners, the cries which some of you have heard coming up from the death beds of blasphemers, ought to be enough evidence that there is a world to come whereof we speak. And that there are terrors of the law which are happily concealed today from your eyes and from your ears, but which you may soon know, and know far better than the best words can teach you, by your own feelings, by your own everlasting despair, and banishment from God.

II. I turn now, to the second portion of the discourse—THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT, by way of explanation.

How will God punish sin? The text says, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." The old Puritan preachers, such men as Alleine, who wrote the "Alarm," and others of his class—always gave a very gross picture of the world to come. They could never represent it except by brimstone, flames, and dancing fiends, and such like horrors. They were conscientious in the drawing of the picture, and to them the terrors of the Lord were gross, corporeal, unscriptural ideas of hell, but rather let us feel that it is a great mystery, concerning which, we must rather follow Scripture than imagination.

The first punishment which will be executed upon man for his sins, will be punishment to his soul. The soul leaves the body, the body is *here* enclosed in the coffin, rotting in the tomb. The disembodied

spirit will appear before its God. It will then know at once what its future destination shall be. The great judgment will not then have been held, the Judge will not have officially pronounced the sentence, but the soul anticipating the sentence will expect its execution.

Memory will begin to reflect upon past sins, past mercies unimproved, past opportunities neglected, and past offenses which have long been forgotten. Then, the conscience will begin to thunder. "You did this wantonly," says Conscience. "You did it against light and knowledge, you did despise Christ, you did neglect the day of mercy, you have been a suicide, you have destroyed yourself."

Then the fears will come in, the fears of the day of judgment, when the body shall be reunited with the soul. And those fears will sting the man with thoughts like these. "What will you say when He comes to judge you? How will you bear the eyes of Him that shall read you through and through?" *Now* you know that what was preached to you on earth is true. "You are no infidel *now*. *Now* the truth is not kept out of your soul by the dullness of your fleshly body, you *see*, you *know* it. What will become of you when earth shall pass away, and heaven shall shake, and hell shall gape to receive its prey?" So the spirit shall be virtually in hell before the body goes there. This shall be the first punishment of sin.

Then, when the day predestined shall have come, the trump of the archangel shall ring through the air—the trump this time of the second resurrection—for the dead in Christ shall have already risen, and have reigned with Christ upon the earth. Then rings the clarion note that wakes the dead. They start up, and the soul returns to its old house, the body. Then it receives its sentence. It is brought forth as the text says, "to the day of wrath"—it had been reserved in chains before, in blackness and darkness. It is now brought forth to receive the sentence, that the body must begin its hell.

Then, mark you, beyond a doubt, for we cannot understand Scripture, and especially the words of Christ without it, the body shall have pains meet for its offenses. Your members were servants of your lusts, they shall now be partakers of the wage of your soul. The feet that carried you in the paths of sin, shall tread the fiery road. The eyes which gazed with lustful glance, shall now be made to weep the scalding tear. The teeth which ministered to your gluttony, shall now gnash for pain. The tongues which talked so exceeding proudly against God, shall be "tormented in this flame." There shall certainly be a punishment for the body as well as for the soul, for what else did Christ mean when He said, "Fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." I will not enlarge upon what sort of punishment this will be, suffice me to say that whatever it is, it will be *just*.

The sinner in hell shall not endure one iota more than he deserves. He shall have the due reward of his deeds—no more. God is not unjust to punish men arbitrarily—I know of no arbitrary condemnation. There is no such thing as sovereign damnation. It will be justice—inflexible, I grant you, but yet not such as shall pass the bounds of due and right desert. God will give to man only the harvest of his own deeds. He sowed the wind and he shall reap the whirlwind.

You shall not have the consolation in hell of saying that you did not deserve it, for in hell you will be made to feel, "I brought this on myself. I destroyed myself. It is true I am in pain, but I am the father of my own pains. I planted the tree which yields the bitter fruit. I dug about it and I watered it. I did the work. I labored, and these are my wages." And you will have to feel then and there, that in every pang that rends the heart, God is infinitely just.

And then, whatever the pain may be, we know that while it is just, it will be *terrible*. Whose are those awful words, "He shall burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire!" Is this the language of Moses? No, of Christ. It is a remarkable fact, that the most frightful descriptions of punishment of another world are from the lips of the Savior. Had Peter spoken them, you would have said Peter was harsh in spirit. It was the Master who spoke them. He who wept over Jerusalem said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

He spoke of "burning up the chaff," He spoke of "binding hand and foot, and giving them up to the tormentors." In the compass of revelation, there are no words so grim and terrible in their awful suggestiveness, as the words of Him, "who went about doing good." He who wept and cried, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

And we know, again, that this punishment will be *eternal*. This is the very essence of it. There were no hell if it were not eternal, for the hope of an end would be the end of fear. If there could be an end to hell at any time, there would be an end to it at once, for no man would feel that desperate despair, if there were a hope that it should come to a close. But it is eternity, eternity, eternity, that makes punishment hell. This is the bell which tolls the funeral of every hope—eternity, eternity, eternity. To sail across a sea of fire forever, never reaching a haven, to sink, but never reach the bottom, or to rise to heights of greater agony, and never reach the summit.

Oh! brethren, brethren, it is not the wrath of God in this world that you have so much to fear, the wrath's to come, the wrath's to come. And it is not the wrath that the soul shall be filled with, when it has been there a thousand years, it is the wrath's to come. They will go on sinning, and God will go on avenging—they will go on blaspheming, and they shall go on gnawing their tongues—they shall go on hating God, and they shall go on feeling His anger. They shall go from bad to worse in character, and doubtless, from bad to worse in agony. O God, help us to escape from this awful thing—the wrath, the wrath to come.

III. I close now, by offering SOME FEW WORDS OF EXPOSTULATION.

You will kindly look at the thirty-first verse. He says, "Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him what he has done?" Now, there are many men who think they shall come off scot free, because in this life there are none who will dare to mention their sins to their face. The covetous man is very seldom rebuked for his covetousness. If a man lives an unclean life, he does not usually read books which would prick his conscience. If a man acts dishonorably in his trade, if another should tell him of it, he would be exceedingly insulted.

It is true a faithful minister will often make men feel uneasy in their sins, for he will be led by God's direction to give such a description of the offenses and of the punishment, that he will make sinners tremble in their shoes. But still are there not some among you here today who can sin with both your hands, and there is no Elijah to say, "You are the man"? You have none to meet you in Naboth's vineyard, and say to you, "Have you killed and taken possession?" There is perhaps hardly a "still small voice." There used to be one. The agonizing face of your wife when first you had forsaken the way of virtue, the ghastly look of your mother as you were bringing down her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, the sorrowful gaze of your little children when first their father became a drunk. These were still voices to you, but they are now hushed.

When God gives you up, then indeed your damnation slumbers not. But remember, however cheaply you can sin now, God will not fear insulting you. He will bring your sins to your remembrance and there shall be no consideration of your dignity. He will not consult your feelings. He will not look upon you as a great one. He will bring your sins to remembrance in no courtly phrases and in no polished terms. You shall find that the lips of Justice know not how to make distinctions between you and the basest menial whom you once despised.

Now, if a man should speak against your character, it would be libel, but when God speaks of it, you shall not threaten Him. What do you think, that He will fear and tremble before you? Who are you, O man, that the lips of the Eternal God should be silent about you! Who are you that He should fail to draw your character in black or crimson hues? He will convict you to your face, and you shall be utterly unable to plead guiltless of your sins.

And then the text says, "Who shall repay him?" Ah! there is no hand which dares repay you now, you have gone unpunished yet. No law can touch you, you say—ah! but there is a law divine which overrides the law that is human. And if the arm of human justice be too short, the arm of God is as long as it is strong, and He will reach you, and to the last jot and tittle He pay you your due reward. You shall not escape even in the slightest degree. No pleas and prayers, no tears and excuses, shall have any avail with Him, but till Justice shall have had its uttermost farthing, you shall by no means come out from there.

And now, sinner, why will you dare the wrath of God? Why will you run this fearful risk? Why will you make your bed in hell? Why will you dwell in everlasting burnings? Is it wise, or are you mad, and is your reason gone? Have I preached to you a bugaboo and a fable—if so, go your way and sin. But oh! if it be true—and it *must* be, unless you are prepared to reject that precious Book, and the very name of Christian—if it be true.

Soul, I pray you let me feel for you, if you will not feel for yourself. Why dash yourself upon the point of JEHOVAH's javelin? Why destroy yourself against the points of His buckler? What can there be that makes you so in love with ruin? Why will you hug the grave and embrace destruction? Soul, again I say, are you mad?—Are you mad?—Are you mad? May the Lord teach you reason, and may He help you to flee to the only refuge where a sinner may find mercy.

I shall close when I have tried to set out the way of mercy. I have read in the old Histories of England that Edward the Second, one of our kings, was exceedingly enraged against one of his courtiers. Being out hunting one day, he threatened the courtier with the severest punishment. There was a river between them at the time, and the courtier, thinking that he was perfectly safe, ventured to offer some jeering remark upon the king—telling him that at any rate he would not be likely to chastise him until he got at him. The king, feeling his anger hot within him, told him that the water should not long divide them, leaped into the middle of the stream, and with some difficulty gained the other side. The courtier, in great alarm, fled in terror.

The king pursued him with might and main, spurring his horse to the utmost. Nor did his anger cease, he carried his drawn sword in his hand with the intention of killing him. At last the courtier, seeing that there was no hope for any escape, knelt down upon the grass, and laying bare his neck, said, “I heartily deserve to die. Mercy, King! Mercy!” The king sent back his sword into the scabbard in a moment, and said, “While you sought to escape me, I determined to destroy you, but when I see you humble at my feet, I freely forgive you.” Even so is it with the King of heaven.

Sinners, you say there is this life between you and God. Ah, but how soon will the white horse of Justice pass the stream, and then flee, flee as you may today, He will surely overtake you. He now is swift to destroy, let it be yours on your knees to make confession of your sin, and say, “I deserve Your wrath, Great King, I deserve Your wrath.” And if to this you are enabled to add the plea of the precious blood of Christ, the sword of Justice will return into its scabbard, and He will say, “I am just and yet the justifier of the ungodly.”

For Jesus died and inasmuch as Jesus Christ has died, Justice is satisfied on the account of all believers. Go your way, your sins which are many are all forgiven you. “What must I do to be saved?” says one. This is all you have to do and this the Holy Spirit will work in you, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.” “What is that?” say you. “I believe Him to be divine. I believe that He is able to save.” That will not save you, there must be something more than that. “What then?” “Believe in Him”—carry out practically your belief that He is able to save by trusting yourself in His hands.

To exhibit again an old picture which has often been used, there is a child in a burning house hanging from the upper window. A strong man stands beneath and offers to catch him, if he will but drop from yonder hot windowsill to which he still clings. “Drop, my child,” he says, “I will catch you.” The child believes the strength of his preserver. That does not save him. He trusts to the strength, he lets go his hold and falls, is caught and is preserved. That is faith.

Let go your hold of your good works, your good thoughts, and all else, and trust in Christ. He never did let one soul dash itself to earth yet, that did but fall into His hands. Oh! for grace for every one of us to say in the words of Watts—

“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,

On Christ's kind arms I fall

*He is my strength, and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all.”*

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