

THE SINNER'S END

NO. 486

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 28, 1862
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.
Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.”
Psalm 73:17-18*

WANT of understanding has destroyed many. The dark pit of ignorance has engulfed its thousands. Where the lack of understanding has not sufficed to slay, it has been able to seriously wound. Lack of understanding upon doctrinal truth, providential dealing, or inward experience, has often caused the people of God a vast amount of perplexity and sorrow, much of which they might have avoided had they been more careful to consider and understand the ways of the Lord.

My brethren, if our eyes are dim, and our hearts forgetful as to eternal things, we shall be much vexed and tormented in mind, as David was when he understood not the sinner's end, for indeed it is a great mystery to ordinary reason to see the ungodly prospering and pampered while the righteous are chastened and afflicted. Let us, however, receive a clear understanding with regard to the death, judgment, and condemnation of the proud sinner, then at once our sorrows and suspicions are removed, and petulance gives place to gratitude.

See the ox paraded through the streets covered with garlands, who envies its lot when he remembers the axe and the altar? The child may see nothing but the flowers, but from the man of understanding, no childish ornament can conceal the victim's misery.

The best place in which to be instructed with heavenly wisdom is the sanctuary of God. Until David went there he was in a mist, but entering its hallowed portals, he stood upon a mountain's summit, and the clouds floated far beneath his feet. You ask me what there could have been in the ancient sanctuary which could have enlightened David as to the end of the wicked.

It may be, my brethren, that while he sat before the Lord in prayer, his spirit had such communion with the unseen God, that he looked into unseen things and saw, as in an open vision, the ultimate doom of the graceless. Or it may be that the hallowed songs of Israel's congregation foretold the overthrow of the foemen of JEHOVAH, and stirred the royal soul.

Perhaps on that holy day the priests read in the scanty pages of the then written work some ancient story, such as had refreshed the psalmist in his happier seasons. It may have been that they rehearsed in the ears of the people the years beyond the flood, and the universal death which swept a world of sinners to their eternal prisons with a flood of wrath. Or it may be that they read concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fiery shower which utterly consumed the cities of the plain.

It is not impossible that the theme of meditation led the devout monarch back to the plagues of Egypt, and the day of the Lord's vengeance when He overthrew proud Pharaoh and his hosts in the midst of the Red Sea. The book of the wars of the Lord is full of notable records, all revealing most clearly that the right hand of the Lord hath sooner or later dashed in pieces all His enemies.

Possibly when David went into the sanctuary of God, *the law* was read in his ears. He heard the blessings for obedience, the curses for rebellion, and as he listened to the thundering anathemas of the law which curses none in vain, it may be that he said, “Now understand I their end.” Certainly a due estimate of the law of God, and the justice which maintains its dignity will clear up all fears concerning the ultimate escape of the wicked. Such a law and such a judge allow not the slightest suspicion that sin will always prosper.

Moreover, brethren, David could not well go up to the sanctuary without witnessing a sacrifice, and as he saw the knife uplifted and driven into the throat of the victim, and knew that he himself was preserved from destruction by the sufferings of a substitute, represented by that lamb, he may have learned that the wicked, having no such sacrifice to trust to, must be led as sheep to the slaughter, and as the bullock is felled by the axe, so must they be utterly destroyed.

By some of these means, either by the sight of the sacrifice, or by his own meditations, or by the Word read and the expositions given by prophets or priests in the sanctuary—it was in God's own house that he understood the end of the wicked.

I trust, beloved, if you lack understanding in any spiritual matters, you will go up to the house of the Lord to inquire in His temple. The Word of God is to us as the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest, prayer asks counsel at the hand of the Lord, and often the lip of the minister is God's oracle to our hearts.

If you are vexed at any time because providence seems to deal indulgently with the vile, and harshly with you, come ye to the spot where prayer is wont to be made, and while learning the justice of God, and the overthrow which He will surely bring upon the impenitent, you shall go to your houses calmed in mind and disciplined in spirit.

May you sing as Dr. Watts puts it—

*“I saw the wicked rise,
And felt my heart repine,
While haughty fools, with scornful eyes,
In robes of honor shine.*

*The tumults of my thought
Held me in dark suspense,
Till to Thy house my feet were brought,
To learn Thy justice from thence.*

*Thy word with light and power
Did my mistakes amend;
I view'd the sinner's life before,
But here I learn'd their end.”*

This morning we have selected our subject for many ends, but more especially, with the anxious desire that we may win souls for Christ; that we may see a feast of ingathering at the end of the year; that this may be the best of days to many, the birthday of many immortal souls. The burden of the Lord weighs down my soul this morning, my heart is filled even to bursting with an agony of desire that sinners may be saved. O Lord make bare Thine arm this day, even this day.

In enlarging upon our solemn subject, first, *let us understand the sinner's end*, secondly, *let us profit by our understanding of it*, thirdly, let us, having received this understanding, anxiously and earnestly warn those whose end this must be except they repent.

I. First then, gathering up all our powers of mind and thought, LET US ENDEAVOR TO UNDERSTAND THE SINNER'S END. Let me rehearse it in your ears.

The end of the sinner, like the end of every man in this world, is *death*. When he dieth, it may be that he will die gently, for often there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. A seared conscience gives a quietude of stupidity just as a full forgiveness of sin gives a peacefulness of perfect rest. They talk about another world as though they had no dread, they speak of standing before God as though they had no transgression. “Like sheep they are laid in the grave,” “He fell asleep like a child,” say his friends, and others exclaim, “He was so happy, that he must be a saint.”

Ah! this is but their apparent end. God knows that the dying repose of sinners is but the awful calm which heralds the eternal hurricane. The sun sets in glowing colors, but O the darkness of the black tempestuous night. The waters flash like silver as the soul descends into their bosom, but who shall tell the tenfold horrors which congregate within their dreadful deeps.

Frequently, on the other hand, the death of the wicked is not thus peaceful. Not always can the hypocrite play out his game to the end. The mask slips off too soon and conscience tells the truth. Even in this world, with some men, the storm of everlasting wrath begins to beat upon the soul before it leaves the shelter of the body. Ah, then, the cries, the groans! What dread forebodings of the unquiet spirits! What visions of judgment! What anxious peering into the midnight of future banishment and ruin!

Ah, then the cravings after a little longer span of life, the clutchings at anything for the bare chance of hope. May your ears be spared the dreadful outcry of the spirit when it feels itself seized by the invisible hand and dragged downward to its certain doom.

Give me sooner to be shut up in prison for months and years than to stand by dying beds such as I have myself witnessed. They have written their memorial on my young heart. The scars of the wounds they gave me are there still. Why the faces of some men, like mirrors, reflect the flames of hell while yet they live.

All this, however, is but of secondary importance compared with that which follows death. To the ungodly there is awful significance in that verse of the Revelation, "I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was *Death, and Hell followed with him.*"

One woe is past, but there are other woes to come. If death were all, I were not here this morning, for little matters it in what style a man dies, if it were not that he shall live again. The sinner's death is *the death of all in which he took delight*. No cups of drunkenness for you again, no viol, no lute, no sound of music, no more the merry dance, no more the loud lascivious song, no jovial company, no high-sounding blasphemies, all these are gone forever.

Dives, your purple is plucked from off you, the red flames shall be your mantle. Where now is your fine linen, wherefore is your nakedness thus revealed to your shame and contempt? Where now your delicate tables, O you who did fare sumptuously every day? Your parched lips shall crave in vain the blessed drop to cool your tongue. Now where are your riches, you rich fool? Your barns are indeed pulled down, but you need not build greater, your corn, your wine, your oil have vanished like a dream, and you are poor indeed, cursed with a depth of penury such as the dog-licked Lazarus never knew.

Death removes every delight from the graceless. It takes away from his eye, his ear, his hand, his heart, everything which might yield him solace. The cruel Moabites of death shall cut down every fair tree of hope, and fill up with huge stones every well of comfort, and there shall be nothing left for the spirit but a dreary desert, barren of all joy or hope, which the soul must traverse with weary feet forever and ever!

Nor is this all. Let us understand their end yet farther. No sooner is the sinner dead than *he stands before the bar of God* in his disembodied state. That impure spirit is set before the blazing eye of God. Its deeds are well known to itself, it needs no opening of the great books as yet. A motion of the eternal finger bids it go its way. Whither can it go? It dare not climb to heaven. There is but one road open, it sinks to its appointed place. The expectation of future torment plagues the soul with a self-kindled hell, conscience becomes a never-dying, ever-gnawing worm.

Conscience, I say, cries in the souls of men, "Now where art thou? You are lost, and this your lost estate you have brought upon yourself. You are not yet judged," says conscience, "yet you are lost, for when those books are opened, you know that their records will condemn you."

Memory wakes up and confirms the voice of conscience "'Tis true," she saith, "'tis true." Now the soul remembers its thousand faults and crimes. The judgment also shakes off its slumber, holds up its scales, and reminds the man that conscience clamors not amiss. Hope has been smitten down, but all the fears are living and full of vigor, like serpents with a hundred heads, they sting the heart through and through.

The heart bowed down with unnumbered dreads moans within itself, “The awful trumpet will soon sound, my body will rise. I must suffer both in body and in soul for all my wrong doings, there is no hope for me, no hope for me. Would God I had listened when I was warned! Ah! would to God that I had turned at the faithful rebuke, that when Jesus Christ was presented to me in the Gospel I had believed on Him!

“But no, I despised my own salvation. I chose the fleeting pleasures of time, and for that poor price I have earned eternal ruin. I chose rather to drown my conscience than to let it lead me to glory. I turned my back upon the right, and now here I am, waiting like a prisoner in a condemned cell till the great assize shall come and I shall stand before the Judge.”

Let us go on to consider their end. *The day of days, that dreadful day has come.* The millennial rest is over, the righteous have had their thousand years of glory upon earth. Hark! the dread trumpet, louder than a thousand thunders, startles death and hell. Its awful sound shakes both earth and heaven.

Every tomb is rent and emptied. From the teeming womb of earth, that fruitful mother of mankind, up start multitudes upon multitudes of bodies, as though they were newborn. Lo, from Hades come the spirits of the lost ones—and they each enter into the body in which once it sinned, while the righteous sit upon their thrones of glory, their transformed bodies made like unto the glorious body of Christ Jesus the Lord from heaven.

The voice of the trumpet waxes exceeding loud and long, the sea has given up her dead, from tongues of fire, from lion's jaws, and from corruption's worm, all mortal flesh has been restored, atom to atom, bone to bone. At the fiat of Omnipotence all bodies are refashioned.

And now the great white throne is set with pomp of angels. Every eye beholds it. The great books are open, and all men hear the rustling of their awful leaves. The fingers of the hand that once was crucified turns leaf after leaf, and names of men are sounded forth—to glory, to destruction—“Come ye blessed,” “Depart ye cursed”—these are the final arbiters of glory or of ruin.

And now where are you, sinner, for your turn is come? Your sins are read and published! Shame consumes you. Your proud face now mantles with a thousand blushes. You would cover yourself, but you cannot, and most of all, you are afraid of the face of Him who today looks on you with eyes of pity, but then with glances of fiery wrath, the face of Jesus, the face of the Lamb, the dying Lamb, then enthroned in judgment.

Oh how ashamed you will be to think you have despised Him, to think that though He died for sinners, you did scorn and scoff Him, did malign His followers and slander His religion! How piteously will you crave a veil of granite to hide your shameful face from Him. “Rocks hide me! Mountains fall upon me! Hide me from the face of him that sits upon the throne.” But it must not—it must not be.

***“Where now, oh, where shall sinners seek
For shelter in the general wreck?
Shall falling rocks be o'er them thrown?
See rocks, like snow, dissolving down.”***

O, sinner, this is but the beginning of the end, for now your sentence is read out, your doom pronounced, hell opens her wide jaws, and you fall to destruction. Where are you now? Body and soul remarried in an everlasting union, having sinned together, must now suffer together, and that forever.

I cannot picture it, imagination's deepest dye paints not this tenfold night. I cannot portray the anguish which both soul and body must endure—each nerve a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, each mental power a blazing furnace heated seven times hotter with raging flames of misery. Oh, my God, deliver us from ever knowing this in our own persons!

Let us now pause and review the matter. It behooves us to remember concerning the sinner's latter end, that *it is absolutely certain.* The same “word” which says, “he that believeth *shall* be saved,” makes it also equally certain and clear that “he that believeth not *shall* be damned.” If God be true, then must

sinner suffer. If sinners suffer not, then saints have no glory, our faith is vain, Christ's death was vain, and we may as well abide comfortably in our sins.

Sinner, whatever philosophy may urge with its syllogisms, whatever skepticism may declare with her laughter and sneers, it is absolutely certain that, dying as you are, the wrath of God shall come upon you to the uttermost.

If there were but a thousandth part of a fear that you or I might perish, it were wisdom to fly to Christ, but when it is not a "perhaps" or a "peradventure," but an absolute certainty that he who rejects Christ must be lost forever, I do conjure you, if you be rational men, see to it and set your houses in order. For God will surely smite, though He tarry never so long. Though for ninety years you avoid the arrows of His bow, His bolt will in due time find you, and pierce you through, and where are you then?

And as it is certain, so let us recollect that to the sinner it is often *sudden*. In such an hour as he thinks not, to him the Son of man comes. As pain upon a woman in travail, as the whirlwind on the traveler, as the eagle on his prey, so suddenly comes death. Buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, chambering and full of wantonness, the ungodly man says, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee."

But as the frost often comes when the buds are swelling ready for the spring and nips them on a sudden, how often does the frost of death nip all the hopeful happiness of ungodly men and it withers once for all. Have you a lease of your life? Lives there a man who can insure that you shall breathe another hour? Let but your blood freeze in its channels, let but your breath stop for a moment, and where are you? A spider's web is a strong cable when compared with the thread on which moral life depends.

We have told you a thousand times, till the saying has become so trite that you smile when we repeat it, that life is frail, and yet you live O men, as though your bones were brass, and your flesh were adamant, and your lives like the years of the Eternal God. As breaks the dream of the sleeper, as flies the cloud before the wind, as melts the foam from the breaker, as dies the meteor from the sky, so suddenly shall the sinner's joys pass from him forever, and who shall measure the greatness of his amazement?

Remember, O sons of men, how *terrible* is the end of the ungodly. You think it is easy for me to talk of death and damnation now, and it is not very difficult for you to hear, but when you and I shall come to die, ah! then every word we have uttered shall have a weightier meaning than this dull hour can gather from it.

Imagine the sinner dying. Weeping friends are about him, he tosses to and fro upon yonder weary couch. The strong man is bowed down. The last struggle is come. Friends watch the glazing of the eyes. They wipe the clammy sweat from the brow. At last they say, "He is gone! He is gone!" Oh, my brethren, what amazement must seize upon the unsanctified spirit then! Ah, if his spirit could then speak, it would say, "It is all true that I was wont to hear. I spoke ill of the minister the last Sabbath in the year, for trying to frighten us, as I said, but he did not speak half so earnestly as he ought to have done.

Oh, I wonder he did not fall down upon his knees and pray me to repent, but even if he had, I should have rejected his entreaties. Oh, if I had known! If I had known! If I had known all this, if I could have believed it, if I had not been such a fool as to doubt God's Word and think it all a tale to frighten children with. Oh, if I had known all this! but now I am lost! lost! lost forever!"

I think I hear that spirit's wail of utter dismay, as it exclaims, "Yes, it *has* come, the thing whereof I was told it has all come to pass. Fixed is my everlasting state, no offers of mercy now, no blood of sprinkling now, no silver trumpet of the Gospel now, no invitations to a loving Savior's bosom now!

God is in arms against me. His terrors have broken me in pieces, and as a leaf is driven with the whirlwind, so am I driven I know not whither, but this I know, I am lost, lost, lost beyond all hope." Horrible is the sinner's end. I shudder while thus briefly I talk of it. O, believer, take heed that you understand this well.

Do not fail to remember that the horror of the sinner's end will consist very much in the reflection that he will *lose heaven*. Is that a little? The harps of angels, the company of the redeemed, the smile of

God, the society of Christ—is this a trifle—to lose the saint's best rest, that heritage for which martyrs wade through rivers of blood, that portion which Jesus thought it worthwhile to die that He might purchase. They lose all this, and then they earn in exchange the *pains of hell*, which are more desperate than tongue can tell.

Consider a moment! He that inflicts the punishment is God. What blows must He strike! He did but put out His finger and He cut Rahab and wounded the dragon in the Red Sea. What will it be when stroke after stroke shall fall from His heavy hand? Oh Omnipotence, Omnipotence, how dreadful are Your blows! Sinner, see and tremble, God Himself comes out in battle against you! Why, the arrows of a man, when they stick in your conscience, are very sharp, but what will the arrows of God be! How will they drink your blood and infuse poison into your veins.

Even now, when you feel a little sickness, you are afraid to die, and when you hear a heart-searching sermon, it makes you melancholy. But what will it be when God in thunder dressed, comes out against you and His fire consumes you like the stubble. Will *God* punish you? O sinner, what punishment must that be which He inflicts? I tremble for you. Flee, I pray you, to the cross of Christ, where shelter is prepared.

Remember, moreover, it will be a God without mercy, who will then dash you in pieces. He is all mercy to you today, O sinner. In the wooing words of the Gospel He bids you live, and in *His* name I tell you as God lives He wills not your death, but would rather you should turn unto Him and live. But if you will not live, if you will be His enemy, if you *will* run upon the point of His spear, then He will be even with you in the day when mercy reigns in heaven, and justice holds its solitary court in hell. O that you were wise, and would believe in Jesus to the salvation of your souls!

I would have you know, O you who choose your own destructions, that you shall suffer *universally*. Now, if our head ache, or if our heart be palpitating, or a member be in pain, there are other parts of the body which are at ease, but then, every power of body and of mind shall suffer at one time. All the chords of man's nature shall vibrate with the discord of desolation. Then shall suffering be *unceasing*. Here we have a pause in our pain, the fever has its rests, paroxysms of agony have their seasons of quiet, but there in hell the gnashing of teeth shall be unceasing. The worm's gnawings shall know no cessation, on, on forever—forever a hot race of misery.

Then, worst of all, it shall be *without end*. When ten thousand years have run their course, you shall be no nearer to the end than at first. When millions have been piled on millions, still the wrath shall be *to come*—to come, as much as if there had been no wrath at all. Ah! these are dreadful things to talk of, and you who hear or read my sermons know that I am falsely accused when men say that I dwell often upon this dreadful theme. But I feel as if there is no hope for some of you, unless I thunder at you.

I know that often God has broken some hearts with an alarming sermon, who might never have been won by an inviting and wooing discourse. My experience goes to show that the great hammer of God breaks many hearts, and some of my more terrible sermons have been even more useful than those in which I lifted up the cross and tenderly pleaded with men. Both must be used, sometimes the love which draws, and anon the vengeance which drives.

Oh, my hearers, I cannot bear the thought that you should be lost! As I meditate, I have a vision of some of you passing away from this world, and will you curse me? Will you curse me as you go down to the pit? Will you accuse me, "You were not faithful with me. Pastor, you did not warn me, minister, you did not strive with me"? No, by the help of my Lord, through whose grace I am called to the work of this ministry, I must, I will be clear of your blood.

You shall not make your bed in hell without knowing what an uneasy resting place you choose. You *shall* hear the warning. It *shall* ring in your ears. "Who among us shall dwell with everlasting fire? Who among us shall abide with the eternal burnings?"

I do assure you a true love speaks to you in every harsh word I utter, a love that cares too much for you to flatter you, a love which must tell you these things without mitigating them in any degree, lest you perish through my trifling. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye

die?" Why will you reject His mercies? God help you by His Holy Spirit to understand your latter end and lay hold on Jesus *now*.

II. This brings us to our second remark—If we have understood the sinner's end, LET US NOW PROFIT BY IT. How can we do this?

We can profit by it, first, by *never envying the ungodly again*. If at any time we feel with the psalmist that we cannot understand how it is that the enemies of God enjoy the sweets of life, let us cease at once from such questions, because we remember their latter end. Let David's confession warn us—

*“Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honor shine!*

*But oh, their end! Their dreadful end!
Thy sanctuary taught me so:
On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.*

*Now let them boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain.”*

If the sinner's end be so terrible, *how grateful* ought we to be, if we have been plucked from these devouring flames! Brothers and sisters, what was there in us why God should have mercy on us? Can we ascribe the fact that we have been washed from sin in Jesu's blood, and made to choose the way of righteousness—can we ascribe this to anything but grace—free, rich, sovereign grace?

Come then, let us with our tears for others mingle joyous gratitude to God for that eternal love which has delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling. Above all let us prize the sufferings of Christ beyond all cost. Oh, blessed cross, which has lifted us up from hell. Oh, dear wounds, which have become gates of heaven to us.

Can we refuse to love that Son of man—that Son of God? Will we not today, at the foot of His dear cross, give ourselves to Him anew, and ask Him to bestow on us more grace, that we may live more to His honor, and spend and be spent in His service? Saved from hell, I must love You, Jesus, and while life and being last, I must live and be prepared to die for You.

Again, beloved friends, how such a subject as this should lead you who profess to be followers of Christ to *make your calling and election sure!* If the end of the impenitent be so dreadful, let nothing content us but certainties with regard to our own escape from this woe. Have you any doubts this morning? Have no peace of mind till those doubts are all solved.

Is there any question upon your spirit as to whether you have real faith in the living Savior? If so, rest not, I pray you, till in prayer and humble faith you have renewed your vows and come afresh to Christ. Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith, prove yourselves, build on the rock, make sure work for eternity, lest it should happen after all, that you have been deceived. Oh, if it should turn out so. Alas, alas! alas! for you to have been so near to heaven and yet to be cast down to hell.

Now this subject should teach Christians to *be in earnest about the salvation of others*. If heaven were a trifle we need not be zealous for the salvation of men. If the punishment of sin were some slight pain we need not exercise ourselves diligently to deliver men from it. But oh, if “eternity” is a solemn word, and if the wrath to come be terrible to bear, how should we be instant in season and out of season, striving to win others from the flames!

What have you done this year, some of you? I fear me, brother Christians, some of you have done very little. Blessed be God, there are many earnest hearts among you, you are not all asleep, there are some of you who strive with both your hands to do your Master's work, but even you are not as earnest as you should be.

The preacher puts himself here in the list, mournfully confessing that he does not preach as he desires to preach. Oh, had I the tears and cries of Baxter, or the fervent seraphic zeal of Whitefield, my soul were well content, but alas! we preach coldly upon burning themes and carelessly upon matters which ought to make our hearts like flames of fire.

But I say, brethren, are there not men and women here, members of this church, doing nothing for Christ? No soul saved this year by you, Christ unhonored by you, no gems placed in His crown? What have you been living for, ye cumber-ground? Why stand you in the church, you fruitless trees? God make you—oh you that do little for Him—to humble yourselves before Him, and to begin the next year with this determination, that knowing the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, and labor, and strive to bring sinners to the cross of Christ.

III. But we must leave that point of instruction and come to our last and pleading point, and that is very earnestly to WARN THOSE WHOSE END THIS MUST BE UNLESS THEY REPENT.

And who are they? Please to remember we are not speaking now of people in the street, of drunkards, and harlots, profane swearers, and such like—we know that their damnation is sure and just—but alas, I need not look far. If I glance along these seats and look into faces upon which my eye rests every Sabbath day, there are some of you, some of you who are unconverted still.

You are not immoral, but you are unregenerated. You are not amiable but you are ungracious. You are not far from the kingdom, but you are not *in* the kingdom. It is *your* end I speak of now, *yours* ye sons of godly mothers, *yours* ye daughters of holy parents—*your* end, unless God gives you repentance.

I want you to see where you are standing today. "*Surely thou didst set them in slippery places.*" If it has ever been your lot to tread the glaciers of the Alps you will have seen upon that mighty river of ice, huge wavelike mountains of crystal, and deep fissures of unknown depth, and of an intensely blue color. If condemned to stand on one of these icy eminences with a yawning crevasse at its base, our peril would be extreme. Sinner, it is on such a slippery place you stand, only the danger is far greater than my metaphor sets forth.

Your standing is smooth, pleasure attends you, yours are not the rough ways of penitence and contrition—sin's road is smooth—but ah how slippery from its very smoothness. O be warned, you must fall sooner or later, stand as firmly as you may.

Sinner you may fall *now*, at once. The mountain yields beneath your feet, the slippery ice is melting every moment. Look down and learn your speedy doom. Yonder yawning gulf must soon receive you, while we look after you with hopeless tears. Our prayers cannot follow you, from your slippery standing place you fall and you are gone forever.

Death makes the place where you stand slippery, for it dissolves your life every hour. *Time* makes it slippery, for every instant it cuts the ground from under your feet. The *vanities* which you enjoy make your place slippery, for they are all like ice which shall melt before the sun. You have no foothold, sinner, you have no sure hope, no confidence. It is a melting thing you trust to. If you are depending on what you mean to do—that is no foothold. If you get peace from what you have felt or from what you have done—that is no foothold. It is a slippery place you stand in.

I read yesterday of the hunter of the chamois springing from crag to crag after the game he had wounded. The creature leapt down many a frowning precipice, but the hunter fearlessly followed as best he could. At last in his hot haste he found himself slipping down a shelving rock. The stone crumbled away as it came in contact with his thickly-nailed shoes, which he tried to dig into the rock to stop his descent. He strove to seize on every little inequality, regardless of the sharp edges, but as his fingers, bent convulsively like talons, scraped the stone, it crumbled off as though it had been baked clay, tearing the skin like ribbons from his fingers and cutting into his flesh.

Having let go of his long pole, he heard it slipping down behind him, its iron point clanging as it went, and then it flew over the ledge bounding into the depths below. In a moment he must follow, for with all his endeavors he is unable to stop himself. His companion looks on in speechless horror. But heaven intervenes. Just as he expects to go over the brink, one foot is arrested in its descent by a slight inequality. He hardly dares to move lest the motion might break his foothold, but gently turning his head to see how far he is from the brink, he perceives that his foot has stopped not a couple of inches from the edge of the rock, those two inches further and destruction had been his lot.

Ungodly man, in this mirror see yourself, you are sliding down a slippery place, you have neither foothold, nor handhold. All your hopes crumble beneath your weight. The Lord alone knows how near you are to your eternal ruin. Perhaps this morning you are scarce two inches from the edge of the precipice. Your drunken companion who died a few days ago, has just now gone over the edge. Did you not hear him falling—and you yourself are about to perish.

Good God! the man is almost gone! Oh that I could stay you in your downward course. The Lord alone can do it, but He works by means. Turn round and gaze upon your past life, behold the wrath of God which must come on account of it. You are sliding down the slippery places to a fearful end, but the angel of mercy calls you, and the hand of love can save you. Hear how Jesus pleads with you. “Put thy hand in mine,” He says, “thou art lost, man, but I can save thee now.”

Poor wretch! will you not do it? Then art thou lost. Oh wherefore will you not, when love and tenderness would woo you? Wherefore will you not put your trust in Him. He is able and willing to save you, even now. Believe in Jesus, and though you are now in slippery places, your feet shall soon be set upon a rock of safety.

I know not how it is, the more earnestly I long to speak, and the more passionately I would set forth the danger of ungodly men, the more my tongue refuses. These weighty burdens of the Lord are not to be entrusted it seems to the power of oratory. I must stammer and groan them out to you. I must in short sentences tell out my message and leave it with you.

I have the solemn conviction this morning that there are scores and hundreds of you who are on the road to hell. You know you are. If conscience speaks truly to you, you know you have never sought Christ, you have never put your trust in Him, you are still what you always were, ungodly, unconverted. Is this a trifle?

Oh, I ask you, I put it to your own judgments, is this a thing of which you ought to think carelessly? I pray you let your hearts speak. Is it not time that some of you began to think of these things? Nine years ago we had some hopes for you, those hopes have been disappointed up till now. As each year rolls around you promise yourself that the next shall be different, but there has been no change yet. May we not fear that you will continue entangled in the great net of procrastination until at last you will have eternally to regret that you kept deferring, and deferring, and deferring, till it was too late.

The way of salvation is not hard to comprehend. It is no great mystery, it is simply, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” Trust Christ with your soul and He will save it. I know you will not do this unless the Holy Spirit constrains you, but this does not remove your responsibility. If you reject this great salvation you deserve to perish. When it is laid so clearly before you, if you refuse it, no eye can pity you among all the thousands in hell or all the millions in heaven.

*“How they deserve the deepest hell
Who slight the joys above;
What chains of vengeance must they feel
Who break the cords of love.”*

May I ask all Christian people to join in prayer for the ungodly. When I cannot plead as a preacher, I bless God I can plead as an intercessor. Let us spend, all of us, a little time this afternoon in private intercession. May I ask it of you as a great favor—occupy a little time this afternoon, each child of God,

in praying for the unconverted among us. Conversion work does go on, there are many always coming to be united to the church, but we want more, and we shall have more, if we pray for more.

Make this afternoon a travailing time, and if we travail in birth God will give us the spiritual seed. It is to the Holy Spirit we must look for all true regeneration and conversion, therefore let us pray for the descent of His influence, and depend upon His omnipotence and the great work must, and shall be done.

Could I address you in the tones of an angel, yet I could not have more to say than this, "Sinner, fly to Christ." I am glad I am weak, for now the Master's power shall be the better seen. Lord, do You the sinner turn, and make him feel the danger of his state, and find in Christ a ransom and a rescue, and to Your name be glory—Amen.

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

—END OF VOLUME 8—