

AN AWFUL PREMONITION NO. 594

**A SERMON DELIVERED
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”
Matthew 16:28.*

I MUST confess that I have frequently read this verse with but a vague sense of its profound impressiveness, and I have passed it over rapidly because I did not understand it clearly. Though well acquainted with the usual interpretations, none of them had ever satisfied my mind. It seemed to me as if the text had awakened surprise without suggesting a simple obvious meaning, and therefore, the good commentators had invented explanations and offered suggestions widely different one from another, but all equally obscure and improbable. Lately, however, in reading a volume of sermons by Bishop Horseley, I have met with a view altogether new of the passage, which I firmly believe to be the correct one. Though I do not suppose I shall carry the judgment of all of you with me, yet I shall do my best to bring out of it that terrible denunciation which I believe the Savior has here left on record. With His own cross and passion in view, He was admonishing His disciples to steadfastness, appealing to them at any sacrifice to take up their cross and follow Him; then portraying the inestimable value of the soul, and reflecting on the horror of the soul being lost—a doom, the full force of which, it would be impossible to comprehend until He should come in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels—He stopped short, looked upon some of the company, and said in words like these, “There are certain persons standing here who shall never taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”

Now, what did He mean by this? Obviously, it is either a marvelous promise to some who were His disciples indeed, or else it is a forewarning of woe to others who should die in their sins. How do the popular interpretations of our learned expositors look at it?

Some say it refers to the transfiguration, and it certainly is remarkable that the account of the transfiguration immediately follows this verse, both in Mark and in Luke, as well as in this record of Matthew. But can you for a moment bring your minds to believe that Christ was describing His transfiguration when He spoke of, “The Son of man coming in His kingdom,” or can you see any connection between the transfiguration, and the preceding verse, which says, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works”? We grant you that Christ was in His glory upon Mount Tabor, but He did not there “reward every man according to his works,” nor is it fair to call that a “coming” of the Son of man at all. He did not “come” on Mount Tabor, for He was already on the earth; and it is a misuse of language to construe that into an advent. Besides, where would be the occasion for such a solemn prefix—“Assuredly I say unto you”? Does it not raise expectation merely to cause disappointment, if He intended no more than this—“There are some standing here who shall see Me transfigured”? That scene took place six days afterwards. The next verse tells you so, “And after six days Jesus takes Peter, James and John, his brother, and led them up into a high mountain by themselves.” Why, the majesty of the prediction, which carries our thoughts forward to “*the last things*” in the world’s history, makes us shrink from accepting an immediate fulfillment of it all. I cannot imagine, therefore, that the transfiguration is in the slightest degree referred to here; and I do not think that anyone would have thought of such a thing, unless he had been perplexed and utterly at a loss for an explanation.

And again—though it seems almost incredible—Dr. Gill endorses this view, and moreover says, that it also refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit. At this I am staggered! How any man can find an analogy with Pentecost in the connection here, I cannot understand. Pentecost took place six months after this event, and why Jesus Christ should say, “Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here, who will live six months,” I really cannot comprehend. It seems to me that my Master did not waste people’s time by talking such platitudes. Who that reads this passage can think it has any reference to the descent

of the Holy Spirit?—"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then shall He reward every man according to his works." Did Christ come at Pentecost in the glory of His Father? Was there any company of angels at Pentecost? Did He then reward every man according to his works? Scarcely can the descent of the Holy Spirit, or the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire, be called the "Coming of the Son of man in the glory of His Father with His angels, to give every man according to his works," without a gross misuse of our mother tongue, or a strange violation of symbolic imagery!

Both these constructions, however, which I now mention, have now been given up as unsatisfactory by those modern students who have thought most carefully upon the subject. The third still holds its ground, and is currently received, though I believe it to be quite as far from the truth of God, as the others. Will you carefully read the chapter through at your leisure, and see if you can find anything about the siege of Jerusalem in it? Yet this is the interpretation that finds favor at the present time! Some persons were standing there who would be alive when Jerusalem should be destroyed by the Romans!! Nothing surely could be more foreign to the entire scope of our Lord's discourse, or the narrative of the evangelists. There is not the slightest shadow of a reference to the siege of Jerusalem. It is the coming of the Son of man which is here spoken of, "in the glory of His Father with His angels, to reward men according to their works." Whenever Jesus spoke of the siege of Jerusalem and of its coming, he was known to say, "Assuredly I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things are fulfilled," but He never singled out some few persons and said to them, "Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death, till the city of Jerusalem is besieged and destroyed."

If a child were to read this passage I know what he would think it meant—he would suppose Jesus Christ was to come, and there were some standing there who should not taste of death until really and literally He did come. This, I believe, is the plain meaning.

"Well," says one, "I am surprised; do you think, then, that this refers to the apostle John?" No; by no means. The fable was current you know, that John was to live till Christ came again. But John himself repudiated it. For at the end of his gospel, he says, "Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, 'He shall not die; but, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?'" This, you see, was putting a *suppositions* case, and in no sense, the language of *prediction*.

Now, dear brethren, if you are so far convinced of the unreasonableness of each of these efforts to solve the difficulty by feigning a sense, I shall hope to have your minds in readiness for that explanation which appears to me to harmonize with every requirement. I believe the "coming" here spoken of, is the coming of the Son of God to judgment at the last great and terrible judgment, when He shall judge the righteous, and separate the wicked from among them.

The next question is—"Of whom were the words spoken?" Are we warranted in supposing that our Lord intended this sentence as a gracious promise, or a kindly expectation, that He would kindle in the breast of His disciples? I suppose not. To me it appears to have no reference whatever to any man who ever had grace in his soul—such language is far more applicable to the *ungodly* than the wicked. It may well have been aimed directly at those followers who should apostatize from the faith, grasp at the world, shrink at the cross, endeavor to save their lives, but really lose them, and barter their souls. At the glorious appearing of Christ there are some who will taste death, but will they be the righteous? Surely, my dear friends, when Christ comes, the righteous will not die; they will be caught up with the Lord in the air. His coming will be the signal for the resurrection of all His saints. But mark you, at the time of His coming, the men who have been without God, and without Christ, will begin for the first time to "taste of death." They passed the first stage of dissolution when the soul quitted the body, but they have never known the "taste of death." Till then, they will not have known its tremendous bitterness and its awful horror. They will never drink of the wormwood and the gall, so as really to "taste of death," till the Lord shall come. This tasting of death here may be explained, and I believe it is to be explained, by a reference to the second death, which men will not taste of till the Lord comes. And what a dreadful sentence that was, when the Savior said—perhaps singling out Judas as He spoke—"Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here, who shall never know what that dreadful word 'death' means, till the Lord shall come. You think that if you save your lives, you escape from death. Ah, you do not know

what death means! The demise of the body is but a prelude to the perdition of the soul. The grave is but the porch of death; you will never understand the meaning of that terrible word till the Lord comes.”

This can have no reference to the saints, because in the 8th chapter of John, at the 51st verse, you find this passage—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that you have a devil; Abraham is dead and the prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death.” No righteous man, therefore, can ever “taste of death.” He will fall into that deep oblivious sleep in which the body sees corruption; but that is another and a very different thing from the bitter cup referred to as tasting of death. When the Holy Spirit wanted an expression to set forth what was the equivalent for the divine wrath, what expression was used?—“Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.” The expression, “To taste of death,” means the reception of that true and essential death, which kills both the body and the soul in hell forever. The Savior said then, as He might say, I fear, if He stood in this pulpit tonight—“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.”

If this is the meaning, and I hold that it is in keeping with the context, it explains the verse, sets forth the reason why Christ demanded breathless attention with the word, “Assuredly,” answers both the grammar and the rhetoric, and is not by any argument that I have ever heard of to be repudiated—and if this is so, what thrilling denunciations are contained in my text. O, may the Holy Spirit deeply affect our hearts, and cause our souls to thrill with its solemnity!

What thoughts it stirs up! *Compared with the doom which will be inflicted upon the ungodly at the coming of Christ, the death of nature is nothing. We go farther—compared with the doom of the wicked at the coming of Christ, even the torments of souls in a separate state are scarcely anything.* The startling question then comes up—“*Are there any sitting or standing here who will have to taste of death when the Lord comes?*”

I. THE SINNER’S DEATH IS BUT A FAINT SIGN OF THE SINNER’S DOOM AT THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN HIS GLORY.

Let me endeavor to show the contrast. We can make but little comparison between the two *in point of time*. Many men meet with their death so suddenly, that it can scarcely involve any pain to them. They are crushed, perhaps, by machinery; a shot sends them to find a grave upon the battlefield; or they may be speedily poisoned. If they are for hours, or days, or weeks, or months, upon the bed of sickness, yet the real work of dying is but short. It is more a weary sort of living, than an actual sense of dying while hope lingers though even in fitful dreams. Dying is but the work of a moment—if it shall be said to last for hours, yet the hours are brief. Misery may count them long, but oh, with what swift wings do they fly! To die, to fall asleep, to suffer—it may be but a pin’s prick—and then, to have passed away from the land of the living to the realm of shades! But oh, the doom which is to be brought upon the wicked when Christ comes! This is a death which never dies. Here is a heart palpitating with eternal misery. Here is an eye never filmed by the kind finger of generous forgetfulness. Here will be a body never to be stiffened in apathy; never to be laid quietly in the grave, rid of keen pangs, wearing disease, and lingering wretchedness. To die, you say, is nature’s kind release—it brings ease. It comes to a man, for this world at least, a farewell to his woes and griefs; but there shall be no ease, no rest, no pause in the destination of impenitent souls. “Depart, you cursed,” shall always ring along the endless aisles of eternity. The thunderbolt of that tremendous word shall follow the sinner in his perpetual flight from the presence of God; from its dire influence he shall never be able to escape—no, never! A million years shall make not so much difference to the duration of his agony as a cup of water taken from the sea would to the volume of the ocean. No, when millions of years multiplied a million times shall have rolled their fiery orbits over his poor tormented head, he shall be no nearer to the end than he was at first. Talk of *death!* I might even paint him as an angel when once I think of the terrors of the wrath to come. Soon comes, soon gone, is death. That sharp scythe gives but one cut, and down falls the flower, and withers in the heat of the sun; but Eternity, Eternity, Eternity, who shall measure its wounds, who shall fathom the depths of the gashes? When Eternity wields the whip, how dreadfully will it fall! When Eternity grasps the sword, how deep shall be the wounds, how terrible its killing!—

*“To linger in eternal pain,
Yet death forever fly.”*

You are afraid of death, sinner; you are afraid of death; but were you wise, you would be ten thousand times ten thousand times more afraid of the coming and the judgment of the Son of man!

In point of loss there is no comparison. When the sinner dies it is not, tasting of death, in its true sense, for what does he lose? He loses wife, and children, and friends; he loses all his dainty bits and his sweet draughts. Where now are his violin and his flute? Where now the merry dance and the joyful company? For him no more the pleasant landscape nor gliding stream. For him no more light of the sun by day, or light of moon and stars by night. He has lost at one stroke every comfort and every hope. But then the loss, as far as death is concerned, is but a loss of earthly things, the loss of temporal and temporary comforts, and he might put up with that. It is wretched enough to lose these, but let your imagination follow me, faint as is my power to describe the everlasting and infinite loss of the man who is found impenitent at the last great Judgment Day. What does he lose then? The harps of heaven, and the songs thereof; the joys of God's presence, and the light thereof; the jasper sea, and the gates of pearl. He has lost peace and immortality, and the crown of life; no, he has lost all hope—and when a man has lost that, what remains for him? His spirit sinks with a terrible depression, more frightful than a maniac ever knew in his wildest moods of grief. His soul sinks, never to recover itself into the depths of dark despair, where not a ray of hope can ever reach him. Lost to God; lost to heaven; lost to time; lost to the preaching of the gospel; lost to the invitation of mercy; lost to the prayers of the gracious; lost to the Mercy Seat; lost to the blood of sprinkling; lost to all hope of every sort—lost, lost, forever! Compared with this loss the losses of death are nothing, and well might the Savior say that lost spirits shall not, “Taste of death” until He shall come, and they shall receive their sentence!

Neither does death bear any comparison with the last judgment *in point of terror*. I do not like to paint the terrors of the deathbed of unrepentant men. Some, you know, glide gently into their graves. It is, in fact, the mark of the wicked that they have no bands in their death—but their strength is firm; they are not troubled like other men are. Like the sheep they are laid in the grave. A peaceful death is no sign of divine grace. Some of the worst of men have died with a smile upon their countenance to have it changed for one *eternal* weeping. But there are more men of other exquisite sensibility, instructed men, who cannot die like brutes, and they have alarms and fears and terrors when they are on their deathbeds. Many an atheist has cried to God under dying pangs, and many an Infidel who up to then could brag and speak high things against God, has found his cheek turn pale and his throat grow hoarse when he has come there. Like the mariner, the boldest man in that great storm reels to and fro, and staggers like a drunken man, and is at his wits' end; for he finds that it is no child's play to die. I try sometimes to picture that hour, when we shall perhaps be propped up in bed, or lying down with pillows round about us, and diligently watched; and as they hush their footsteps and gaze anxiously on, there is a whisper that the solemn time has come, and then there is a grappling of the strong man with the stronger than he. Oh, what must it be to die without a Savior—to die in the dark without a light except the lurid glare of the wrath to come! Horrors there are, indeed, around the deathbed of the wicked, but these are hardly anything compared with the terrors of the day of judgment! When the sinner wakes from his bed of dust, the first thing he will see will be the great white throne and the Judge seated upon it—the first sound that will greet his ears will be the trumpet sounding—

***“Come to judgment, come to judgment,
Come to judgment, sinner, come!”***

He will look up and there will be the Son of man on His judgment throne—the King's officers arranged on either side—the saints at His right hand, and angels round about Him; then the books will be opened. What creeping horror will come upon the flesh of the wicked man! He knows his turn will arrive in a moment; he stands expecting it; fear takes hold upon him while the eyes of the Judge look him through and through, and he cries to the rocks to hide him, and the mountains to fall upon him! Happy would he be now to find a friendly shelter in the grave, but the grave has burst its doors, and can never be closed upon him again. He would even be glad to rush back to his former state in hell, but he cannot! The judgment has come, the court is set—again the trumpet rings—

***“Come to judgment, come to judgment,
Come to judgment, come away!”***

And then the book is opened, and the dread sentence is pronounced; and, to use the words of Scripture, “Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” The man never knew what death was before. The

first death was but a flea-bite—this is death indeed. The first death, he might have looked back upon as a dream, compared with this tasting of death, now that the Lord has come!

From what we can glean darkly from hints of Scripture, *the pains of death* are not at all comparable to the pains of the judgment at the second advent. Who will speak in a depreciating manner of the pains of death? If we should attempt to do so, we know that our hearts would contradict us. In the shades of night, when deep sleep falls upon men, you sometimes suddenly awake. You are alarmed. The terror by night has come upon you. You expect—you hardly know what it is, but you are half afraid that you are about to die. You know how the cold sweat comes upon the brow. You may have a good hope through grace, but the very thought of death brings a peculiar pang. Or when death has really come in view, some of us have marked with terrible grief, the sufferings of our dearest friends. We have heard the eye-strings break; we have seen the face all pale, and the cheeks all hollow and sunken. We have sometimes seen how every nerve has become a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, and how every vein has been a canal of grief. We have marked the pains, and moans, and groans, and dying strife, that frightens the soul away. These, however, are common to man. Not so the pangs which are to be inflicted both on body and soul at the coming of the Son of God; they are such that I cast a veil over them, fearful of the very thought. Let the Master's words suffice—"Fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell; yes, I say unto you, fear Him." Then the body in all the parts shall suffer; the members which were once instruments of unrighteousness shall now be instruments of suffering. And the mind, the major sinner, shall be also the greater sufferer. The memory, the judgment, the understanding, the will, the imagination, and every power and passion of the soul will become a deep lake of anguish. But I spare you these things; oh, spare yourselves! God alone knows with what pain I have talked about these horrors. Were I not to speak of them, then I must give my account at the day of judgment as a faithless servant. Were it not that I must speak of them in mercy to your souls, poor sinners, I would gladly forget them altogether, seeing that my own soul has a hope in Him who saves from the wrath to come. But as long as you will not have mercy upon yourselves, we must lay this axe at your root; as long as you will make a mockery of sin, and set at nothing the terrors of the world to come, we must warn you of hell. If it is hard to talk of these things, what must it be to *endure* them? If a dream makes you quiver from head to foot, what must it be to really endure, and in person, the wrath to come? O souls, were I to speak as I ought, my knees would knock together with trembling! Were you to feel as you should, there would not be an unconverted man among you who would not cry, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" I do beseech you to remember that death, with all its pangs, is but a drop in a bucket compared with the deep, mysterious, fathomless, shoreless sea of grief you must endure forever at the coming of the Lord Jesus unless you repent!

Death makes great discoveries. The man thought himself wise, but death draws the curtain, and he sees written up in large letters—"You fool!" He said he was prudent, for he hoarded up his gold and silver, and kept the wages of the laborer; but now, he finds that he has made a bad bargain while the question is propounded to him—"What does it profit you, to have gained the world, and to have lost your soul?" Death is a great revealer of secrets. Many men are not believers at all until they die; but death comes and makes short work with their skepticism. It gives but one blow upon the head of doubt, and all is done; the man believes then, only he believes too late! Death gives to the sinner the discovery that there is a God—an angry God—and punishment is wrapped up in the wrath to come. But how much greater the discoveries that await the day of judgment! What will the sinner see then? He will see the man who was crucified sitting upon His throne; he will hear how Satan has been defeated in all his craftiest undertakings. Read from those mysterious books, the secrets of all hearts shall then be revealed. Then men shall understand how the Lord reigned supremely even when Satan roared most loudly—how the mischief and the folly of man did but, after all, bring forth the great purposes of God. All this shall be in the books, and the sinner shall stand there defeated, terribly defeated, beaten at every point—baffled, foiled, thwarted in every act and every purpose by which he thought to do well for himself. Yes, and utterly confused in all the hostility and all the negligence of his heart towards the living and true God who would and who did rule over him. Too late he will discover the preciousness of the blood he despised—the value of the Savior he rejected—the glory of the heaven which he lost, and the terror of the hell to which he is sentenced! How wise, how dreadfully wise will he be, when fully aware of his

terrible and eternal destruction! Thus sinners shall not taste of death in the real meaning of the term until the Lord shall come.

II. Still further; IN THE STATE OF SEPARATE SPIRITS THEY HAVE NOT FULLY TASTED OF DEATH, NOR WILL THEY DO SO UNTIL CHRIST COMES.

The moment that a man dies, his spirit goes before God. If without Christ that spirit then begins to feel the anger and the wrath of God. It is as when a man is taken before a magistrate. He is known to be guilty, and therefore he is remanded and put in prison till his trial shall come. Such is the state of souls apart from the body—they are spirits in prison, waiting for the time of their trial. There is not, in the sense in which the Romanist teaches it, any purgatory; yet there is a place of waiting for lost spirits which is in Scripture called, “Hell,” because it is one room in that awful prison in which must dwell forever spirits that die finally impenitent and without faith in Christ. But those of our departed countrymen and fellow citizens of earth, who die without Christ, have not yet fully tasted of death, nor can they until the advent of the Lord.

Just consider why not. *Their bodies* do not suffer. The bodies of the wicked are still the prey of the worm; still the atoms are the sport of the winds, and are traversing their boundless cycles, and must do so until they are gathered up into the body again, at the trumpet of the archangel—at the voice of God.

The ungodly know that their present state is to have an end at the judgment, but after the judgment their state will have no end; it is then to go on, and on, and on, forever and forever, unchanged and unchangeable. Now there may be half a hope, an anticipation of some change, for change brings some relief; but to the finally damned, upon whom the sentence has been pronounced, there is no hope even of a change. Forever and forever shall there be the same ceaseless wheel of misery!

The ungodly, too, in their present state, have not as yet been put to the shame of a public sentence. They have, as it were, merely been cast into prison, the facts being too clear to admit of any doubt as to the sentence, and they are their own tormentors, vexing and paining themselves with the fear of what is yet to come. They have never yet heard that dreadful sentence—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

I was struck, while studying this subject, to find how little is said about the pains of the lost while they are merely souls, and how much is said concerning them when the Lord comes. You have that one parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and there it speaks of the soul being already tormented in the flame; but if you turn to the 13th chapter of Matthew, and read the parable of the tares, you will find it is at the *end* of the world that the tares are to be cast into the fire. Then comes the parable of the dragnet, it is when the dispensation comes to an end that the net is to be dragged to shore, and then the good are to be put in vessels and the bad cast away. And then the Lord says, “The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” That memorable description in Matthew of those of whom He said, “I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink,” is described as happening when the “Son of man shall come in His glory, and all His holy angels with Him.” The apostle Paul, too, tells us plainly in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, that the wicked are to be destroyed at His coming by the brightness of His power. The recompense of the ungodly, like the reward of the righteous, is anticipated now—but the full reward of the righteous is to be at His coming. They are to reign with Christ; their fullness of bliss is to be given them, when the King Himself in His glory shall sit upon His throne. So, too, the wicked have the beginning of their heritage at death, but the dread fullness of it is to be hereafter.

At the present moment, death and hell are not yet cast into the lake of fire. Death is still abroad in the world slaying men; hell is yet loose; Satan is not yet chained, but still goes about the “dry places, seeking rest, and finding none.” At the Last Day, at the coming of Christ, “Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire.” We do not understand the symbol; but if it means anything, one would think it must mean this, that at that day the scattered powers of evil, which are to be the tormentors of the wicked, but which have up to now been wandering up and down throughout the world, shall all be collected together, and then, indeed, shall it be that the wicked shall begin to “taste of death,” as they have never tasted of it before!

My soul is bowed down with terror while I speak these words to you. I scarcely know how to find suitable words to express the weight of thought which is upon me. My dear hearers, instead of speculat-

ing upon these matters, let us try to shun the wrath to come; and what can help us to do that better than to weigh the warning words of a dear and loving Savior, when He tells us that at His coming such a gloom shall pass upon impenitent souls, that compared with it, even death itself shall be as nothing? Christians, by the faith of their risen Lord, swallow death in victory; but if you die impenitent, you swallow death in ignorance. You do not feel its bitterness now. But, oh, that bitter pill has yet to work its way, and that fierce draught has yet to be drained even to the dregs, unless you repent!

And now, does not the meditation of these terrors prompt A QUESTION? Jesus said—“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom.” *Are there any, standing or sitting here, who shall not taste of death till then?*

In that little group addressed by the Savior stood Judas; he had been trusted by His Master, and he was an apostle, but after all he was a thief and a hypocrite. He, the son of perdition, will not taste of death till Christ should come in His kingdom. Is there a Judas here? I look into your faces, and many of you are members of this church, and others of you, I doubt not, are members of other Christian churches, but are you sure that you have made sound work of it? Is your religion genuine? Do you wear a mask, or are you an honest man? O sirs, try your own hearts, and since you may fail in the trial, ask the Lord to search you; for as the Lord my God lives, unless you thus search yourselves and find that you are in the right, you may come presumptuously to sit at the Lord’s table. Though with a name to live, you may be among His people here, but you will have to taste of death when the Lord comes. You may deceive *us*, but you cannot deceive *Him!* The preacher reflects that he himself may be mistaken, that he himself may be self-deceived. If it is so, may the Lord, open my eyes to know the worst of my own state. Will you put up this prayer for yourselves, professors? Do not be too bold, you who say you are Christ’s; never be satisfied till you are quite sure of it; and the best way to be sure is to go again just as you went at first, and lay hold on eternal life through the power of the blessed Spirit, and not by any strength of your own.

No doubt, however, there stood in that little throng around the Savior some who were careless sinners. He knew that they had been so during the whole of His teaching, and that they would be so still, and therefore, they would taste of death at His coming. Are there not some careless persons come in here tonight? I mean you who never think about religion, who generally look upon Sunday as a day of pleasure, or who loll about in your shirtsleeves nearly all the day; you who look upon the very name of religion as a bugaboo to frighten children with; who mock God’s servants, and despise the very thought of earnestly seeking after the Most High. Oh, will you, will you be among the number of those who taste of death when the Son of man shall come in His kingdom? Oh, must I ring your death knell tonight? Must my warning voice be lost upon you? I beseech you to remember that you must either *turn or burn!* I beseech you to remember this—“Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” By the wounds of Jesus, sinner, stop and think! If God’s dear Son was slain for human sin, how terrible must that sin be; and if Jesus died, how base are you if you are disobedient to the doctrine of faith! I pray you, if you think of your body, give some thought to your soul! “Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And labor for that which satisfies not?” Harken diligently unto Jehovah’s words, and eat of that which is good, real, and substantial food. Come to Jesus, and your soul shall live!

And there are some here of another class—Bethsaida sinners, Capernaum sinners. I mean some of you who constantly occupy these pews, and stand in yonder area, and sit in yonder gallery, Sunday after Sunday. The same eyes look down on me, week after week; the same faces salute me often with a smile when Sunday comes, and I pass you journeying to this the tabernacle of your worship, and yet how many of you are still without God, and without Christ? Have I been unfaithful to you? If I have, forgive me, and pray to God both for me and for yourselves that we may mend our ways. But if I have warned you of the wrath to come, why will you choose to walk in the path which leads to it? If I have preached to you Christ Jesus, how is it that His charms move you not, and that the story of His great love does not bring you to repentance? O that the Spirit of God would come and deal with you, for I cannot! My hammer breaks not your flinty hearts, but God’s arm can do it, and O may He turn you yet. Of all sinners over whom a minister ought to weep, you are the worst; for while the careless perish you perish doubly. You know your Master’s will, and yet you do it not. You see heaven’s gate set open, and yet you will not enter. Your vicious free will ruins you; your base and wicked love of self and sin destroys

you. “You will not come unto Me that you might have life,” said Christ. You are so vile that you will not turn, even though Jesus should woo you. I pray you, let the menace of judgment to come, contained in my text, stir you now, if you have never been stirred before. May God have pity on you, even if you will have no pity upon yourselves.

Perhaps among that company there were some who held the truth of God, but who held it in licentiousness—and there may be such here now present. You believe in the doctrine of election, so do I; but then you make it a cloak for your sin. You hold the doctrine of the perseverance of the Saints, but you still persevere in your iniquity. Oh, there is no way of perishing that I know of worse than perishing by making the doctrines of grace an excuse for one’s sins! The apostle has well said of such that their damnation is just—it is just to any man, but to a seven-fold degree is it just to such as you are. I would not have you forget the doctrine, nor neglect it, nor despise it, but I do beseech you, do not prostitute it; do not turn it to the vile purposes of making it pander to your own carnal ease. Remember, you have no evidence of election except you are holy, and you have no right to expect you will be saved at the last unless you are saved now. *A present faith in a present Savior is the test.* O, that my Master would bring some of you to trust Him tonight. The plan of salvation is simple. Trust Christ, and you are saved; rely upon Him and you shall live. This faith is the gift of God. But remember, that though God gives it, He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. God does not believe for you; the Holy Spirit does not believe for you—you must believe, or else you will be lost; and it is quite consistent with the fact that it is the *gift of God*, to say that it is also the *act of man*. You must, poor soul, be led to trust the Savior, or into heaven you can never enter. Is there one here who says, “I desire to find the Savior tonight”? Go not to your bed until you have sought Him, and seek Him with sighs and with tears.

I think this is a night of divine grace. I have preached the law and the terrors of the Lord to you, but it will be a night of grace to the souls of some of you. My Master does but kill you that He may make you alive; He does but wound you that He may make you whole. I feel a sort of inward whisper in my heart that there are some of you who even now have begun your flight from the wrath to come. Where do you flee? Fly to Jesus! Hurry, sinner, hurry! I trust you will find Him before you retire to your beds, or if you lie tossing there in doubt and fear, then may He manifest Himself to you before the morning light. I think I would freely give my eyes if you might but see Christ, and that I would willingly give my hands if you might but lay hold on Him. Do, I beseech you, put not from you this warning, but let it have its proper work upon you and lead you to repentance. May God save you, and may the prayer we have already offered this evening be answered, that the company of you may be found among His elect at His right hand. To that end let us pray.

Our Father, save us with Your great salvation. We will say unto God, do not condemn us; deliver us from going down to the pit of hell, for You have found the ransom; may we not be among the company that shall taste of death when the Son of man shall come. Hear us, Jesus, through Your blood. God be merciful to us sinners. Amen.

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