



Free Grace Broadcaster

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Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

“For when thy
judgments are in
the earth, the
inhabitants of the
world will learn
righteousness”

-Isaiah 26:9

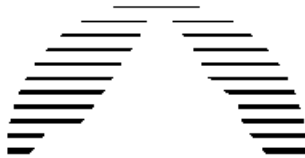
God's Warnings

When a Nation is Under Divine Correction



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Approaching Darkness

by Ralph Erskine

“Give glory to the Lord your God, before He cause darkness”

—Jeremiah 13:16.

These words are part of a weeping prophecy wherein the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, from the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, of which we read in the preceding part of the chapter; and now he comes to give them good and seasonable counsel, (vs 15) “Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.” God has passed His word, and the decree is gone forth: and then he calls them to repent, and give glory to God, before He cause darkness.

What hinders people’s hearing when God speaks either by word or rod? What but pride? Be not proud; do not think yourself too good to be taught. Be not scornful, be not willful, be not secure when God threatens; be not impatient when God strikes; for pride is at the bottom of both.

It is the duty of a sinful people to give glory to God before He cause darkness: to repent, before He bring judgments upon them.

O Sirs, be exhorted then to “Give glory to God, before He cause darkness.” For motives to persuade you hereto, consider:

1. That the glory of God has been much darkened by our sins, and the sins of this generation; darkened to such a degree as may justly provoke Him to cause darkness. How has He been dishonored by our forefathers and us? How is He dishonored by the gross infidelity, error, ignorance, and irreligion of the day! by the great contempt and neglect of precious Christ and His glorious gospel! the woeful barrenness and unfruitfulness of ordinances! indifference and lukewarmness in the matters of God! lamentable backsliding and defection from His ways and His truth! hypocrisy, carnality, and earthly-mindedness! all seeking NOT the things of Christ Jesus, but their own things! gross immorality, cursing, swearing, whoredom, drunkenness, profanation of God’s name and Sabbath! How is He dishonored by our sinning against so much, and so many mercies, and warnings!

2. Consider how the darkness of sin in dishonoring God, is attended with the darkness of judgment, portending yet greater darkness. How many shadows of the evening are stretched over us? The shadow of spiritual judgments and

plagues, as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, stupidity, security, and deadness; and the giving up of men to the lusts of their own hearts, in the righteous judgment of God! The shadow of desertion; the Lord visibly withdrawing His gracious presence from His ordinances, and the assemblies of His servants and people! The shadow of dissensions and divisions among ministers and people: God dividing us in His anger! The visible glory of the church, her doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, sadly corrupted with carnal policy, framing the tabernacle of God otherwise than according to the pattern seen in the mount! The invisible glory is much withdrawn, that few tokens appear of God's powerful presence in the sanctuary, and a great famine of spiritual influence! What a shadow of darkness is the reduction of the remnant! when the good men perish, and few faithful pastors and sound professors are left! "Help, Lord," says the psalmist, "for the godly man ceaseth"; few to bear witness for God.

3. Consider how much it concerns us to give glory to God: ***glorifying of God is the great end of our creation and being***: "The Lord made all things for Himself"; and if all things, then man especially, the master-piece of the visible creation. It is for this end God has given us rational souls and noble faculties, and the means of grace; and all lest this end be not obtained. The glorifying of God is the chief end of all His works, viz. creation, providence, and redemption. All the other creatures, sun, moon, and stars, yea, and brute beasts, they all glorify God according to their nature and capacities; and, what are we doing? We depend upon Him absolutely for life and breath and being, every moment: "In Him we live, move, and have our being": and is it not highly reasonable that we live to Him? The glory of God is most excellent; His glory is above heaven and earth. His glory surpasses the thoughts of men and angels. It is more worth than heaven; more worth than the salvation of all men. His glory is dear to Him. He has given many excellent gifts to His children, but His glory will He not give to another. And if His glory be so dear to Him, should it not be dear to us? And ought we not to promote it? Our NOT glorifying God will come to a sad account, for the sum of the grand account we are to be called to is this, What revenue of glory have you brought in to Me? And, if God have no glory *by* us, He will have glory *upon* us. If you glorify Him not actively, you shall glorify Him passively; and, alas! how sad will their case be, who shall serve for no other end, but to set forth the glory of His vindictive justice to all eternity! In a word, it will be our unspeakable advantage to glorify Him, for we shall be glorified by Him: "They that honor Me, I will honor."

4. Consider whom it concerns to glorify God; put it not off from you. Does it not concern magistrates to give glory to Him by enacting good laws and executing them faithfully? Does it not concern ministers and church-officers to give glory to God by asserting and maintaining the true doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of God's house; to buy truth and not to sell it, though it should cost us our life, as it has done many worthy ministers and martyrs. Does it not concern people in their private stations, to give glory to God, and

advance the kingdom of Christ Jesus, and to contribute their mite, though they were never so poor and mean, for the building of the tabernacle? As, when it was reared in the wilderness, some that were able gave gold, silver, precious stones, scarlet, and fine linen; some that were poorer and unable to give great things, they gave badgers' skins and goats' hair: so according to your ability, you are to give glory to God, and to pray for the coming of His kingdom, when you can do no more.

5. Consider that darkness is threatened. There are signs of darkness and of judgment a-coming.

a. Abounding of all manner of sin. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and

Give Him glory by living by faith upon the Son of God; you cannot glorify God, if you do not glorify the Son, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23).

blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea the fishes of the sea shall also be taken away" (Hosea 4:1-3).

b. These aggravated so much, being against light, love, and mercy; so that the patience of God is abused, (Rom 2:4,5) "Despisest thou the riches of His forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath?"

c. When God's patience is not only abused, but affronted, and ridiculed and laughed at, (2 Peter 3:3) "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night."

d. When the gospel is despised, and Christ is rejected by the generality, it bodes darkness, (Matt 21:42,43) "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing and is wonderful in our eyes. Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from

you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." O then, "Give glory to God before He cause darkness."

Give Him glory by living by faith upon the Son of God; you cannot glorify God, if you do not glorify the Son, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). O then, Sirs, give Christ the glory of His name and offices.

Give Christ the glory of His name, by making His name your strong tower. *Give Him the glory of His name Jesus*, by looking to Him for salvation. *Give Him the glory of His name Christ*, the Anointed, by looking to Him for the Spirit, the anointing. *Give Him the glory of His name, The Sun of righteousness*, by praying Him to arise on you with healing in His wings. *Give Him the glory of His name, The Resurrection and the Life*, by looking to Him for life to your dead soul.

Give Him the glory of all His offices. A man in his office reckons it his honor to be employed, much employed. O then, Sirs, *give Christ the glory of His prophetic office* by employing Him to teach you, and to dispel the darkness of your mind. *Give Him glory as a Priest*, by employing Him to pardon you, and wash you in His blood. *Give Him glory as a King*, by employing Him to subdue all your iniquities, mortify all your corruptions, and destroy all your spiritual enemies. *Give Him glory as a Physician*, by employing Him to heal all your diseases. *Give Him glory as a Captain*, by employing Him to fight all your battles. *Give Him glory as a Treasurer*, by employing Him to supply all your wants out of His fullness. *Give Him glory as an Agent*, by employing Him to do all your works for you and in you, saying with the Psalmist, "Do Thou for me, for Thy name's sake"; and again, (Psa 57:2) "I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me." If you cannot believe, nor employ Him, O will you *give Him glory as the Author of faith*, by pleading, that He may come and take employment, and work faith in you. *Give Him the glory of His drawing grace*, saying, "Lord, draw me, and I will run; turn me, and I will be turned." Remember you are called to *give Him glory, before He cause darkness*. Darkness will come whether you will or not, the darkness of distress, the darkness of a sick-bed or a death-bed, the darkness of death itself, the darkness of a judgment-day. If you would have darkness to be light before you, O Sirs, give Him glory before He cause darkness. O seek to be regenerated, for you cannot please God while you are in the flesh: "Who can gather grapes of thorns?" Seek acquaintance with Christ and union to Him; you cannot glorify God but in Christ. Seek to have the Word hid in your heart, and particularly to be well acquainted with the gospel covenant: plead the promises thereof; "For the promises are Yea and Amen, in Christ, to the glory of God" (2 Cor 1:20). How sweet will it be in a dying hour, if you could say, "Father, I have glorified Thee on earth; glorify Thou me with Thyself," and with the glory Thou hast prepared for me from all eternity.

An Alarm To A Careless World



by William Romaine

“Prepare to meet thy God.” (Amos 4:2)

The church calls upon us, by the present solemnity, to bring into our most serious thoughts, the advent of our blessed Lord in the flesh, when he came to visit us in great humility. He appeared upon earth in the character of a meek, suffering, dying Saviour. But there is another advent not far off, when all flesh shall see him in the majesty of the Godhead. His first advent was in the lowest humiliation, his second advent will be in the highest exaltation. And we wait for that great day, when he will come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, hoping to be found, when he comes, watching and praying, that we may rise with him to the life immortal.

We do not pretend to know the precise time of his coming: for of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, but the judge himself has given us some signs and marks, by which we might be as certain, that he is nigh and standeth before the door, as that summer is nigh, when the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs. And whenever we see these scripture signs and marks, it is our office and duty, as faithful watchmen, to give you notice, that you may be ready, lest your Lord should come in a day, when ye look not for him, and in an hour that ye are not aware of, and should cut you asunder, and appoint you your portion with the hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. On this account, the subject appointed by the church for this day, falls in seasonably with these remarkable providences, which have been lately manifested in this, and other countries. And I have therefore chosen a scripture proper to awaken your attention to the second advent of Christ. It is exceedingly awful and solemn. The very reading of it must make a deep impression upon every serious mind. “Prepare to meet thy God,” the eternal and almighty God, who is coming in all his glory to judgment, and if the righteous scarcely be saved in that great day, where shall the wicked and infidel appear? They will then have no excuse for their sins—self-condemned they will stand with guilt and horror before his tribunal, to hear their sentence of condemnation past, which is never, never to be reversed. So that unless an eternity of pain and misery be the best thing we can work out in our short life, we should now think of making some provision for an eternity of happiness. **We should now be preparing to meet our God.** As we must meet him

soon, it should be our whole business to get ready and to be prepared, that whenever he comes, we may enter in with him into the joy of our Lord. This is the instruction which I shall draw from the text, "Prepare to meet thy God."

First, We here learn that God our Saviour, who once came in great humility to visit us, is now preparing to meet us in judgment. And

Secondly, We should therefore be prepared to meet him, And,

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to stir you up to the true gospel preparation, that whenever our Saviour comes, you may lift up your heads with joy, knowing that your redemption draweth nigh. And

May the ever blessed Spirit, from whom the preparation must come, assist us with his grace, that our meditation first upon our Saviour's preparing to meet us in judgment, may be the means of preparing us to meet him. "Prepare to meet thy God." The suffering Jesus was united to the eternal God, and so united, that as the reasonable soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ. At his first coming he visited us in great humility, and the Godhead was veiled under a covering of flesh, but at his second coming, all flesh shall see that Jesus is God indeed. Every eye shall then behold the divine glory of the suffering Saviour, and they who once pierced him at his bitter passion, or since with their horrid blasphemies, shall then confess to their everlasting shame, that he is the almighty God of heaven and earth. On this account, we should be prepared to meet him. At the time appointed he came to suffer for the sins of the world, and at the time appointed he will come to Judgment. His second advent is as certain as his first. It was foretold in the Old Testament, and promised in the New, and the scriptures cannot be broken. God had revealed it in the clearest manner to the patriarchs, so that Enoch, the 7th from Adam, prophesied of it, saying—"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." The Father of the faithful knew that he was to come to execute judgment upon all, and speaks with confidence, "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" And Job had the same holy confidence, when he made his supplication to his judge, and the solemnity of his coming to judgment, Solomon being a prophet, foresaw and has plainly described it in these words—"God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." And the judge himself has given us a very circumstantial description in three of the evangelists, of the process of the great day, and has called upon us again and again, to be always ready and prepared for it. His apostles argue from the certainty of our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, and frequently make use of these terrors of the Lord to persuade men to faith and repentance. And there is a very remarkable circumstance, which gives great weight to these authorities; when our Lord is describing the general judgment, he confirms his

account with a promise, that he would come to judge the Jewish nation, before that generation should pass away. Accordingly he came; and there has not a tittle failed of what he foretold concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, or concerning the dispersion of the Jews over the face of the earth. It is then a matter of fact, that he has already acted as judge, and he will come to complete his office. It is not more certain that the sun will rise tomorrow, than that he who judged the Jewish nation, will soon come to judge the whole earth. His second advent is fixed and determined to the fulness of time, as well as the first was. He will come in his glorious majesty at the last day. And in the mean time, he comes with many signal strokes of vengeance to awaken a careless sleepy world. ***He visits the inhabitants of the earth with his judgments, that they may learn righteousness, and he has lately visited us with some of his heaviest judgments, and I hope many of you have been stirred up by them to prepare to meet your God.*** And it is high time we should be all prepared: for the marks and signs of his second advent are fulfilling daily. His coming cannot be far off. The day, indeed, and the hour, are not known, but if you will compare the uncommon events, which our Lord says were to be the fore-runners of his coming to judgment, with what has lately happened in the world, you must conclude, that the time is at hand. He foretells us, that there should then be wars, and rumours of wars and are there not wars, and rumours of more wars? There were to be pestilences, and we have had the pestilence for more than ten years in this kingdom. There were to be great earthquakes in divers places, and there have been earthquakes lately in many parts of the world, and in a far greater number than they ever were in any other age. And these earthquakes were to be attended with fearful sights; and did not many fearful sights in the element attend the two last earthquakes we had in this city? But the worst sign of all is the present decay of religion among us; this renders the rest more terrible, and makes it to be feared, that as we are ripe for destruction, so we may soon expect to have our candlestick removed: “for when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?” says Christ. There will be so little, that he shall scarce find any. ***The true saving faith will be diminished from among the children of men! and it has for some time been vanished out of the popish countries, and the reformed churches have lately fallen sadly from the faith, and have preserved very little more of Christianity than the mere name: and in our own church we have kept up the form of godliness, but we are so far from having the power, that we deny any person can have it, and the few, who say they have it, are treated as madmen and enthusiasts.*** These are some of the infallible signs of our Lord’s second advent. From them we are assured that it is not a great distance. When we behold the fig-tree, and all the trees shooting forth, then we know that summer is near; and so likewise, when we see these things come to pass, we know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. It will not be long before the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, and because we are assured that he will come soon, and yet know not the day nor the hour, we should therefore be always waiting with

watchfulness and prayer. Our Lord required us to be always in this devout frame of mind, when he closed the volume of revelation with these words, “surely I come quickly”—surely, says the almighty judge, I come quickly to judgment—to which the faithful reply, “Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus.” Happy would it be for us all, if we were so well prepared to meet our God, that when we see the signs of his coming speedily, and hear him promise, surely I come quickly, then we might give our “Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus.” And are you then, my brethren, not only ready, but also praying for his coming? Do you wait for it with faith, and are you looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ? If you are in this happy state, then you can cry out with joy, Lord we believe the promises, and we see the signs of thy speedy coming, even so, come Lord Jesus.

Christ will soon come to judgment, you ought therefore to be prepared to meet your God. He will come in all the glory of the Godhead, attended with the

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multitude of the heavenly host, and before him shall be gathered all nations. Every one of us must appear before his tribunal. We must meet the almighty God in judgment, when he cometh to take vengeance of his adversaries: and ought we not to be prepared for this awful meeting? We cannot resist the Almighty—we cannot fly from his presence—we cannot conceal one secret thought from him, and is it not then our interest to make the almighty judge our friend? For what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand; or else while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace. ***When the King of kings cometh against you, armed with his omnipotence, you can have no hopes of safety, but in desiring conditions of peace. Your only way is to submit, and to try to make him your friend.*** Then you will be safe. So soon as you have secured the friendship of the sovereign judge, and are under the protection of his almighty power, then you are prepared to meet him in judgment; and therefore since this preparation is the principal business of life, we ought to labour to secure his friendship, as the means of it; And how then shall we make him our friend? Sin made him our enemy, and it is the guilt of sin in the conscience, which makes his coming to judgment terrible, and will make the eternal punishment of sin terrible indeed. Take away sin, and God is reconciled. Let the soul be cleansed from the pollution, and the conscience purged

from the guilt of sin, and there will no fear remain of condemnation. The judge will then be the Saviour, and we shall have no dread of his judgment, having already received the blessings of his salvation.

The gospel has proposed a plain method of bringing the mind into this happy state and it is generally effected in the following manner. While the sinner lies secure in sin, he cannot be prepared to meet his God. He must be awakened. He must be deeply convinced of his guilt and danger, and under the sense of them, he must be humbled to the very dust. These are the first steps towards his preparation. The Holy Spirit has now opened his eyes, and he sees his lost ruined condition. He beholds the God of nature at enmity with him, and all the power in nature combined to destroy him, and if he be ever saved, it must be all free mercy: for in himself he is miserable and helpless, and therefore not daring to look up unto heaven, he smites upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Under these convictions he labours, which though painful for a time, yet being the door and entrance into salvation, are therefore a blessing, and the greater blessing, as they are the general way, by which God brings sinners unto himself: for the deeper and more distressing these convictions of sin are, the greater necessity will the sinner find of mercy, and the more earnestly will he seek, until he obtain it. And he has the infallible promise of God to encourage his seeking, "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." In God's own good time he begins to find his interest in this promise: he has faith given him to apply it to himself: he sees his interest in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, giving him all joy and peace in believing. And the sense of this pardoning love casteth out fear: for now as his faith grows, so does he with comfort know that Jesus Christ is his Saviour and his God: he finds daily proof of it in the change of his life and conversation, not walking now by sight, but by faith. His will is now become renewed, and he loves and delights to do the will of God in the inward man. He has grace and strength given him to run the way of his commandments, now his heart is set at liberty. Thus walking with God, his reconciled Father in Jesus, and trusting to his grace and strength, he will be found watching and praying, whenever his Lord comes, and will therefore be always ready and prepared to go forth to meet him.

In this method the Holy Spirit prepares us to meet our God; he first convinces us of our sinful state, in which we are at enmity with God and are not prepared to meet him; and then he convinces us of our reconciliation with him, of which we have the witness of the word, together with the witness of the Spirit, bearing his testimony with our spirits, that we are the children of God, and we have the outward witness of our lives and conversations, which we are enabled by faith, to direct according to the rule of God's commandments. And then we need not doubt of our interest in the almighty judge: for he has washed us from our sins in his blood, and has clothed us with his all-perfect righteousness, and having thus saved us from our sins, we are thereby saved from the fear

of judgment. And what have we then to fear? Our Saviour is the judge—his omnipotence is our protection—he comes in all his glory to take us up with him into his heaven, and to make us partakers of his everlasting joys. Blessed, and for ever blessed are they who are thus prepared to meet their God.

And are you, then, my brethren, prepared in this manner? Have you secured the friendship of the judge, so that whenever he comes you are ready to meet him? An eternity of happiness or misery depends on your preparation, and therefore I hope the vast importance of the subject will command your attention!

And now to apply what has been said as a motive to stir you up to be always prepared to meet your God. You have heard the character of the judge. He is the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity—the Lord of Hosts is his name. He is the almighty creator of all things visible and invisible—when he spake the word they were made—He commanded and they stood fast—His providence ruleth over them all, and he upholdeth them by the word of his power. And this eternal, infinite and almighty God hath appointed a day, wherein he will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Such is the glorious majesty of the judge! And are you prepared to meet him? Have you no fear nor dread in your minds, if he should come this night? If you should this moment hear the loud trump of God calling the world to judgment, and should see the Lord of heaven and earth coming with thousand and ten thousands of angels and saints, how would it affect you? Consider, whether you could stand the shock? Look into your hearts, and see if you be this moment in the very state, in which you would wish to appear before Christ's tribunal. Put the question to yourselves, suppose the judge was to come this hour, am I prepared to meet my God? If you are prepared, you are happy. But if not, you are and will be miserable, unless you can be persuaded to seek an interest in the judge. And this I will attempt in the help of God, under two or three short remarks.

First, To them who do not believe the doctrine. These are the deists and profess infidels, the open enemies of Jehovah and his Christ, who having denied him to be God, think they are out of the reach of his judgment. I hope there are not many of them here present. Some perhaps there may be; for I know they are terribly affrighted at the late earthquakes, and their leaders have no way to quiet their consciences, but to assure them that they are mere natural effects, produced by natural causes; as if it were less terrible to be destroyed by a natural cause, than to be destroyed by the God of nature. Poor little philosophers! in what a despicable light do they appear, who are forced to exclude a providence, in order to get rid of their fear? And so for safety, they take shelter in atheism; and let them talk ever so much of one supreme being, yet they are rank atheists; for their one supreme being is one supreme nothing. God has been pleased to reveal his essence and personality to us, and his revealed account of himself they

deny and consequently whatever they set up against him, be it a God in one person, or thirty thousand Gods, it is all a mere imagination, a one supreme being without any existence. No wonder, they should live loose libertine lives, since they are without God in the world. And what can we do but pity and pray for these men, who have adopted this system of practical atheism? Oh that the eternal Spirit would open their eyes, and if they have but a glimpse of truth, they will see that Jesus is God. ***And if they will not confess him here before men, there is a day coming, when they shall confess that he is a God indeed.*** *At the glory of his appearance, these bold blasphemers, who now ridicule his divinity, will then be calling to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover them. The majesty of God the almighty judge will strike them with terror, and when they are called before his throne, to give an account of the hard speeches, which they had spoken against him, they will stand guilty, and trembling, waiting for that righteous sentence, which will carry with it inexpressible misery, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Oh that these terrors of the Lord may sink deep into the heart of every unbeliever, who is now at open war with his judge!*

Secondly, Addressing myself to the careless sinners among you, who are, I fear, a great number. The generality of them who profess Christianity live to this world, and seldom think about the next. Their pleasures and diversions are the chief object of their pursuit, and money and honour and power are sought after, that they may enjoy themselves the better. All worldly men are upon this scheme; and while they pursue it, they go on securely in their sins, and are careless about the concerns of eternity. Their hearts are engaged upon other matters, than preparing to meet their God. Their attachment to the world is the

You cannot promise yourselves an hour to prepare in. His judgments are now in the earth, and they are sent to rouse you out of your security. Oh that you would be awakened by them and see your danger.

greatest obstacle to their preparation, and therefore we are forbidden to "love the world, or the things of the world, for if any man love the world, the love of the father is not in him." And if the love of God be not in us, we cannot be prepared to meet him in judgment.

Consider this all ye who speak peace to your souls, while you indulge yourselves in sin. You believe that God will call you before his judgment-seat, and that if you live and die in your sins, you cannot escape the eternal punishment of them. You know not but the judge may call you before him this night, and you are not prepared, and yet you have no concern about it. You sin on with the judgment-seat of Christ before your eyes to which you may be brought before

the next act of sin be finished. What can we think of this unaccountable conduct? Certainly men in their sober senses cannot act such an absurd part. It is against reason: for if these very men were setting out upon a journey of two or three hundred miles, they would make more preparation than they do for eternity. It is against self-interest: for who would take some present empty indulgences of sin, as an equivalent for eternal happiness? It is against all principles of good sense to prefer sin to holiness, and to choose hell before heaven. And it is destroying religion, whose sole business it is to prepare the soul to meet its God. And are any of you, my brethren, in this strange careless state? Do you act thus against reason and self-interest, against common sense and religion? You are guilty of all these inconsistencies, if the judge should come in an hour, when ye look not for him. And he may come and find you unprepared as you are at present. You cannot promise yourselves an hour to prepare in. His judgments are now in the earth, and they are sent to rouse you out of your security. Oh that you would be awakened by them and see your danger. Do you not suppose, that the inhabitants of Lisbon thought themselves as safe as you may do at present? They had no apprehensions of an earthquake. They did not imagine that God was going to destroy them that morning. But you hear how they were surprised and overthrown with a great destruction. While they were speaking, peace, peace, unto themselves, they were called and hurried in a moment to judgment. One had set his heart upon getting an handsome fortune, and was just sitting down to cast up his accounts, and he was cut off that moment, and called to judgment, with a soul full of the love of money. Another, intent upon his pleasures, was feeding his imagination with a vile scene of indulgences, and his filthy soul was taken in the midst of this impurity, and brought before the all-pure and holy God. One with an oath in his mouth was calling for damnation upon his soul, and it came, while the words were in his mouth, and down he sunk into the pit of hell. Dreadful it is to think of the manner, in which they were surprised and cut off in their sins. Suppose such a judgment should be sent to this city at the same time of the day, how would it overtake sinners both high and low? The great, tired with diversions of the preceding day, would be surprised in their sleep, and would awake in the eternal world full of hatred to Jesus Christ, and his people, and his holy faith. What can they expect from the judge? And the lower people would be up, but at the devil's work, going on careless in their sins, lying, and cursing, and swearing, and blaspheming God, and snatched away with some horrid imprecation in their mouths. Why may not this happen to you, as well as to the inhabitants of Lisbon? Why may you not be thus cut off, and die in your sins, yea in the very act of sin? You have more reason to fear it than they had: for your sins are greater than theirs. ***Think not that they were sinners above all the inhabitants of the earth, because they suffered such things. I tell you, nay; but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.*** The same immoralities which reigned among them, reign also in this city; but the contempt of Jesus Christ, and his religion, and the opposition now made to the progress of the gospel by every method, but shedding of blood, from

which God with-holds the enemies hands, these are crimes of a deeper guilt, then the unhappy Portuguese had to answer for. The common people in those popish countries are kept in great ignorance, they have not the light of the gospel shining clearly among them, as you have, and therefore they were not guilty of that one damnable sin, which makes all your other sins so exceeding sinful. *You sin against the fullest evidence; you reject the light of the gospel in your understandings, and you act against it in your lives; and you sin on, when you are invited to forsake your sins and live. God sends his ministers to plead with you, but their counsel you reject with contempt. The means of grace are before you, but you refuse to make use of them. You have the scriptures in your hands, and you may there read the danger of your careless way of life, but the scripture has no influence. **If none of these motives can prevail, be assured, that your guilt will increase in proportion to the advantages you enjoy; and the more reason there was for your being prepared to meet your God, the heavier will the condemnation be, if he should come and find you unprepared.*** May you lay these things to heart, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, now resolve to prepare for the coming of our almighty God and Saviour.

And if you have any desire to be prepared, there is one motive which ought to have great weight with you, and it is taken from a matter of fact. There are, God be praised, many persons in this city, several I hope in this congregation, who have obtained the love and friendship of the supreme judge. Look into their lives and examine them closely. See how they are affected with the report of these judgments, which are now in the earth. You will find no dread or fear in their minds. They are not afraid of any evil tidings. The inward peace and joy, which arise from the sense of God's loving them in Christ Jesus, are not lessened by any outward calamity. They know that he, who is the Lord of nature, will make all things work together for their good, and therefore their heart is established and will not shrink, though the earth should quake from its very foundations, and the hills should be carried into the midst of the sea. If the whole course of nature should be disturbed, they have nothing to fear. God is their friend. They are kept by the arms of the Almighty, and if the heavens should pass away, and the earth, and all that is therein should be burnt up, yet still they are safe. In life and death they can stay their minds upon God in perfect peace. You cannot deny, that there are Christians in this safe and happy state: for God has promised it them, and we declare that God is faithful and true, and if you believe it, how does it affect you? Do you find no desire to be as safe and happy as they are? Does no wish arise in your hearts, that you might be under the protection of the almighty God, and that he would set you on high out of the reach of public calamity; so that whenever he come to visit a sinful people laden with iniquity, and to be glorified in their destruction, then you may rejoice and be exceeding glad, knowing assuredly that your eternal redemption is at hand?

Lay all these considerations together, and may the Lord let you see the

importance of them. God is preparing to meet you in judgment, and eternity depends on your being prepared to meet him. You have no time to lose. He may come this night. And you are not prepared. What would your condition be, if he should call you unprepared? Therefore as you love your souls apply to him this moment. Now go to the throne of grace for pardon, lest you should be called before the throne of glory unpardoned. Cry aloud for mercy. *The judge may still be intreated. Oh plead with him then, and be importunate, until he become your friend. Remind him of his love to sinners. Urge his bloody sweat, his bitter cross and passion, his cruel mockings, buffetings, and scourgings, endured all for sinners. Plead these with him, and lay before him the torments and the shame of the cross, and the piercing of his hands and feet, which are the engravings of his love to sinners, and be assured that tender heart cannot want love for them, which bled to death for their salvation.* Hold on this plea, until you find him gracious, and are enabled to place your whole trust and confidence in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Then you will be safe. There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. They shall be found in him at the great day, when he will become to them the author of eternal salvation. Knowing this by faith, they are prepared to meet their God.

I hope he has heard my prayers for you this day, and if it be his blessed will, has disposed you to seek an interest in the judge of all the earth. He will come to judgment, and quickly. May the Holy Spirit prepare us all to meet him. Oh! If he should come this night, how would he find you? Are you all ready? Is every one of you fit to die? Have you all got your lamps trimmed, and ye yourselves prepared; that if there should be a great cry made at midnight, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, ye may be ready, and enter in with him to the marriage? And if he should call you by an earthquake, or by any other judgment, have you so sure an interest in him, that sudden death would be welcome? Think, what an awful thing it would be, if you were to enter upon the eternal world this night, where your state is to be unalterably fixed forever. O what continual preparation should you be making for eternity. For if you die unprepared, all is lost. Hell and torments are your everlasting portion. And if you are not quite in love with misery, now beg of God to show you your danger, and to deliver you from it. The door of mercy is still open. O that you may find an entrance, and press forwards with an holy violence, until you receive grace to prepare you to meet your God. And let us all agree to look up to him for it!

“Almighty God give us grace, that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may (be prepared to meet him and may) rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee, and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.”

God's Patience Abused

by Stephen Charnock

“The Lord is slow to anger”—Nahum 1:3

Slowness to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the divine nature.

God's patience is seen in His providential works in the world: “He suffered the nations to walk in their own way”; and the witness of His providence to them was His “giving them rain, and fruitful seasons, filling their heart with food and gladness” (Acts 16:17).

His patience is manifested to our first parents. His slowness to anger was evidenced in not directing His artillery against them when they attempted to rebel. God did not presently send that death upon man which he had merited, but continued his life to the space of 930 years. The earth did not swallow him up, nor a thunderbolt from heaven raze out the memory of him. Though he had deserved to be treated with such a severity for his ungrateful demeanor to his Creator and benefactor, and affecting an equality with Him, yet God continued him with a sufficiency for his content after he turned rebel, though not with such a liberality as when he had remained a loyal subject. And though He foresaw that he would not make an end of sinning but with an end of living, He used him not in the same manner as He had used the devils.

His slowness to anger is manifest to the Gentiles. What they are, we need no other witness than the apostle Paul, who sums up many of their crimes (Rom 1:29-32). He does preface the catalog with a comprehensive expression, “being filled with all unrighteousness”; and concludes it with a dreadful aggravation, “They not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.” All of them were plunged in idolatry and superstition, but God “winked at the times of that ignorance” (Acts 17:30). He winked as if he did not see them and would not deal so severely with them.

His slowness to anger is manifest to the Israelites. You know how often they are called a stiff-necked people; they are said to do evil from their youth, i.e. from the time they were erected a nation. They scarce discontinued their revolting from God; they were a “grief to Him forty years together in the wilderness” (Psa 95:10), yet “He suffered their manners” (Acts 13:18). He bore with their ill

behaviour and sauciness towards Him; and no sooner was Joshua taken away, and the elders that were their conductors gathered to their fathers, but the next generation forsook God, and smutted themselves with idolatry of the nations (Judg 2:10). Their coming out of Egypt being about the year of the world 2450, and their final destruction as a commonwealth not till about forty years after the death of Christ; and all this while His patience did sometimes wholly restrain His justice, and sometimes let it fall upon them in some few drops, but made no total devastation of their country till the Roman conquest, wherein He put a period to them both as a church and state, He is long-suffering here, that His justice may be more public hereafter.

How is God's patience abused?

The Gentiles abused those testimonies of it, which were written in showers and fruitful seasons. No nation was ever stripped of it, under the most provoking idolatries, till after multiplied spurns of it.

Not a person among us has not been guilty of the abuse of it. Let us consider the ways in which slowness to anger is abused.

1. ***It is abused by misinterpretations of it***, when men slander God's patience, to be only a carelessness and neglect of His providence; or when men, from His long-suffering, charge Him with impurity, as if His patience were a consent to their crimes; and because He suffered them without calling them to account, He were one of their partisans, and as wicked as themselves: (Psa 50:21) "Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself."

2. ***His patience is abused by continuing in a course of sin*** under the influence of it. How much is it the practical language of men, Come, let us commit this or that iniquity, because divine patience has suffered worse than this at our hands! How often did the Israelites repeat their murmurings against Him, as if they would put His patience to the utmost proof, and see how far the line of it could extend? They were no sooner satisfied in one thing but they quarreled with Him about another, as if He had no other attribute to put in motion against them. They tempted Him as often as He relieved them, as though the declaration of His name to Moses to be "a God gracious and long-suffering" had been intended for no other purpose but a protection of them in their rebellions.

3. ***His patience is abused by repeating sin***, after God has, by an act of His patience, taken off some affliction from men. As metals melted in the fire remain liquid under the operation of the flames, yet when removed from the fire they quickly return to their former hardness and sometimes grow harder than they were before, so men who, in their afflictions, seem to be melted, like Ahab confess their sins, lie prostrate before God, and seek Him early, yet if they be brought from under the power of their afflictions, they return to their old nature, and are as still against God, and resist the blows of the Spirit as much as they did before. Pharaoh was somewhat thawed under judgments, and frozen

again under forbearance.

4. ***His patience is abused, by taking encouragement from it***, to mount to greater degrees of sin. Because God is slow to anger, men are more fierce in sin, and not only continue in their old rebellions, but heap new upon them. If He spare them for “three transgressions” they will commit “four,” as is intimated in Amos 1 and 2. “Men’s hearts are fully set in them to do evil, because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed” (Eccl 8:11). No encouragement is given to men by God’s patience, but they force it by their presumption. But let it be considered,

1. ***That this abuse of patience is a high sin.*** As every act of forbearance obliges us to duty, so every act of it abused increases our guilt. The more frequent its solicitations of us have been, the deeper aggravations our sin receives by it. Every sin, after an act of divine patience, contracts a blacker guilt.

2. ***It is dangerous to abuse His patience.*** Though His Spirit strives with man, yet it “shall not always strive” (Gen 6:3). Though there be a time wherein Jerusalem might “know the things that concerned her peace,” yet there is another period wherein they should be “hid from their eyes,” (Luke 19:42) “Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day.” Nations have their day and persons have their day, and the day of most persons is shorter than the day of nations. And for particular persons the time of life whether shorter or longer, is the only time of long-suffering. It has no other stage than the present state of things to act upon. The time of patience ends with the first moment of the soul’s departure from the body. This time only is the day of salvation. It is at His pleasure to shorten or lengthen our day, not at ours. It is not our long-suffering, but His; He has the command of it.

It is dangerous to abuse His patience, for God has wrath to punish as well as patience to bear. He has a fury to revenge the outrages done to His meekness; when His messages of peace, sent to reclaim men, are slighted, His sword shall be whetted, and His instruments of war prepared; (Hosea 5:8) “Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah.” As He deals gently like a father, so He can punish capitally as a judge. Though He holds His peace for a long time, yet at last He will go forth like a mighty man, and stir up jealousy as a man of war, to cut in pieces His enemies. It is not said, He has no anger, but that He is slow to anger, but sharp in it. He has a sword to cut, and a bow to shoot, and arrows to pierce (Psa 12:13). And though He be long a-drawing the one out of the scabbard, and long a-fitting the other to His bow, yet when they are ready, He strikes home and hits the mark.

Though God a while was pressed with the murmurings of the Israelites, after their coming out of Egypt, and seemed desirous to give them all satisfaction upon their unworthy complaints, yet when they came to open hostility, in setting a golden calf in His throne, He commissions the Levites to “kill every man his brother and companion in the camp” (Exo 32:27); and how desirous soever

He was to content them before, they never murmured afterwards, but they severely smarted for it. He planted by the apostles churches in the East, and when His goodness and long-suffering prevailed not with them, He tore them up by the roots. What Christians are to be found in those once famous parts of Asia, but what are overgrown with much error and ignorance?

The more His patience is abused, the sharper will be the wrath He inflicts. All the time men are abusing His patience, God is whetting His sword, and the longer it is whetting the sharper will be the edge.

When He puts an end to His abused patience, His wrath will make quick and sure work. He that is slow to anger, will be swift in the execution of it. The departure of God from Jerusalem is described with wings and wheels (Eze 11). One stroke of His hand is irresistible; He that has spent so much time in waiting, needs but one minute to ruin; though it be long ere He draw His sword out of the scabbard, when once He does it, He dispatches men at a blow. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had a long time of patience and prosperity, but “now shall a month devour him with his portion” (Hosea 5:7). One fatal month puts a period to the many years’ peace and prosperity of a sinful nation.

Though He defers His visible wrath, yet that very delay may be more dreadful than a quick punishment. He may forbear striking, and give the reins to the hardness and corruption of men’s hearts. He may suffer them to walk in their own counsels, without any more striving with them, whereby they make themselves fitter fuel for His vengeance. This was the fate of Israel; when they would not hearken to His voice, “He gave them up to their own hearts’ lusts, and they walked in their own counsels” (Psa 81:12). Though His sparing them had the outward aspect of patience, it was a wrathful one, and attended with spiritual judgments. Thus many abusers of patience may have their line lengthened, and the candle of prosperity to shine upon their heads, that they may increase their sins, and be the fitter mark at last for His arrows. They swim down the stream of their own sensuality with a deplorable security, till they fall into an unavoidable gulf, where at last it will be a greater part of their hell to reflect on the length of divine patience on earth, and their inexcusable abuse of it.

It is a vast comfort to any when God is pacified to them; but it is some comfort to all that God is yet patient towards them, though but very little to a refractory sinner. It is a terror that God has anger, but it is a mitigation of that terror that God is slow to it. Patience, as long as it lasts, is a temporary defence to those that are under the wing of it; but to the believer it is a singular comfort. It is a comfort in that it is an argument of His grace to His people. If He has so rich a patience to exercise towards His enemies, He has a greater treasure to bestow upon His friends. If His slowness to anger be so great when His precept is slighted, His readiness to give what He has promised will be as great when His promise is believed. He was more ready to make the promise of redemption, after man’s apostasy, than to execute the threatening of the law.

It is a comfort in infirmities. If He were not patient, He could not bear with so many peevishnesses and weaknesses in the hearts of His own. Were it not for His slowness to anger, He would stifle us in the midst of our prayers, wherein there are as many foolish thoughts to disgust Him as there are petitions to implore Him. The most patient angels would hardly be able to bear with the follies of good men in acts of worship.

Presume not upon God's patience. The exercise of it is not eternal; you are at present under His patience, yet while you are unconverted you are also under His anger: (Psa 7:11) "God is angry with the wicked every day." You know not how soon His anger may turn His patience aside, and step before it. It may be His sword is drawn out of the scabbard, His arrows may be settled in His bow, and perhaps there is but a little time before you may feel the edge of the one or the point of the other, and then there will be no more time for patience in God to us, or petition from us to Him. If we die without repentance, He will have no longer mercy to pardon, nor patience to bear.

[Sinner, won't you come to the Saviour? Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Who knows when your soul will be required of you. The Lord is calling to all the earth, "come now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool." Do you not have strength? He tells you that you are to take hold of his strength. "let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." The call goes forth "turn ye turn ye for why will ye die?" Call upon the name of the Lord and thou shalt be saved.]

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

(Hebrews 13:5,6)

The Imminent Danger, And The Only Sure Resource Of This Nation

by John Newton

“Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” Jonah 3:9

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were heathens. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet till Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, they believed God. The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation, of business and of pleasure took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigour of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy. Though they had no encouragement but a peradventure, Who can tell if God will return and repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not?

It appears from this, and other passages of scripture, that the most express declarations of God's displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance. Thus in the prophecy of Ezekiel, “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die;” and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, “At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.” The Lord God speaks to us by his word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot repent, he is of one mind, who can turn him? Yet when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgement of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation,

repentance, and prayer, he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah's message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear, that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us, if we do not imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? *They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately, on their first hearing him: and they sought for mercy upon a peradventure, when they could say no more, than, Who can tell, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet so solemnly declared?*

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet, nor is it necessary. We know, or may know from his written word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the Scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the event, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God is preached unto us. Jesus Christ as crucified is set forth amongst us. His blood cleanseth from all sin; and they who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified. They have also free access to a throne of grace, and like Israel they have power, by prayer, to prevail with God and with man. And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not? May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his providence. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behoves us to learn righteousness. [editor's note: Remember September 11th 2001] His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet, sooner or later, they must, they shall see. The great God has a controversy with the potsherd of the earth. The point to be decided between him, and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home, is, whether he be the Governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom his name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concerns in subordination to this. If there be no other alternative, misery and havoc must spread, men must perish by millions, yea, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonoured and defiled with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause; and either in a way of judgment or of mercy all men shall know that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, Ye, or they shall know that I am the Lord? "Hath he said it, and shall he not make it good?"

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horror which overspread a great part of the continent, the distant report of which is sufficient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged, yea, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore men are left to themselves, their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the way of their own hearts. A more dreadful judgment than this cannot be inflicted on this side of hell.

And though we are still favoured with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems moving our way, and we have reason to fear it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord's gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him, either to save or to destroy, by many or by few. Our fleets and armies may be well appointed, and well commanded; but without his

“We...were born and educated in a land, distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel-truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins”

blessing upon our councils and enterprises, and they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissension. And by his mighty wind, he can dash our ship to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them as lead in the mighty waters. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth not?

Our Lord and Saviour, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, Think ye that these men were sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! We, on the contrary, were born and educated in a land, distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel-truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favoured, and for an equal space of time, by the providence of God, and have likewise equalled us in disobedience and ingratitude.

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting today, is to humble ourselves before Almighty

God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved; and imploring his blessing and assistance on the arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself, and to his kingdoms. I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described! Oh! that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence, and the attitude of their attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of his majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to him. Oh, that by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Host, the whole earth is filled with his glory! If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely, each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the gospel prevented us from crying out, Woe is me, I am undone! we should at least say, (the Hebrew word might be so rendered), I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts (Isa 6:1-7).

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to pre-plex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles, we either feel or fear, to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all; and is readily made by all who know themselves. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, Their iniquity is not yet full: I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though by grace delivered from the reigning power of sin, are still sinners. In many things we offend all, in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light, and experience—for those personal sins, the record of which is only known to God and our consciences—for the defects and defilements of our best services—for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dullness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our differences to what concerns his glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions when our

own temporal interests are affected; are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that if he was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them; If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins, can be competent judges of what the prophet meant, or felt, when he said, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell, than for our own. We shall be so, if with the eyes of our mind we behold the King, the Lord of hosts; because his glory, which should be the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him.—He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to shew amongst us, such instances of his protection, his favour, his grace, and his patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation.

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this island; it was probably at an early period of the Christian era! But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the dawn of returning gospel light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliff, the morning-star of the Reformation, the true gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars, which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies, and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our internal broils at different times have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide spreading and flourishing commerce, has raised us to a pitch of opulence, which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map, but our interests and influence extended, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply with equal propriety to us? What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore when I

looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

How is the blessed gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe, and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number: and for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach, and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known.

Wisdom is indeed justified by all her children. The gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe. It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery, guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not.—Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversations, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What then must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspaper. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's Sabbaths and worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. *In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning; thoughtless security, dissipation and riot, are characteristics of our national spirit. The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination, so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf.*

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation, in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him!

II. Have we not therefore cause to say, with the Ninevites, Who can tell?—Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility, that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other

nations; and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed: If we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves: If all the day long he has stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people—and hitherto, almost in vain:—If neither the tokens of his displeasure nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds, who can tell if he will yet be entreated? May we not fear, lest he should say, My Spirit shall strive with them no more. They are joined to their idols, let them alone. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear!

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain-tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished and their memorials have almost perished with them. The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece, and in the Lesser Asia? When the Apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited his epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are every where spoken of, and that we are examples to all that believe? That our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known and the last to be more than the first? Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny Him?—That they are neither hot nor cold—That they have a name to live, and are dead—That they have at least forgotten their first love? When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions which once rejoiced in the light of the gospel, have been long overspread with Mohammedan darkness; and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we, if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with

them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of his glory into the hands of their enemies; to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell?—Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked. Many seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: And that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain, in a time of disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted and instigated by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no union can long subsist.

“Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things.” These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God! *Who can tell but he may repent, and turn from the fierceness of his anger, that we perish not. If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by his blessing, it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from his word, that there is yet hope.* You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth; take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm; but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place; under the shadow of his wings you shall be safe.

1. He who loved you, and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him. The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great design; and the remainder of that wrath, all their

projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain. In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than he permits them. If they attempt it, he has a hook and a bridle in their mouths. When the enemies would come in like a flood, he can lift up a standard against them. As he has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed; so, with equal ease, he can still the madness of the people.

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know him not. But if you make him your fear and your dread, he will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.

2. Your part and mine, is to watch and pray.—*Let us pray* for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning, that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event. *Let us pray* for the peace of Jerusalem, for his church, which is dear to him, as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his gospel, and the extension of his kingdom, till his great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled; and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light will undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. *Let us earnestly pray* for a blessing from on high, upon our rulers, upon the counsels of government, and upon all subordinate authority in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret mark of divine protection. The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. *Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace, he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us strength according to our day. He is always near to his people, a very present help in the time of trouble; and he can make the season of their greatest tribulations, the season of their sweetest consolations.*

3. And *let us pray in faith*. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an ax, or a saw, in the hand of God. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem, But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the lord in the temple, and prayed; and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened, while the church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance.

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us, as men,

as Christians, is threatened. *Our enemies are inveterate, and enraged? Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for mercy, who can tell, but he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man?* Yea, we have encouragement to hope, that he will be for us, and then none can prevail against us. But without his blessing our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertaking cannot succeed. [Therefore we must pray in faith.]

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state—You I trust, will shew yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows; and by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction.

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly, who are a little concerned for their own sins, and are, of course, incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it.—Or, if it please God to prolong our tranquillity, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? Or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask it of him, he will give it you; if you seek it, in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find. If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. If you are not saved by faith in his blood, you are lost forever. Oh! kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!(Psa 2:12).

The Time of Danger

by James Hervey



“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the first-born, should touch them.”

— Heb. 11:28

If we consult the history to which these words refer we shall find the Israelites in a state of great affliction. The Egyptians oppressed them; and made their lives bitter with hard bondage.—The misery of His people God pities, and is resolved to redress. Accordingly, He sends Moses, in the quality of His ambassador, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, demanding their release. The king most insolently replies. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.” God, to chastise his insolence and obstinacy, inflicts a variety of plagues on him and his subjects. In contempt of all which Pharaoh hardens his heart, persists in his disobedience, and refuses to let the people go.—At last, says the Lord, I will bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt, which shall infallibly accomplish my purpose. Be their hearts hard as the nether millstone, this shall make them feel. Be their resolution stubborn as an iron sinew, this shall make it bend. “About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die.”

But as the Israelites dwelt in Egypt, how should they be safe amidst the general desolation? The Lord directs Moses to a method which should effectually secure the families of Israel, while death entered into all the habitations of the Egyptians. The method, its execution, and success, are all specified in the text, where we may observe.

A very dreadful danger, intimated by the destruction of the firstborn. The Lord had already put his hand to the sword. It was even now drawn from the scabbard, and had received a commission to go forth. To go forth that very night; to walk through all the land of Egypt; and to be bathed, before the morning-light, in the blood of the firstborn. All the firstborn, from the haughty king

that sat on the throne, even, to the slave that toiled at the mill, and the very sheep that yeaned in the field. Tremendous, as well as inevitable blow! O, what an alarm will it create, and what affliction will it spread! Make every heart sad, and every house a scene of mourning. “There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”

And is not the present time a time of imminent danger? If God indeed were for us, we might trust and not be afraid. We might look danger in the face, and boldly say, “Who shall be against us?” But is this the case? Are we a righteous nation, that keepeth the truth? (Isa. 26:2). Is there sufficient reason to believe, that the Holy One of Israel is our defense? Are we not, on the contrary, a sinful generation; a people laden with iniquity? Is there not abundant reason to fear, lest our God should say, in terrible indignation: “They are joined to idols, let them alone?”

In order to determine this point, let us examine our ways. Are not we, like the Egyptians, in a state of great danger, if we consider

1. The sins of our nation.
2. The judgments of God denounced upon such sins.
3. The certain execution of those judgments, unless we fly to the appointed Refuge.

1. **Consider the sins of our nation.** Here I shall mention some, and only some of those abominations which, wherever they are found, cannot fail to provoke the eyes of God’s glory, and render, either a person or a people ripe for His vengeance.

The Christian Sabbath is an inestimable privilege to the church of Christ. It is a pledge of God’s distinguishing love. It is a happy means of building us up in knowledge; of establishing us in faith; and preparing us for everlasting rest.—Yet is it not shamefully profaned, in city and in country? What multitudes waste it in idleness, or squander it away in unedifying conversation, making it by far the most useless and contemptible day of the week?—This they do, even though God strictly charges, saying, “Remember ye the Sabbath day,” not barely to abstain from your ordinary works, but “to keep it holy,” devoting it entirely to holy purposes and religious exercises. This they do, even though God solemnly threatens, saying, “If ye will not hearken unto Me, to hallow the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in your gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jer. 17:27).

Is not the name of God great, wonderful, and holy? Ought it not to be used with the deepest veneration, and magnified above all things? But is it not audaciously dishonored, and impiously blasphemed? Dishonored by customary and wanton, blasphemed by false and faithless swearing? Has not the most high God declared, that He will in nowise hold such daring wretches guiltless? Yet, how do these daring wretches swarm, like the locusts of society, in our polluted land?

How is our air tainted with this breath of the infernal pit! How do our streets resound, most horribly resound, with this language of hell! And will not the Almighty Lord make thee know—know by bitter experience, what that meaneth, which is spoken by his prophet? “Because of swearing, the land mourneth,” (Jer. 23:10), mourneth under afflicting visitations, and desolating judgments.

Is not the Scripture a singular blessing? Yes, it is celebrated by the psalmist as the sovereign blessing, that which crowns the other instances of divine goodness, “He sheweth His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.” It is also celebrated as a most distinguishing blessing, from which multitudes are excluded. “He hath not dealt so with all nations, neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.” *Should not then the Scripture be precious to our souls, more precious than fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the droppings of the honeycomb? Should we not exercise ourselves in it, day and night; reading it by day, meditating on it by night? Should we not make it the most delightful subject of our conversation? Talk of it to our children, our domestics, our neighbors; when we lie down and rise up; when we walk by the way and sit in the house?* (Deut. 6-7).—But where are the persons who bear such a superlative esteem for the Bible? Where is the company that delights to converse on those Oracles of Truth? Where are the parents that diligently instruct their children, and feed them with milk of the Word? Diversion, of every kind, engages their attention, and the most trifling impertinence employs their tongue; but the Lord’s Word is insipid, if not irksome. His Word is treated, even by Protestants, as the Manna was treated by the Israelites, who had the ingratitude and impudence to say, “our soul loatheth this light bread.” A plague from the Lord of Hosts was the consequence of their contemptuous treatment of the meat that perisheth. Of how much sorer punishment shall we be thought worthy, who condemn the Food which endureth to everlasting life!

God hath reserved the unjust, saith the Scripture, unto the day of judgment, to be punished, “chiefly them who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness,” (2 Pet. 2:10). Is not this iniquity rampant among the inhabitants of our land? What lewd pictures are exposed to view! What filthy writing are suffered to see the light! Fuel for lusts, and incentives to debauchery. What is wit, in our days, but either some lascivious hint, or some licentious abuse of Scripture! Are not the wanton entertainments of the stage, and other seminaries of lewdness, countenanced, supported, thronged? Can you acquit our cities and towns of drunkenness, revelings, and abominable excesses? Are not these, and all sorts of filthiness found in our skirts? If so, hear the Word of the Lord, and let it sink deep into every heart: “When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor’s wife. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” (Jer 5:7-9).

Is not religion, vital religion, very much upon the decline, even among the serious? Do not many professors, quite destitute of the power of godliness, content themselves with the mere form? Whereas, if any, in imitation of the first believers and the first preachers, are alive to God, and zealous for the Lord of Hosts, these persons, instead of being esteemed, are reproached. Of such persons even the malignant spirit could bear witness, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who shew unto us the way of salvation." But among us, who call ourselves Christians, who pride ourselves upon being the purest church in Christendom; among us, such persons are deemed the visionaries of the age, the disturbers of society, the men that would turn the world upside down. The ministers who are most faithful, and the people who are most exemplary, are a derision and a byword among their neighbors. Thus in Israel, they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets. But it was to the confusion of those scoffers, and the ruin of their country, "For the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy."

Are we not abandoned to a spirit of carnal confidence? *When do we discover any reliance on the Almighty, or ascribe any of our success to His gracious interposition? It is not God, but our sword, that shall help us. Or, if any unseen power is acknowledged it is not the Lord of Hosts, but good fortune. One would almost imagine, that we were ashamed of a heavenly Ally, and thought it a disgrace to own ourselves dependent on Omnipotence.* Is not such a temper a national infatuation, and the harbinger of national judgments? Zedekiah and the men of Judah forgot or neglected the Rock of their salvation, and made Pharaoh's army their confidence. But see, what was the issue; or hear it from the mouth of Him who fulfilleth the word of His servants. "For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire" (Jer. 37:10).

What ignorance prevails, especially among the lower ranks of people? The grossest ignorance of themselves and of God our Savior, the grossest ignorance of grace, and salvation by a Redeemer's righteousness; the grossest ignorance of the very first principles of our holy religion. To do evil, they are wise. But to do good, to believe in Jesus Christ, to love and glorify Him, who bought sinners with His blood; to do all, to do any of this, they have no knowledge. And is it a small matter to be thus children of darkness? Is not the soul alienated from the life of God through ignorance? (Eph. 4:18.) Does not this displease the most high God, and provoke the Holy One of Israel? Let His own Word determine. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them; and He that formed them will shew them no favor," (Isa. 27:11). Are these impotent menaces? Made only to be contemned? Then we may dismiss our fears. But if they are the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, then we have reason to cry, What will become of our land?

In a word; religion, both as to the knowledge and practice, was never at so low an ebb since the Reformation took place. Nor luxury and immorality of every kind at such an enormous height.—Where now are our rulers? Are they zealous for God, and valiant for the Truth? Have they courage to stem the torrent, or to oppose the overflowings of ungodliness?—*Where are the magistrates? Warm with generous indignation, do they snatch the spear, and like the gallant Phineas, smite through the loins of iniquity? Alas! have not our great men altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bands? Are they not, generally speaking, the ringleaders in transgression, as eminent for their contempt of God, as for the affluence of their circumstances? Yea. “the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in the several trespasses,” (Ezra 9:2).* But will that dignity which they have abused, will that authority, which was lent them for better purposes; will those distinctions be a security to them or their country, in the day of visitation? Hear what the righteous Lord says, who is higher than the highest, and able to execute all His decrees, “It is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied,” (Ezek. 21:14). Gates, be they ever so strongly fortified, or ever so carefully guarded, are no fence against the point of Jehovah’s sword. And if sin is suffered to enter, judgments will assuredly follow. Judgments will follow even the most powerful and wealthy sinners; will pursue them like an eager bloodhound; will haunt them like a dismal ghost; will force a way into their palaces, nay, into their closest retirements; and never remit the chase, till fainting of heart ends in multiplied ruin; in the ruin of themselves, their families, their country.

Amidst all these crying evils, are we not presumptuously secure? Is there not a deplorable spirit of stupidity, which blinds our eyes and renders our hearts insensible? Scarce any one lays these miseries and dangers to heart. Who mourneth for the abominations of the land? Who stirreth up himself to call upon God? If so be, He may yet be entreated, and have mercy upon Zion. Are we not too much like the intoxicated sinners of the old world? “They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” They gave themselves wholly up to sensual gratifications and inferior cares disregarding all the admonitions of Noah, and all the tokens of impending vengeance. Till the divine longsuffering ceased, the universal flood came, and with irresistible violence swept them all away. Are we not in the condition of those supine senseless people, spoken of by the prophet Zephaniah, “It shall come to pass at that day, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees, that say in their heart, the Lord will do no good, neither will He do evil,” Zeph 1:12. And may we not justly expect their awful doom? “Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation. Their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them, in the day of the Lord’s wrath, but the whole land shall

be devoured by the fire of His jealousy” (Zeph. 1:18).

As a farther aggravation of our crimes, have we not been incorrigible, amidst the most compulsive and the most winning motives to amendment?—Behold the state of our nation. *Our sins abound, and are grown up to heaven; sins of every kind, even the most horrid kind; sins among all ranks, from the highest to the lowest. In our sins we persist, though wooed, as it were, with the choicest mercies, though made to smart under various judgments, though threatened with far more afflictive visitations.* And will the great, the mighty, the terrible God always bear with such a people? Will He receive the most horrible indignities and still refrain himself? Surely, He will say, with a determined indignation, “Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies,” (Isa. 1.24). Has He not evidently begun to show us terrible things in righteousness? [editor’s note: Remember September 11th, 2001.] And what, O! what may the end of these things be? How doleful, how destructive! Unless sovereign grace interpose, bringing us by faith in the Son of God, to unfeigned repentance, and newness of life.

Some notion we may form, concerning the end of these things, by unfolding the second point,

2. *The judgment of God, denounced on such sins.*—Where such iniquities prevail, we might naturally conclude, that the divine indignation is awakened, and the divine vengeance lingereth not. Is there a God? Does He behold the children of men? Is His nature infinitely pure and holy? Surely then He cannot, He will not suffer the most outrageous violations of His sublime perfections to pass unpunished. Thus we might argue from the nature of God; this we might conjecture from the aspect of things. But we have a more sure word of prophecy. In this word, the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And see, in what flaming colors, by what frightful images this wrath is represented, these judgments are described.

They are likened to a lion, rending his prey. The Lord had been unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Jacob as a worm. He had inflicted milder judgments, rebuking them gradually, and withholding inferior comforts. His judgments were like a moth fretting the garment, or like a worm corroding the wood; in both which cases the corruption creeps, as it were; the wasting proceeds silently and slowly. Thus the chastising Jehovah acted; giving the people space for recollection, and looking for repentance. But no repentance was produced. They continued irreclaimable, adding sin to sin. Then says the Lord, “I will be unto Ephraim as a lion,” which, all fierce and ravenous, rushes upon a lonely traveler. I will now come forth as an incensed and irresistible adversary, and be “as a roaring lion to the house of Judah.” I, even I, who am omnipotent, will tear, will destroy, them with my mighty hand; and go away, satiated with slaughter and vengeance. I will take away both prince and people, I will take away their very place and nation, and none shall have power to effect, or courage

to attempt, a rescue. (Hos. 5:14) If God do thus to perverse and incorrigible Judah, why should we imagine that He will deal otherwise with our perverse and incorrigible land?

They are described by a flood, (Isa. 8:7-8). "Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all His glory, and He shall come up over all his channels, and go over all His banks; and He shall pass through Judah, He shall overflow and go over; He shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of His wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." The king of Assyria and his army, determined to invade Judah, are signified by the waters of the river. These the Lord bringeth up, overruling the purposes of ambitious princes, and making even the wicked designs subservient to His holy will. They are, like the waters of an immense flood, strong and many, their multitude innumerable, and their force unconquerable. For they shall come with all their glory, with their choicest troops, their ablest commanders, and their whole warlike artillery. He shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks; from all parts of his vast dominion his troops shall be assembled; each province shall be drained of its bravest inhabitants; and all unite to render this expedition one of the most formidable that ever was undertaken. He shall pass through Judah, not only make inroads upon the frontiers, but push his way through the country, and penetrate the very heart of the kingdom. He shall overflow; spread terror and desolation on every side and in every quarter. He shall go over villages, towns, cities, tribes; and bear down all before him. He shall reach even to the neck; his ravages shall extend even to the royal city, to the very gates of the metropolis; threatening destruction to the palace of the king, and the walls of the temple. The stretching out of his wings, the several detachments and parties of his victorious army shall fill the breadth of the land with havoc, slaughter and ruin. Even of thy land, O Immanuel. Their relation to thee shall procure no favor, shall afford no protection. They have dishonored thy goodly name, wherewith they were called. Therefore that goodly name shall no longer stand in the breach, but pour itself with the torrent, and render it irresistible. Such an inundation of judgments, so terrible, so destructive, have not we deserved, may not we expect?

These judgments are compared to fire, and to the fiercest of fires, that which glows in a furnace, (Ezek. 22:18-21). "The house of Israel is to me become dross; all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof." Astonishing words! And they are doubled! They are redoubled! in order

to alarm the insensible sinner, as the sword, by being brandished in many a dreadful circle, over the criminal's head, strikes terror into his apprehensions, before it does the work of vengeance on his heart.—This generation is become brass, impudent in their wickedness. They have a whore's forehead; they cannot blush at their iniquities, but glory in their shame. They are tin, a degenerate race, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the good old way, and swerved from the example of their fathers. With regard to hardness of heart, they are of iron. Impenitent amidst all their guilt; obstinately tenacious of their vices; and not to be wrought upon by any addresses, not to be reclaimed by any expedients. In another respect, they are like lead, stupid and sottish, pliable to evil, but for any good purpose unmeet; to every good work reprobate. Because they are exceedingly sinful, they shall be overtaken by God's anger, and surrounded by his fury; as metals, cast into the midst of a furnace, are surrounded with the raging heat. The flame of this wrath shall be blown, as with a vehement wind, to its utmost height. In this furnace they shall be left, to this wrath they shall be abandoned; till, by a complication of afflictions, resembling the complication of their vices, they are overcome, subdued, and even melted; so melted, as to be either purged from the dross of their iniquities, or else blended together in one promiscuous ruin.

These judgments are described by the terrible representation of an end. *An end of affluence and prosperity, of which we have gloried. An end of power and strength, in which we have trusted. An end of all national blessings, which we have not improved to God's honor, but turned into licentiousness. "Thus saith the Lord God, an end, an end is come upon the four corners of the land. The sword without, and the pestilence and the famine within; he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, pestilence and famine shall "devour him," (Ezek, 7-2-15).* For this we have been ripening, by an unintermitted course of ungodliness and iniquity. And what can be expected by an impenitent people, hating to be reformed? What, but that judgments, which have long been suspended, should at last be inflicted? An end is come. It is come upon the land. It is a national visitation. Not confined to a part, but extending to the whole kingdom. Upon the four corners of the land. No place shall be exempt, nothing secure. Neither that which seems to be most secret, nor that which lies most remote. The vengeance is universal and inevitable. The executioners of this vengeance take their stand, within and without, at home and abroad, so that to fly from one is to fall into the hands of another. He that is in the field, shall find no way to escape, but shall die with the sword. He that is in the city, shall obtain no protection, but pestilence and famine shall devour him. Every city shall be a slaughter-house, and every field a field of blood. In city and country, sin has prodigiously abounded; therefore in city and country, desolation shall be made, deaths shall be multiplied, miseries shall abound.

These are some of the images, by which the judgments and the wrath of God

are represented in the Scriptures. But when all images are used, when fancy itself is exhausted, we may truly cry out with the Psalmist, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" If God whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on judgment, what can withstand it, or who can sustain it? If his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, "it shall consume the earth with her increase; it shall set on fire the foundations of the mountains; and burn to the lowest hell," (Deut. 32:22).

Lest you should begin to say within yourselves, These threatenings are applicable only to the Jews;—I proceed to show,

3. The certain execution of these or some such judgments on us, unless we fly to the appointed Refuge.

God is an infinite Speaker. In his Word, He addresses Himself to all generations of men, and to every individual of the human kind, where His holy revelation is made. It is therefore a certain rule, that when any people, enlightened by the glorious gospel, become, like Jerusalem, universally and incorrigibly corrupt, they do, in Jerusalem's doom, read their own.

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He remembereth His threatenings, as well as His promises, to a thousand generations. Whatsoever, of either kind, happened to our forefathers, happened to them as examples to us. And "whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning" (Rom 15:4). Observe, it was written, not for our amusement, but for our learning and admonition, that we may, as in a mirror, see our own picture, and learn our own destiny.

Is it not a manner necessary, for the manifestation of God's inflexible justice, and His unalterable hatred of sin, that judgments should take their course, when iniquity rears its head, and refuses to be controlled? At such a juncture, does not everyone of the divine attributes cry aloud? "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself."—And how can the justice of God, with regard to a wicked nation, be shown, but by executing His vengeance upon them, in temporal calamities?

Consider, Sirs, the very essence of political communities is temporal, purely temporal. It has no existence but in this world. Hereafter, sinners will be judged and punished, singly and in a personal capacity only. How then shall He that is Ruler among nations, maintain the dignity of his government over the kingdoms of the earth, but by inflicting national punishments for national provocations; and, for final impenitence total destruction?

Besides, has not the Lord always acted in this manner? Go back to the generations of old. Contemplate Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them. Well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord. Yet this fruitful land is made barren; these populous cities are turned into ashes, for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein; for their pride and idleness, for their voluptuous and

wanton indulgences; for which things' sake the wrath of God, not only has come in former ages, and in distant nations; but in every age, cometh, and in every nation will come, upon the children of disobedience, (Col. 3:6).

Pass over to Babylon, the grandest city that the sun ever beheld, which set calamity at defiance, saying in her heart, "I shall be a lady forever," (Isa. 47:7). How is she fallen, swept with the besom of destruction. Not so much as a trace or a footstep of her ancient glory left! And shall we be safe, when those very iniquities prevail among us, which razed the foundations of the Babylonish metropolis, and overthrew the magnificence of the Babylonian monarchy?

Take a view of Constantinople, once the most flourishing Christian city in the world, where the first Christian emperor filled the throne, and Chrysostom, that great Christian orator, the pulpit. Then it was gloriously enlightened with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Grace and truth dwelt in it; and the beauties of holiness adorned it. But now the candlestick is removed. It is now given up to infidelity and barbarity. It is now full of darkness and cruel habitations.

Come hither then, ye careless ones, and see what desolation sin has made in the earth. On account of sin, Sodom was consumed as in a moment; Babylon is totally destroyed; Constantinople has lost her glory. And have we a license to sin with impunity? Are our sins less heinous than those of other people? Quite the reverse. Considering the many blessings which we enjoy as a nation, the many deliverances we have enjoyed as a protestant nation, the numberless advantages for religious knowledge and religious practice, which we both have enjoyed and do enjoy, above all the nations on earth—considering these circumstances, our wickedness is highly aggravated; it admits of no excuse; it exceeds the abominable practices of the heathens. What then can prevent our ruin? [editor's note: especially when we consider the mass murder of our unborn children.]

Perhaps you are ready to allege, "Our alms will deliver us. The son of Sirach exhorts us, to shut up alms in our storehouses, and assures us, that they shall fight for us against our enemies, better than a mighty shield and strong spear. And when was there a greater flow of beneficence, observable in our own, or in any land? What sums have been given to the poor; what hospitals of various sorts, and other charitable foundations have been set on foot, and are supported through the land."—***Let us beware, brethren, lest those very things which we look upon as our recommendation, should prove an offense. If our alms proceed not from faith in Jesus Christ, and an unfeigned zeal for the glory of God; if they are not accompanied with a spirit of love to His name, and with a course of obedience to His commands; hear, what the Lord Himself says concerning such works; see, what a figure they make in His sight; and then judge, whether they are likely to be a security to our land.*** "I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will

I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts, Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols." Hymns of praise, you see, are no other than a noise in the Lord's ear; the most costly services of religion, are no better than a smoke in his nostrils; unless judgment, and the love of God, run down as a river, unless righteousness, and the faith of Christ abound as a mighty stream, (Amos 5:21-24).

Do you still conceit yourselves, that, because there are many righteous persons remaining, they will stand in the gap, they will turn away the anger of the Lord, and be as the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen of Israel, to our endangered state? Hear, what a charge the supreme Jehovah gave to his prophet, when the provocations of Israel were risen to a very high pitch. "Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me, for I will not hear thee," (Jer. 7:16). Amazing and awful prohibition! Yet it is repeated, again and again. God's professing people may, by their excessive wickedness, become so insufferably loathsome, that, were the greatest saints to make supplication in their behalf, they should not prevail. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job," men mighty in prayer, and zealous for the welfare of their neighbors; though these three men (who had each by his single intercession procured blessings from heaven) were uniting their petitions in the midst of this profligate generation, "as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate," (Ezek. 14 :16).

The land shall be desolate. Doleful sound! Dismal decree! And has it not long ago, been carried into execution? Was not Jerusalem ploughed as a field, and trodden down by the Gentiles? Are not the inhabitants rooted out of their dwellings, and scattered to all the ends of the earth? While their country is given up for a prey and for a possession to strangers, to infidels, to Turks.

Perhaps you will say, "The Jews crucified the Lord of glory, and rejected His gospel. Therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost." And are not we guilty, concerning this thing? Is Christ received into the hearts of men, with deep adoration of his person, as Immanuel, God with us? Do they glory and delight themselves in His complete redemption as finished by the great God and our Savior? Do they confide in Him alone for their justification, as an infinite surety, and as Jehovah our righteousness? Do they depend on Him alone for their sanctification, as Jesus, who saves His people from their sins, and sanctifies them through His blood? Do they count all things but dung, for the excellency of Christ, and His incomprehensible merit?—Alas! Is not His name, though a name above every name, derided and blasphemed? Are not the influences of His eternal Spirit, though the very life of our souls, exploded and ridiculed? They who would exalt the Savior, would make every sheaf bow down to the Redeemer's, presenting Him as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, in the salvation of sinners, those preachers, those writers, those believers, are treated as the foolish people that dwell in Sichem.

What the Jews did through ignorance, we who call ourselves Christians, Protestants, we do knowingly, willfully, and of malicious wickedness. And if we thus trample upon the blood, which alone can screen us, if we thus crucify afresh that Jesus who is our only hope, what can we look for, but vengeance and fiery indignation? If we ourselves, with our own hands, demolish the only barrier, what can ensue, but an inundation of wrath, tribulation, and anguish?

Consider these things, brethren. The Lord enable you to discern the signs of the times! Then you will acknowledge, that we have reason to be alarmed, to tremble, to be horribly afraid. Are not these iniquities the Achans, that will assuredly bring distress and trouble, if not destruction, upon our country? Are not these iniquities the Jonahs, that will awaken the divine displeasure, and deliver up our vessel to the tempest, if not to shipwreck?

Is any one disposed to say within himself, "Though others may be guilty of these flagrant iniquities, yet am not I."—Remember, my friend, the prophet Isaiah. He was, at least, as free from these flagrant iniquities as yourself. Yet he laments, and with painful apprehensions, the guilt of his countrymen, as well as his own. Remember King Josiah. Though a holy man and a just, he rent his clothes, and trembled at God's word, denouncing vengeance against an irreligious people.

Consider also, whether you have not been an accessory, even where you were not the principal. Though you have not joined with the more profligate sinners, have you not connived at their impiety? Do their affronts offered to the King of heaven, arouse you into a becoming zeal, to vindicate his injured honor? Or, because iniquity has abounded, is not your love, and the love of many, waxed cold? Have not we, alas! have not we been cowards and traitors, while others have been professed enemies and rebels?

Besides, have not you, have not I, have not all contributed in many, many instances, to swell the score of national provocations? Is not ***every sin*** a disobedience of God's most holy command? Is not ***every sin*** a defiance of his uncontrollable authority? Is not ***every sin*** an imitation of the Devil? Does it not create a kind of hell in the heart? Must it not, therefore, be inconceivably odious to the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth? If so, *how guilty are the very best among us! How has everyone added to the load, that dreadful load, which is likely to sink the nation in ruin! Should not every one, therefore smite upon his breast, and say with the penitent, What have I done! and cry with the publican, God, be merciful to me a sinner!*

Will you still flatter yourself? "All these judgments may be delayed. They may not come in my time." I answer, If there be any truth in God's Word, if any conjecture is to be made from the appearance of things, these judgments are near. They are at the door. They are like the ax in the executioner's hand, which has been poised, has received its last elevation, and is now falling on the

criminal's neck.—Yet, if these should be withheld for a season, will not sickness come upon you? Are not many disasters lying in ambush to seize you? Is not death sharpening his arrow, perhaps sitting it to the string, or even aiming at your life? Is not the day, the dreadful day approaching, when the shout of the archangel and the trump of God will be heard, when the dead shall arise, and heaven and earth flee away? Will not the Lord, the Lord God omnipotent, quickly come, with thousands of his saints," to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him," (Jude 15).

Take then, my dear hearers, take the advice of the greatest of preachers, and the wisest of men, "*The prudent foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself,*" (Prov. 22:3). Behold, the rains are descending, and the flood is coming; hasten like Noah, hasten to your Ark. See, the skies are kindling all around, and the shafts of vengeance are ready to fly. Make haste, O, make haste, and delay not the time, to get into a hiding place. Let me sound in your ears the angel's admonition; and may the Lord of angels, may the Friend of sinners, convey it to your hearts!

"Escape for your lives, lest ye be consumed," lest the judgments of God, and the wrath of God, more to be feared than a deluge of waters, more to be feared than a torrent of flames, surround you suddenly, seize you unavoidably, and overwhelm you in ruin, temporal and eternal.

O! that I might prevail! O that God would make you sensible of your peril! O that man, woman, and child would ask, "How shall I be safe in the day of visitation? Show me the Ark! Show me the Refuge!" I should then with great satisfaction proceed to answer this enquiry, and point out Christ to your souls, as the only hiding place, as the sure hiding place, where you may certainly find safety.

Let me beseech you to lay these alarming truths to heart. Let them impress your consciences. Let them penetrate your souls. And O Thou gracious, thou Almighty Lord God, do Thou command them to sink deep into all our minds; that we may, with Ezra thy priest, sit down ashamed and astonished, under a sense of our manifold iniquities,—that we may, with thy servant Job, abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes;—that we may, in the words and with the compunction of thy prophet cry out, "Woe is me: for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," (Isa. 6:5).

**"Fear God for not to fear Him
is to fear everything."**

—Thomas Wilcox

The Cup of Wrath

Psalm 75:8

by Andrew Bonar

It will help greatly to the right apprehension of this solemn subject to notice that Christ is the speaker of these awful truths. They cannot, then, have been spoken harshly; they must have been uttered in all tenderness. As the head of His Church, Christ says (verse 1), “Unto Thee, O God, do *we* give thanks;” and then (verse 2), looking on a world lying in wickedness, He anticipates a different state of things ere long: “I purpose when I shall receive the congregation that I shall judge uprightly.” This shall be in the day when He returns to judge the earth. It is He, meanwhile, who upholds all by the word of His power; He keeps the world from falling into ruin; He it is that sustains that blue firmament, as well as earths foundations, “I bear up the pillars thereof” — and were I to withhold my hand, all would tumble into ruin. Oh that an unthinking world would consider! Oh that fools would learn wisdom, and the proud fall down before their Lord. For the Judge shall surely come, with the cup of red wine in His hand — a cup of wrath, of which every rebellious one must drink to the dregs. The horns of the wicked shall soon be laid low, and the righteous alone exalted (verses 9, 10).

It is of this cup that we this day wish to speak to you. It gives an alarming, awakening view of our God and Savior. It is not “God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” but God the Judge, Christ the Judge. It is not the King with the golden scepter, inviting all to draw near: it is the King risen up in wrath, in the evening of the day of grace, to “judge all the wicked of the earth.”

Oh there is a hell, an endless hell, awaiting the ungodly! The Judge warns us of it in order that none of us may be cast into that tremendous woe. Say not in your hearts, “God is too loving and merciful ever to condemn a soul to such woe.” If you continue in sin you shall know too late that the Judge does condemn; not because He is not infinitely loving, but because your sin compels Him so to do. Listen to what is written, and you will see that as sure as ever an unworthy communicant drank the wine out of the cup, so surely, if unpardoned, he shall drink of this wine of God’s indignation.

I. *The Cup of Wrath.*

The general idea of the verse is, that there is *wrath against sin* to be manifested by God, terrible beyond conception. As it is written by God, terrible

beyond conception. As it is written in Ezek 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it *shall die*;" and Psalm 7:11,12: "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death." In Psalm 11:6: "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." In Psalm 21:9: "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger." In Job 36:18: "Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee." In Rom 2:5 we read, "Thou treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" and in Rev 14:9,10: "If any man worship the beast, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of His holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." Can words be found more emphatic to express God's indignation at man's sin?

"A *cup*" is spoken of. A measured out portion. (Psalm 11:6 and Psalm 16:5: "The Lord is the portion of my cup"). It is frequently used to express a full amount; as when fulfillment of curse is called the "cup of trembling," Isaiah 51:22; and in Ezek 23:31, wrath upon Samaria is, "the cup of Samaria." God's wrath shall be given forth in a measured portion, deliberately and fairly considered. There shall be nothing of caprice, nothing arbitrary, in God's judgment on sin; all shall be fairly adjusted. Here are the sins; there is the cup, of a size proportioned to the sin, and full. God's perfections direct and dictate the filling of it.

It is "*a cup of red wine*." He elsewhere calls it "The wine of my fury;" and Rev 16:19, it is "Wine of the fierceness of His wrath." In the East, red wine was usually the strongest; but besides, the fiery nature of the contents is indicated by the color. This "red wine" is pressed out of the grapes by the divine attributes. It must be the concentrated essence of wrath; no weak potion, but one like that in Jer. 25:16, where they "drink, and are moved, and are mad;" or that in Ezek 23:33: "A cup deep and large; it containeth much; a cup of astonishment and desolation, filled with drunkenness and sorrow."

It is "*full of mixture*." — This signifies that the wine's natural quality has been strengthened; its force has been intensified by various ingredients cast into it. Such is the sense of "mingled wine" in Isaiah 5:22, and in Prov 9:5, "Come, drink of the wine which I have mingled." We must distinguish this from the expression "*without mixture*," in Rev 14:10, where the speaker means to say, that there is no infusion of water to weaken the strength of the wine. Here there is everything that may enhance the bitterness of the cup; and let us ask, What may be these various ingredients? From every side of the lost sinner's nature forms of misery shall arise. The body, as well as the soul, shall be steeped in never-ending anguish, amid the unceasing wretchedness of eternal exile and lonely imprisonment. Further, each attribute of Godhead casts something into the cup. *Righteousness* is there; so that the rich man in hell (Luke 16) dare not

hint that his torment is too great. *Mercy and Love* stand by and cast on it their ray, testifying that the sinner was dealt with in longsuffering, and salvation placed within his reach. O the aggravation which this thought will lend to misery. *Omnipotence* contributes to it; the lost man in the hands of the Almighty is utterly helpless, weak as a worm. *Eternity* is an ingredient, telling that this wrath endures as long as God lives. And *truth* is there, declaring that all this is what God spoke, and so cannot be altered without overturning His throne. Yet more: while shame and contempt, and the consciousness of being disowned by every holy being, fiercely sting the soul, there are ingredients cast in by the sinner himself. His *conscience* asserts and attests that this woe is all deserved, and the man loathes himself. *Memory* recalls past opportunities and times of hope despised. Sin goes on increasing, and passions rage; cravings gnaw the unsatisfied soul with eternal hunger. It may be that every particular sin will contribute to the mixture—a woe for broken Sabbaths; a woe for lusts gratified; a woe for every act of drunkenness, and every falsehood and dishonesty; a woe for every rejected invitation, and every threatening disregarded. Who can tell what more may be meant by the words: “*Full of mixture?*”

It has “*dregs*” in it. The dregs lie at the bottom, out of sight, but are the bitterest. Do these mean hidden woes not yet conceived of by any? Such as may be hinted at in the words, “Better he had never been born?” Such as Christ’s woes seem to speak of? These shall be the reverse of the saved man’s joys, “which never have entered the heart” to imagine. Backsliders seem sometimes to have begun to taste these dregs. Apostates, like Sipra, have shown a little of what they may be. But oh, the reality in the ages to come! For it shall be the wrath of Him whose breath makes the mountains smoke, and rocks earth to its center. O the staggering madness of despair!

“*He poureth out of the same.*” “*The wicked shall wring them out and drink them.*” They are not meant to be merely shown; this is not a cup whose contents shall only be exhibited and then withdrawn. No, the wicked must “*drink them.*” and cannot refuse. When Socrates, the Athenian sage, was adjudged to drink the cup of poison, he was able to protest his innocence, and thus to abate the bitterness of the draught, though he took it as awarded by the laws of his country. Here, however, there shall be nothing like protest, nothing of and such alleviation of the awful draught which the sinner must drink. “God poureth out,” and the guilty soul “*shall wring out and drink*” the very dregs. Job 27:22, says “They would fain flee out of his hand,” but cannot, for it is written, “God shall cast upon him and not spare.” In Jer 25:15, we have the Lord most peremptorily commanding, “Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved and be mad.” And further, He insists, verse 28, “If they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink.” “They shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (Job 21:20). And what mean those words already quoted in Rev 14:10, 11? It shall

not, on God's part, be a mere silent feeling of indignation at sin; there must be infliction of curse. There is no thunder while the electricity sleeps in the cloud. The seven seals showed no deliverance for earth while unbroken; the seven trumpets summoned no avengers, till sounded; the seven vials brought down no judgment, while only held in the angles' hands. Ah yes, the penalty must be exacted, and it will require eternity to exact it all!

O fellow-sinner, we have tried to say somewhat of this doom; but what are words of man? You have seen a porous vessel, in which was fine flavored liquor? outside you tasted the moisture, and it gave a slight idea of what was within; but slight indeed. So our words today. And remember each new sin of yours will throw in more mixture. It is the merciful One Himself who speaks in Ezek 22:13,14: "Behold I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? *I the Lord have spoken it and will do it.*" It is dreadful to read and hear this proclamation of wrath; but it is all given in order to compel us to flee from it. As one of our poets (Montgomery) sings:

"Mercy hath writ the lines of judgment here;
None who from the earth can read them need despair."

II. The story of One who drank this cup to the dregs.

We would not leave you merely contemplating the terrors of that wrath. We go on, in connection with it, to speak of one whose history has a strange bearing on our case.

There has been only One who has ever "drunk this cup to *its dregs.*" Cain has been drinking it for 5,000 years and finds his punishment greater that he can bear, but has not come to the dregs. Judas had been drinking it for nearly 2000 years, often crying out with a groan that shakes hell, "Oh that I had never been born! Oh that I had never seen or heard of the Lord Jesus Christ!" But he has not reached the dregs. The fallen angels have not come near the dregs: for they have not arrived at the judgment of the Great Day. The only One who has taken, tasted, drunk, and wrung out the bitterest of the bitter dregs, has been *the Judge Himself*, the Lord Jesus!

You know how often, when on earth, He spoke of it. "Are ye able to drink the cup that I shall drink of?" (Matt 20:22). "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 17:11). In Psalm 88:15, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: I suffer thy terrors: I am distracted." The universe saw Him with it at His lips. It was our cup of trembling; the cup in which the wrath due to the "multitude which no man can number" was mingled. What wrath, what woe! A few drops made Him cry, "Now is my soul troubled!" In the garden, the sight of it wrung out the strange, mysterious words, "Sorrowful unto death!" though God-man, He staggered at what He saw, and went on trembling. Next day, on Calvary, He drank it all. I suppose the three hours of darkness may

have been the time when He “was wringing out the dregs;” for then arose from His broken heart the wail that so appealed to the heart of the Father, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” As He ended the last drop, and cried out, “It is finished,” we may believe angels felt an inconceivable relief—and even the Father Himself! So tremendous was the wrath and curse!—the wrath and curse due to our sin.

In all this, there was nothing too much. Love would protest against one drop too much; and never do you find God exceeding. Did He not hasten to stay Abraham’s hand when enough had been done on Moriah? and at that same spot again, David’s day, when Justice had sufficiently declared the sharpness of its two-edged sword, did He not again hasten to deliver, crying, “It is enough?” How much more then when it was His beloved Son? He sought from Him all that was needed by justice craved. And so we find in this transaction what may well be good news to us. For Jesus drank that cup as the substitute for “the great multitude,” His innumerable people, given Him of the Father; and thereby freed them from ever tasting even one drop of that fierce wrath, that “cup of red wine, full of mixture,” with its dregs, its unknown terrors. Now, this One, this only One, who so drank the whole, presents to the sinners of our world the *emptied Cup*—His own Cup emptied. He sends it round the world, calling on mankind-sinners to take it and offer it to the Father as satisfaction for their sins. Come, O fellow-sinner, grasp it and hold it up to God! Plead it, and thou art acquitted.

Yes, if you are anxious at all to be saved and blessed, take up this emptied cup. However cold thy heart, however dull thy feelings, however slight thy sorrow for sin, take this emptied cup. Your appeal to this emptied cup arrests judgment at once. Do not think you need to endure some anguish of soul, some great sorrow—to take some sips of the red wine, far less to taste its dregs, ere you can be accepted. What thoughtless presumption! Imitating Christ in His atoning work! If Uzziah, the king, presenting incense when he ought to have let the priest do it for him, was smitten for his presumption, take care lest you be thrust away, if you presume to bring the fancied incense of your sorrow and bitter tears. It is the emptied cup that is offered us, not the cup wet with our tears, or its purity dimmed by the breath of our prayers. Feelings of ours, graces of ours, can do nothing but cast a veil over the perfect merits of Christ.

Man of God who hast used this cup, keep pleading it always. Ever make it the ground of thine assurance of acceptance. Examine it often and well—see how God was glorified here, and how plentifully it illustrates and honors the claims of God’s righteousness. Full payment of every claim advanced by Justice is here; and so you, in using it, give good measure, pressed down and running over. What then remains but that you render thanks and take this salvation, often singing,—

“Once it was mine, that cup of wrath,
And Jesus drank it dry!”

What should ever hinder thy triumphant joy? Be full of gratitude; and let this gratitude appear in thy letting others know what it has done for you, and may do for them.

For again we say to you, fellow-sinner, if you accept it not, soon you shall have no opportunity of choice. May I never see one of my people drinking this awful cup! May I never see it put into their hands! The groaning of a soul, dying in sin, is at times heard on this side of the veil, and it is the saddest and most haunting of all solemn and awful scenes; but what is that to the actual drinking of the cup, and wringing out the very dregs, that God "poureth out of the same." Never may Satan have it in his power to upbraid you with having once had the offer of salvation, an offer never made to him! It seems to me that every Sabbath, especially the Lord takes Gospel-hearers aside into a quiet secluded nook, and there sets down before them the "cup of red wine, full of mixture," and then the emptied cup of Jesus, earnestly, most earnestly, most sincerely, most compassionately, pressing them to decide and be blessed. *Men and brethren, never rest till the Holy Spirit has in your eye so glorified Christ who drank the cup, that you see in Him your salvation and God's glory secured beyond controversy, beyond even Satan's power to question or assail.*

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."

(Habakkuk 3:17-19)