

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE UNBELIEVER'S UNHAPPY CONDITION.

A Sermon

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“He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”—John iii. 36.

THIS is a part of a discourse by John the Baptist. We have not many sermons by that mighty preacher, but we have just sufficient to prove that he knew how to lay the axe at the root of the tree by preaching the law of God most unflinchingly; and also that he knew how to declare the gospel, for no one could have uttered sentences which more clearly contain the way of salvation than those in the text before us. Indeed, this third chapter of the gospel according to the evangelist John is notable among clear and plain Scriptures—notable for being yet clearer and plainer than almost any other. John the Baptist was evidently a preacher who knew how to discriminate—a point in which so many fail—he separated between the precious and the vile, and therefore he was as God's mouth to the people. He does not address them as all lost nor as all saved, but he shows the two classes, he keeps up the line of demarcation between him that feareth God and him that feareth him not. He plainly declares the privileges of the believer, he saith he hath even now eternal life; and with equal decision he testifies to the sad state of the unbeliever—“he shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” John the Baptist might usefully instruct many professedly Christian preachers. Although he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist, and ought, therefore, more clearly to bear witness to the truth; yet, there are many who muddle the gospel, who teach philosophy, who preach a mangle-mangle, which is neither law nor gospel; and these might well go to school to this rough preacher of the wilderness, and learn from him how to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” I desire this morning to take a leaf out of the Baptist's lesson book; I would preach as he did the gospel of the Lord Jesus, “whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.” It is my earnest

desire to enjoy the delight of expounding to you the deep things of God; I feel a profound pleasure in opening up the blessings of the covenant of grace, and bringing forth out of its treasury things new and old. I should be happy to dwell upon the types of the Old Testament, and even to touch upon the prophecies of the New; but, while so many yet remain unsaved, my heart is never content except when I am preaching simply the gospel of Jesus Christ. My dear unconverted hearers, when I see you brought to Christ, I will then advance beyond the rudiments of the gospel; but, meanwhile, while hell is gaping wide, and many of you will certainly help to fill it, I cannot turn aside from warning you. I dare not resist the sacred impulse which constrains me to preach over and over again to you the glad tidings of salvation. I shall, like John, continue laying the axe at the root of the trees, and shall not go beyond crying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he did, we shall now declare the sad estate of him who believeth not the Son of God.

This morning, with the burden of the Lord upon us, we shall speak upon the words of the text. Our first point shall be a discovery of *the guilty one*, "he that believeth not the Son." Next, we shall consider *his offence*; it lies in "not believing the Son;" thirdly, we shall lay bare the *sinful causes which create this unbelief*; and, fourthly, we shall show the terrible result of not believing in the Son: "he shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." May the Spirit help us in all.

I. To begin, then, who is THE GUILTY ONE? Who is the unhappy man here spoken of? Is he a person to be met with only once in a century? Must we search the crowds through and through to find out an individual in this miserable plight? Ah! no; the persons who are here spoken of are common; they abound even in our holy assemblies; they are to be met with by thousands in our streets. Alas, alas! they form the vast majority of the world's population. Jesus hath come unto his own and his own have not received him, the Jewish race remain unbelieving; while the Gentiles, to whom he was to be a light, prefer to sit in darkness and reject his brightness. We shall not be talking this morning upon a recondite theme, with only a remote relation to ourselves, but there are many here of whom we shall be speaking, and we devoutly pray that the word of God may come with power to their souls.

The persons here spoken of are those who believe not the Son of God. Jesus Christ, out of infinite mercy, has come into the world, has taken upon himself our nature, and in that nature has suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. By reason of his sufferings, the gospel message is now proclaimed to all men, and they are honestly assured that "whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." The unhappy persons in this text will not believe in Jesus Christ, they reject God's way of mercy; they hear the gospel, but refuse obedience to its command. Let it not be imagined that these individuals are necessarily avowed sceptics, for many of them believe much of revealed truth. They believe the Bible to be the word of God; they believe there is a God; they believe that Jesus Christ is come into the world as a Saviour; they believe most

of the doctrines which cluster around the cross. Alas! they may do this, but yet the wrath of God abideth on them, if they believe not the Son of God. It may surprise you to learn that many of these persons are very much interested in orthodoxy. They believe that they have discovered the truth, and they exceedingly value those discoveries, so that they frequently grow very warm in temper with those who differ from them. They have read much, and they are masters of argument in the defence of what they consider to be sound doctrine. They cannot endure heresy, and yet sad is the fact, that believing what they do, and knowing so much, they have not believed the Son of God. They believe the doctrine of election, but they have not the faith of God's elect : they swear by final perseverance, but persevere in unbelief. They confess all the five points of Calvinism, but they have not come to the one most needful point of looking unto Jesus, that they may be saved. They accept in creed the truths that are assuredly believed among us, but they have not received that faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; at any rate, they have not received it personally and practically for their souls' salvation.

It must be admitted that not a few of these persons are blameless as to their morals. You could not, with the closest observation, find either dishonesty, falsehood, uncleanness, or malice in their outward life ; they are not only free from these blots, but they manifest positive excellences. Much of their character is commendable. They frequently are courteous and compassionate, generous and gentle-minded. Oftentimes, they are so amiable and admirable, that, while looking upon them, we understand how our Lord, in a similar case, loved the young man who asked " what lack I yet ? " The one thing needful they are destitute of, they have not believed in Christ Jesus, and loath as the Saviour was to see them perish, yet it cannot be helped, one doom is common to all who believe not ; they shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them.

In many cases these persons are, in addition to their morality, religious persons after a fashion. They would not absent themselves from the usual service of the place of worship. They are most careful to respect the Sabbath, they venerate the Book of God, they use a form of prayer, they join in the songs of the Sanctuary, they sit as God's people sit, and stand as God's people stand, but, alas, there is a worm in the centre of that fair fruit, they have missed the one essential thing, which, being omitted, brings certain ruin ; they have not believed on the Son of God. Ah, how far a man may go, and yet, for lack of this one thing, the wrath of God may still abide upon him. Beloved of parents who are hopeful of the conversion of their boy, esteemed by Christians who cannot but admire his outward conversation, yet for all that, the young man may be under the frown of God, for " God is angry with the wicked every day." The wrath of God abideth on the man, whoever he may be, that hath not believed in Jesus.

Now, if our text showed that the wrath of God was resting on the culprits in our jails, most persons would assent to the statement, and none would wonder at it. If our text declared that the wrath of God abides upon persons who live in habitual unchastity and constant violation of

all the laws of order and respectability, most men would say "Amen;" but the text is aimed at another character. It is true that God's wrath does rest upon open sinners; but, oh sirs, this too is true, the wrath of God abideth upon those who boast of their virtues but have not believed in Jesus his Son. They may dwell in palaces; but, if they are not believers, the wrath of God abideth on them. They may sit in the senate house and enjoy the acclamations of the nation; but, if they believe not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on them. Their names may be enrolled in the peerage, and they may possess countless wealth, but the wrath of God abideth on them. They may be habitual in their charities, and abundant in external acts of devotion; but, if they have not accepted the appointed Saviour, the word of God bears witness, that "the wrath of God abideth on them."

II. Now let us, with our hearts awakened by God's Spirit, try to think upon THEIR OFFENCE.

What is this peculiar sin which entails the wrath of God upon these people? It is that they have not believed the Son of God. What does that amount to? It amounts to this, first of all, that they refuse to accept the mercy of God. God made a law, and his creatures were bound to respect and obey it. We rejected it, and turned aside from it. It was a great display of the heart's hatred, but it was not in some respects so thoroughly and intensely wicked a manifestation of enmity to God as when we reject the gospel of grace. God has now presented not the law but the gospel to us, and he has said: "My creatures, you have broken my law, you have acted very vilely towards me. I must punish for sin, else I were not God, and I cannot lay aside my justice; but I have devised a way by which, without any injury to any of my attributes, I can have mercy upon you. I am ready to forgive the past, and to restore you to more than your lost position, so that you shall be my sons and my daughters. My only command to you is, believe in my Son. If this command be obeyed, all the blessings of my new covenant shall be yours. Trust him, and follow him; for, behold, I give him as a leader and commander to the people. Accept him as making atonement by his substitution, and obey him." Now, to reject the law of God shows an evil heart of unbelief; but who shall say what a depth of rebellion must dwell in that heart which refuses not only the yoke of God but even the gift of God. The provision of a Saviour for lost men is the free gift of God, by it all our wants are supplied, all our evils are removed, peace on earth is secured to us, and glory for ever with God: the rejection of this gift cannot be a small sin. The all-seeing One, when he beholds men spurning the supreme gift of his love, cannot but regard such rejection as the worst proof of the hatred of their hearts against himself. When the Holy Spirit comes to convince men of sin, the especial sin which he brings to light is thus described: "Of sin, because they believed not on me." Not because the heathen were licentious in their habits, barbarous in their wars, and bloodthirsty in their spirit. No: "Of sin, because they believe not on me." Condemnation has come upon men, but what is the condemnation? "That light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Remember, also, that expressive text: "He that believeth not is condemned already;" and what is he

condemned for? "Because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

Let me remark, further, that in the rejection of divine mercy as presented in Christ, the unbeliever has displayed an intense venom against God, for observe how it is. He must either receive the mercy of God in Christ, or he must be condemned—there is no other alternative. He must trust Christ whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin, or else he must be driven from the presence of God into eternal punishment. The unbeliever in effect says, "I had sooner be damned than I would accept God's mercy in Christ." Can we conceive a grosser insult to the infinite compassion of the great Father? Suppose a man has injured another, grossly insulted him, and that repeatedly, and yet the injured person, finding the man at last brought into a wretched and miserable state, goes to him, and simply out of kindness to him, says, "I freely forgive you all the wrong you ever did me, and I am ready to relieve your poverty, and to succour you in your distress." Suppose the other replies, "No, I would sooner rot than take anything from you;" would not you have in such a resolve a clear proof of the intense enmity that existed in his heart? And so when a man saith, and everyone of you unbelievers do practically say so, "I would sooner lie for ever in hell than honour Christ by trusting him," this is a very plain proof of his hatred of God and his Christ. Unbelievers hate God. Let me ask, for what do you hate him? He keeps the breath within your nostrils; he it is that gives you food and raiment, and sends fruitful seasons. For which of these good things do you hate him? You hate him because he is good. Ah, then, it must be because you yourself are evil, and your heart very far removed from righteousness. May God grant that this great and crying sin may be clearly set before your eyes by the light of the Eternal Spirit, and may you repent of it, and turn from your unbelief, and live this day.

But yet further, the unbeliever touches God in a very tender place by his unbelief. No doubt, it was to the great Maker a joyous thing to fashion this world, but there are no expressions of joy concerning it at all equal to the joy of God in the matter of human redemption. We would be guarded when we speak of him; but, as far as we can tell, the gift of his dear Son to men, and the whole scheme of redemption, is the master work even of God himself. He is infinite in power, and wisdom, and love; his ways are as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth; but Scripture, I think, will warrant me in saying—

"That in the grace which rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross 'tis fairest writ,
In precious blood and crimson lines."

Now, the man who saith, "There is no God" is a fool, but he who denies God the glory of redemption, in addition to his folly, has robbed the Lord of the choicest jewel of his regalia, and aimed a deadly blow at the divine honour. I may say of him who despises the great salvation, that, in despising Christ, he touches the apple of God's eye. "This is my beloved Son," saith God, "hear ye him." Out of heaven he saith

it, and yet men stop their ears and say, "We will not have him." Nay, they wax wrath against the cross, and turn away from God's salvation. Do you think that God will always bear this? The times of your ignorance he hath winked at, but "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Will ye stand out against his love? His love that has been so inventive in ingenious plans by which to bless the sons of men? Shall his choicest work be utterly contemned by you? If so, it is little wonder that it is written, "The wrath of God abideth on him."

I must, still further, unveil this matter by saying that the unbeliever perpetrates an offence against every person of the blessed Trinity. He may think that his not believing is a very small business, but, indeed, it is a barbed shaft against the Deity. Take the Persons of the blessed Trinity, beginning with the Son of God who comes to us most nearly. It is to me the most surprising thing I ever heard of that "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." I do not wonder that in Hindostan the missionaries are often met with this remark: "It is too good to be true that God ever took upon himself the nature of such a thing as man!" Yet, more wonderful does it seem to be that, when Christ became man, he took all the sorrows and infirmity of man, and, in addition, was made to bear the sin of many. The most extraordinary of all facts is this: that the infinitely Holy should be "numbered with the transgressors," and, in the words of Esaias, should "bear their iniquities." The Lord hath made him, who knew no sin, to be made sin for us. Wonder of wonders! It is beyond all degree amazing that he who distributes crowns and thrones should hang on a tree and die, the just for the unjust, bearing the punishment due to sinners for guilt. Now, knowing this, as most of you do, and yet refusing to believe, you do, in effect, say, "I do not believe that the incarnate God can save." "Oh no," you reply, "we sincerely believe that he can save." Then, it must be that you feel, "I believe he can, but I will not have him to save me." Wherein I excuse you in the first place, I must bring the accusation more heavily in the second. You answer that "you do not say you will not believe him." Why do you then remain in unbelief? The fact is you do not trust him; you do not obey him. I pray you account for the fact. "May I believe him?" saith one. Have we not told you ten thousand times over that whosoever will may take the water of life freely. If there be any barrier it is not with God, it is not with Christ, it is with your own sinful heart. You are welcome to the Saviour now, and if you trust him now he is yours for ever. But oh, unbeliever, it appears to be nothing to you that Christ has died. His wounds attract you not. His groans for his enemies have no music in them to you. You turn your back upon the incarnate God who bleeds for men, and in so doing you shut yourselves out of hope, judging yourselves unworthy of eternal life.

Furthermore, the wilful rejection of Christ is also an insult to God the Father. "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed the record that God gave of his Son." God has himself often borne testimony to his dear Son. "Him hath God the Father set forth to be a propitiation for our sins." In rejecting Christ, you reject God's testimony and God's gift. It is a direct assault upon

the truthfulness and lovingkindness of the gracious Father, when you trample on or cast aside his priceless, peerless gift of love.

And, as for the blessed Spirit, it is his office here below to bear witness to Christ. In the Christian ministry, daily the Holy Spirit cries to the sons of men to come to Jesus. He has striven in the hearts of many of you, given you a measure of conviction of sin, and a degree of knowledge of the glory of Christ, but you have repressed it, you have laboured to your utmost to do despite to the Spirit of God. Believe me, this is no slight sin. An unbeliever is an enemy to God the Father, to God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Against the blessed Trinity in Unity, O unbeliever, your sin is a standing insult: you are now to God's face insulting him, by continuing an unbeliever.

And, I must add, that there is also in unbelief an insult against every attribute of God. The unbeliever in effect declares, "If the justice of God is seen in laying the punishment of sin upon Christ—I do not care for his justice, I will bear my own punishment." The sinner seems to say, "God is merciful in the gift of Christ to suffer in our stead—I do not want his mercy, I can do without it. Others may be guilty, and they may trust in the Redeemer, but I do not feel such guilt, and I will not sue for pardon." Unbelievers attack the wisdom of God, for, whereas the wisdom of God is in its fullness revealed in the gift of Jesus, they say, "It is a dogma, unphilosophical, and worn-out." They count the wisdom of God to be foolishness, and thus cast a slight upon another of the divine attributes. I might in detail mention every one of the attributes and prerogatives of God, and prove that your non-acceptance of the Saviour is an insult to every one of them, and to God himself: but the theme is too sad for us to continue upon it, and, therefore, let us pass to another phase of the subject, though I fear it will be equally grievous.

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE CAUSES OF THIS UNBELIEF.

In a great many, unbelief may be ascribed to a careless *ignorance* of the way of salvation. Now, I should not wonder if many of you imagine that, if you do not understand the gospel, you are therefore quite excused for not believing it. But, sirs, it is not so. You are placed in this world, not as heathens in the centre of Africa, but in enlightened England, where you live in the full blaze of gospel day. There are places of worship all around you, which you can without difficulty attend. The book of God is very cheap; you have it in your houses; you can all read it or hear it read. Is it so, then, that the King has been pleased to reveal himself to you, and tell you the way to **salvation**, and yet you, at the age of twenty, thirty, or forty, do not know the way of salvation? What do you mean, sir? What can you mean? Has God been pleased to reveal himself in Scripture, and tell you how to escape from hell and fly to heaven, and yet have you been too idle to inquire into that way? Dare you say to God, "I do not think it worth my while to learn what thou hast revealed, neither do I care to know of the gift which thou hast bestowed on men." How can you think that such ignorance is an excuse for your sin? What could be a more gross aggravation of it? If you do not know, you ought to know; if you have not learned the gospel message, you might have learned it, for there are some of us whose language it is not

difficult for even the most illiterate to understand, and who would, if we caught ourselves using a hard word, retract it, and put it into little syllables, so that not even a child's intellect need be perplexed by our language. Salvation's way is plain in the book; those words, "Believe and live," are in this Christian England almost as legible and as universally to be seen as though they were printed on the sky. That trust in the Lord Jesus saves the soul is well-known news. But, if you still say you have not known all this, then I reply, "Dear sir, do try to know it. Go to the Scriptures, study them, see what is there. Hear, also, the gospel, for it is written, "Incline your ear to come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." For your soul's sake I charge you, be no longer ignorant of that which you must know, or else must perish.

In some others, the cause is *indifference*. They do not think the matter to be of any very great consequence. They are aware that they are not quite right, but they have a notion that somehow or other they will get right at last; and, meanwhile, it does not trouble them. Oh man, I pray thee as thy fellow creature let me speak with thee a word of expostulation. God declares that his wrath abides upon you as an unbeliever, and do you call that nothing? God says, "I am angry with you," and you say to him, "I do not care, it is of very small importance to me. The rise or fall of the consols is of much more consequence than whether God is angry with me or not. My dinner being done to a turn concerns me a great deal more than whether the infinite God loves me or hates me." That is the English of your conduct, and I put it to you whether there can be a higher impertinence against your Creator, or a direr form of arrogant revolt against the eternal Ruler. If it does not trouble you that God is angry with you, it ought to trouble you; and it troubles *me* that it does not trouble *you*. We have heard of persons guilty of murder, whose behaviour during the trial has been cool and self-possessed. The coolness with which they pleaded "not guilty" has been all of a piece with the hardness of heart which led them to the bloody deed. He who is capable of great crime is also incapable of shame concerning it. A man who is able to take pleasure and be at ease while God is angry with him shows that his heart is harder than steel.

In certain cases, the root of this unbelief lies in another direction. It is fed by *pride*. The person who is guilty of it does not believe that he needs a Saviour. His notion is that he will do his very best, attend the church or the meeting-house very regularly, subscribe occasionally or frequently, and go to heaven partly by what he does, and partly by the merits of Christ. So that not believing in Christ is not a matter of any great consequence with him, because he is not naked, and poor, and miserable; but he is rich, and increased in goods in spiritual things. To be saved by faith is a religion for harlots, and drunkards, and thieves; but for respectable persons such as he is, who have kept the law from their youth up, he does not see any particular need of laying hold upon Christ. Such conduct reminds me of the words of Cowper:—

"Perish the virtue, as it ought, abhorr'd,
And the fool with it that insults his Lord."

God believed it needful, in order to save man, that the Redeemer

should die; yet you self-righteous ones evidently think that death a superfluity: for if a man could save himself, why did the Lord descend and die to save him? If there be a way to heaven by respectability and morality without Christ, what is the good of Christ? It is utterly useless to have an expiator and a meditator, if men are so good that they do not require them. You tell God to his face that he lies unto you, that you are not so sinful as he would persuade you, that you do not need a substitute and sacrifice as he says you do. Oh, sirs, this pride of yours is an arrogant rebellion against God. Look at your fine actions, you that are so good—your motives are base, your pride over what you have done has defiled, with black fingers, all your acts. Inasmuch as you prefer your way to God's way, and prefer your righteousness to God's righteousness, the wrath of God abideth on you.

Perhaps I have not hit the reason of your unbelief, therefore let me speak once more. In many *love of sin* rather than any boasted self-righteousness keeps them from the Saviour. They do not believe in Jesus, not because they have any doubt about the truths of Christianity, but because they have an enslaving love for their favourite sin. "Why," saith one, "if I were to believe in Christ, of course, I must obey him—to trust and to obey go together. Then I could not be the drunkard I am, I could not trade as I do, I could not practise secret licentiousness, I could not frequent the haunts of the ungodly, where laughter is occasioned by sin, and mirth by blasphemy. I cannot give up these my darling sins." Perhaps, this sinner hopes that one day, when he cannot any longer enjoy his sin, he will meanly sneak out of it, and try to cheat the devil of his soul; but, meanwhile, he prefers the pleasures of sin to obedience to God, and unbelief to acceptance of his salvation. O sweet sin! O bitter sin! How art thou murdering the souls of men! As certain serpents before they strike their prey fix their eyes upon it and fascinate it, and then at last devour it, so does sin fascinate the foolish sons of Adam; they are charmed with it, and perish for it. It yields but a momentary joy, and the wage thereof is eternal misery, yet are men enamoured of it. The ways of the strange woman, and the paths of uncleanness lead most plainly to the chambers of death, yet are men attracted thereto as moths by the blaze of the candle, and so are they destroyed. Alas! that men wantonly dash against the rocks of dangerous lusts, and perish wilfully beneath the enchantment of sin. Sad pity it is to prefer a harlot to the eternal God, to prefer a few pence made by dishonesty to heaven itself, to prefer the gratification of the belly to the love of the Creator, and the joy of being reconciled and saved. It was a dire insult to God when Israel set up a golden calf, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Shall the image of an ox that eateth grass supplant the living God! He that had strewn the earth with manna, had made Sinai to smoke with his presence, and the whole wilderness to tremble beneath his marchings, is he to be thrust aside by the image of a bullock that hath horns and hoofs? Will men prefer molten metal to the infinitely holy and glorious Jehovah? But, surely, the preference of a lust to God is a greater insult still: to obey our passions rather than his will, and to prefer sin to his mercy; this is the crime of crimes. May God delive us from it, for his mercy's sake.

IV. We have heavy tidings in the last head of my discourse, THE TERRIBLE RESULT of unbelief. "He shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "The wrath of God!" No words can ever fully explain this expression. Holy Whitfield, when he was preaching, would often hold up his hands, and, with tears streaming down his eyes, would exclaim, "Oh, the wrath to come! the wrath to come!" Then would he pause because his emotions checked his utterance. The wrath of God! I confess I feel uneasy if anybody is angry with me, and yet one can bear the anger of foolish, hot-tempered persons with some equanimity. But the wrath of God is the anger of one who is never angry without a cause, one who is very patient and long-suffering. It takes much to bring the choler into Jehovah's face, yet is he wroth with unbelievers. He is never wroth with anything because it is feeble and little, but only because it is wrong. His anger is only his holiness set on fire. He cannot bear sin; who would wish that he should? What right-minded man would desire God to be pleased with evil? That were to make a devil of God. Because he is God, he must be angry with sin wherever it is. This makes the sting of it, that his wrath is just and holy anger. It is the anger, remember, of an Omnipotent Being, who can crush us as easily as a moth. It is the anger of an Infinite Being, and therefore infinite anger, the heights and depths and breadths and lengths of which no man can measure. Only the incarnate God ever fully knew the power of God's anger. It is beyond all conception, yet the anger rests on you my hearer. Alas, for you, if you are an unbeliever, for this is your state before God. It is no fiction of mine, but the word of inspired truth: "the wrath of God abideth on him."

Then notice the next word, it "*abideth*," this is to say, it is upon you now. He is angry with you at this moment,—and always. You go to sleep with an angry God gazing into your face, you wake in the morning, and if your eye were not dim, you would perceive his frowning countenance. He is angry with you, even when you are singing his praises, for you mock him with solemn sounds, upon a thoughtless tongue; angry with you on your knees, for you only pretend to pray, you utter words without heart. As long as you are not a believer, he must be angry with you every moment. "God is angry with the wicked every day."

That the text saith it abideth, and the present tense takes a long sweep, for it always will abide on you. But may you not, perhaps, escape from it, by ceasing to exist? The text precludes such an idea. Although it says, that you "shall not see life," it teaches that God's wrath is upon you, so that the absence of life is not annihilation. Spiritual life belongs only to believers; you are now without that life, yet you exist, and wrath abides on you, and so it ever must be. While you shall not see life, you shall exist in eternal death, for the wrath of God cannot abide on a non-existent creature. You shall not see life, but you shall feel wrath to the uttermost. It is horror enough that wrath should be on you now, it is horror upon horrors, and hell upon hell, that it shall be upon you for ever.

And notice that it must be so, because you reject the only thing that can heal you. As George Herbert says, "Whom oils and balsams kill, what salve can cure?" If Christ himself has become a saviour

of death unto death unto you, because you reject him, how can you be saved? There is but one door, and if you close it by your unbelief, how can you enter heaven? There is one healing medicine, and, if you refuse to take it, what remains but death? There is one water of life, but you refuse to drink it; then must you thirst for ever. You put from you, voluntarily, the one only Redeemer; how then shall you be ransomed? Shall Christ die again, and in another state be offered to you once more? O sirs, you would reject him then as you reject him now. But there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. On the cross, God's mercy to the sons of men was fully revealed, and will you reject God's ultimatum of grace; his last appeal to you. If so, it is at your own peril: Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; he shall come again, but without a sin offering unto the salvation of his people.

Remember, sirs, that the wrath of God will produce no saving or softening effect. It has been suggested that a sinner, after suffering God's wrath awhile, may repent, and so escape from it. But our observation and experience prove that the wrath of God never softened anybody's heart yet, and we believe it never will: those who are suffering divine wrath will go on to harden, and harden, and harden; the more they suffer, the more they will hate: the more they are punished, the more will they sin. The wrath of God abiding on you will produce no good results to you, but rather you shall go from evil to evil, further and further from the presence of God.

The reason why the wrath of God abides on an unbeliever is partly because all his other sins remain on him. There is no sin that shall damn the man who believes, and nothing can save the man who will not believe. God removes all sin, the moment we believe; but while we believe not, fresh cords fasten upon us our transgressions. The sin of Judah is written as with an iron pen, and graven with a point of a diamond. Nothing can release you from guilt while your heart remains at enmity with Jesus Christ your Lord.

Remember that God has never taken an oath, that I know of, against any class of persons, except unbelievers. "To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" Continued unbelief God never will forgive, because his word binds him not to do so. Doth he swear an oath, and shall he go back from it? It cannot be. O that you might have grace to relinquish your unbelief, and close in with the gospel, and be saved.

Now, I hear some one object, "You tell us that certain people are under the wrath of God, but they are very prosperous." I reply, that yonder bullock will be slaughtered. Yet it is being fattened. And your prosperity, O ungodly man, is but a fattening of you for the slaughter of justice. Ay, but you say, "They are very merry, and some of those who are forgiven are very sad." Mercy lets them be merry while they may. We have heard of men who, when driven to Tyburn in a cart, could drink and laugh as they went to the gallows. It only proved what bad men they were. And so, whereas the guilty can yet take comfort, it only proves their guiltiness.

Let me ask what ought to be your thoughts concerning these solemn truths which I have delivered to you? I know what my

thoughts were; they made me go to my bed unhappy. They made me very grateful because I hope I have believed in Jesus Christ; yet they made me start in the night, and wake this morning with a load upon me. I come here to say to you, must it be so that you will always remain unbelievers, and abide under the wrath of God? If it must be so, and the dread conclusion seems forced upon me, at any rate, do look it in the face, do consider it. If you are resolved to be damned, know what you are at. Take advice and consider. O sirs, it cannot need any argument to convince you that it is a most wretched thing to be now under the wrath of God. You cannot want any argument to show that it must be a blessed thing to be forgiven—you must see that. It is not your reason that wants convincing, it is your heart that wants renewing.

The whole gospel lies in this nutshell. Come, thou guilty one, just as thou art, and rest thyself upon the finished work of the Saviour, and take him to be thine for ever. Trust Jesus now. In your present position it may be done. God's Holy Spirit blessing your mind, you may at this moment say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." You may now confide in Jesus, and some who came in here unforgiven, may make the angels sing because they go down yonder steps saved souls, whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. God knoweth one thing, that if I knew by what study and what art I could learn to preach the gospel so as to affect your hearts I would spare no cost or pains. For the present, I have aimed simply to warn you, not with adornment of speech, lest the power should be the power of man; and now I leave my message, and commit it to him who shall judge the quick and the dead. But this know, if ye receive not the Son, I shall be a swift witness against you. God grant it be not so, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews ii. 14—18;
Hebrews iii.

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