

Monergism

THE MISCHIEF OF  
**SINN**

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# The Mischief of Sin

by Thomas Watson

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## Christian Reader,

The excess of impiety which has broken down the banks of common *civility* and *modesty*, at first led my thoughts to these ensuing subjects. The spirits of men are leavened with *atheism*—and their lives are stained with *debauchery*. I do not know what to call them but *baptized heathens*. I am sure the *floods of sin* are risen, even to a deluge. There is a generation among us of whom I may say, that they militate against religion. They are so exceedingly profane that they esteem the Bible to be a fable—and would jeer all holiness out of the world! The "prince of the power of the air" now works in the children of disobedience, Ephesians 2:2.

In our Savior's time, many men's *bodies* were possessed with demons. But now, people's *souls* are possessed. One is possessed with a *blasphemous* devil, another with a *spiteful* devil, another with a *drunken* devil. This is one great sign of the approach of the last day: "iniquity shall abound," Matthew 24:12. Men's lusts have grown fierce and insatiable and, like vipers, lie sucking them! But Oh, how dire and tremendous will the *effects* of sin be!

"They were brought low for their iniquity." Sin is such a trade, that whoever follows is sure to go bankrupt. What did *Achan* get by his wedge of gold? It was a wedge to cleave asunder his soul from God! What did *Judas* get by his treason? He purchased a halter! What did King *Ahaz* get by worshiping the gods of Damascus? They were the ruin of him and all Israel, 2 Chronicles 28:23. Sin is first *pleasant*—and then *tragic*! I may fitly apply those words of Solomon to sin, Proverbs 7:26. "She has cast down many wounded." Oh, what a harvest of souls is the devil likely to have! Isaiah 5:14, "Hell has enlarged itself." It is greedy to make room for its guests. It is a matter of grief, to think that the *dragon* should have so many followers—and the *Lamb* so few!

Cyprian brings in the devil insulting Christ thus: "As for my followers, I never died for them as Christ has died for His. I never promised them as great a reward as Christ has done to His; yet I have greater numbers than He—and my followers venture more for me than His do for Him!"

Some sin out of *ignorance*—but even the blind can find the way to hell. But most sin out of *choice*. They know the forbidden dish—but they lust after it, though in the day they eat thereof—they shall surely die!

My design in this small treatise is to give check to sinners—and sound a pious retreat in their ears, to make them return from the hot pursuit of their impieties. If notwithstanding all my admonitions, they will run counter to the Word of God—and prostitute themselves

to their sordid lusts, they are soul-suicides—and their blood will be upon their own head! God will say to them in anger, "If you die, you die. If you are killed, you are killed." Zechariah 11:9

I have, at the request of some friends, made this discourse public. I acknowledge it is not inflated with rhetorical huffing and puffing, embellished with flowers of eloquence. Paul's preaching was "not with enticing words of wisdom—but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power," 1 Corinthians 2:4. *Plainness is ever best in beating down sin!* When a wound festers, it is fitter to lance it—than to cover it with silk.

Reader, that God will bless these few meditations to you—and make them operative upon your heart, is the prayer of him who is your friend—and studious of your eternal welfare,  
Thomas Watson

## **Sin Brings a Person Low**

"And were brought low for their iniquity." Psalm 106:43

If the Scripture is a spiritual garden, as Chrysostom said, the book of Psalms is a choice knoll in this garden, set with fragrant flowers. Luther called the Psalms, "a little Bible". The Psalms make sweeter music, than ever David's harp did. They are calculated for every Christian's condition—and may serve either for illumination or consolation.

In this Psalm, David sets down the SINS of the people of God.

First, their sins in **general**. Verse 6, "We have sinned with our fathers." The examples of fathers are not always to be urged. Shall we

not be wiser than our fathers? Fathers may err. Sometimes, it is better for a son to take his *land* from his father—than take his *religion* from his father, 2 Chronicles 29:6.

Second, David makes a **particular** enumeration of their sins.

**1. Their forgetfulness of God.** Verse 13, "They soon forgot His works." Or, as it is in the original—they made haste to forget his works. The Lord wrought a famous miracle for them, verse 11. He drowned Israel's *enemies*—and Israel drowned His *mercies*. Our sins and God's kindnesses, are apt quickly to slip out of our memory. We deal with God's mercies as with flowers. When they are fresh, we smell them and put them in our bosom. But within awhile, we throw them away and mind them no more. They made haste to forget His works.

**2. Their inordinate lusting.** Verse 14, "They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness." They were weary of the provision which God sent them miraculously from heaven. They grew *dainty*. They wept for quails. They were not content that God should supply their *needs*—but they would have Him satisfy their *lusts* also. God let them have their requests. They had quails—but in *anger*. "He sent leanness to their souls." In other words, He sent a plague whereby they pined and consumed away.

**3. Their idolatry.** Verse 19, "They made a calf in Horeb." They framed for themselves a *god of gold* and worshiped it. The Scripture calls idols "*a shame*," Hosea 9:10. For this, God disclaimed them from being His people. Exodus 32:2, "*Your* people have corrupted themselves." Formerly God called them His people—but now He does not say to Moses "*My* people," but "*your* people."

**4. Their infidelity.** Verse 24, "They did not believe His Word—but murmured." They did not think that God would subdue their enemies and bring them into that pleasant land which flowed with

milk and honey. And this unbelief broke forth into murmuring. They wished

they had made their graves in Egypt, Exodus 16:3. When men begin to distrust God's promise—then they quarrel at His Providence. When faith grows low—murmuring grow high. For these things, God stretched out His hand against them, as it is in the text, "And they were brought low for iniquity."

The words branch themselves into two parts.

1. Israel's misery. "They were brought low." Some expositors translate it, "They waxed lean." The Hebrew and Septuagint render it, "They were humbled."
2. The procuring cause of it, "for their iniquity."

**Doctrine.** The proposition resulting from the text—is that sin brings a person low. Psalm 147:6, "The wicked, He casts down to the ground." Jephtha said to his daughter when she met them with timbrel and dancing, Judges 11:35, "Alas my daughter, you have brought me very low." So a man may say to his sin, "Alas, my sin—you have brought me very low!"

Sin is the great leveler. It brings a **family** low. It cuts off the pillars of the family. 1 Samuel 2:29, "Why do you scorn my sacrifices and offerings?" Verse 31, "I will put an end to your family, so it will no longer serve as my priests. All the members of your family will die before their time. None will live to a ripe old age." Which threatening God made good when He cut off Eli's two sons and took the other sons from the priesthood.

Sin brings a **kingdom** low. 1 Samuel 15:19, "Why did not you obey the voice of the Lord—but did evil in His sight?" Verse 28, "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day!"

Sin breaks the foundation of **church** and **state**. Hosea 13:1, "When Ephraim spoke, men trembled; he was exalted in Israel. But he became guilty of Baal worship and died." The tribe of Ephraim carried a majesty with it and was superior to the ten tribes. When Ephraim spoke, he struck an awe and terror into others—but when he became guilty of Baal worship—he died. When once he fell from God by idolatry, he degraded himself of his honor. His strength and glory came to nothing. Now every puny adversary insulted him, as the timid rabbit will tread upon a dead lion.

Among the many threatenings against sin, is Deuteronomy 28:43, "You shall sink lower and lower." And in the text this threatening is exemplified and made good, "They were brought low for their iniquity." That I may amplify and illustrate the proposition, I shall show:

How many ways sin brings a man low.

Why sin must bring a man low.

## **II. WAYS which sin brings a man low**

**1. Sin brings a man low—in God's esteem.** The sinner sets a high price upon himself, Proverbs 26:16—but God has low thoughts of him—and looks upon him with a despicable eye. Daniel 11:21, "The next to come to power will be a despicable man." Who was this spoken of? It was Antiochus Epiphanes. He was a king, and his name signifies "illustrious," and by some he was worshiped. Yet in God's account he was a despicable person. The Psalmist speaking of the wicked says, "All alike have become corrupt," Psalm 14:3. In the Hebrew, it is "they are become stinking."

That you may see how low a sinner is fallen in God's account, the Lord compares him to *dross*, Psalm 119:119; to *chaff*, Psalm 1:4; to a pot boiling with *scum*, Ezekiel 24:6; to a *dog*, 2 Peter 2:22, which under the Law was unclean; to a *serpent*, Matthew 23:33, which is a



cursed creature. Nay, he is worse than a serpent, for the poison of a serpent is what *God* has put into it—but a wicked man has that which the *devil* has put into him! Acts 5:3, "Why has *Satan* filled your heart?"

A sinner has a high opinion of himself. But if he knew how loathsome and disfigured he was in God's eye—he would abhor himself in the dust!

**2. Sin brings a man low in his intellectual parts.** Sin has ruined the rational part. *Darkness* is upon the face of this deep. Since the Fall, the *lamp of reason* burns dim. 1 Corinthians 13:9, "We know but in *part*." There are many knots in nature, which are not easy to untie. Why should the Nile overflow in summer when, by the course of nature, waters are lowest? Why should the loadstone rather draw *iron* than *gold*—which is a more noble metal? "Where is the path to the origin of light? Where is the home of the east wind? Who created a channel for the torrents of rain? Who laid out the path for the lightning?" Job 38:24-25. "How do the bones grow in the womb?" Ecclesiastes 11:5. Many of these are mysteries which we do not understand. The *key* of knowledge is lost in the *tree* of knowledge.

We are especially enveloped with ignorance in sacred matters. "The sword is upon our right eye," Zachariah 11:16. What a little of the sea will a nutshell hold? How little of God will our intellect contain? Job 11:7, "Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Who can fully unriddle the mystery of the Trinity or fathom the mystery of the the divine and human natures of Christ? And alas, as to the plan of salvation, and heart-transforming knowledge—we are totally blinded—until God's Spirit lights our lamp! 1 Corinthians 2:14.

**3. Sin brings a man low in affliction.** That is the meaning of Psalm 107:39, "They were brought low for their iniquity." Adam's sin brought him low; it banished him out of paradise. 2 Chronicles 28:18, "In those days, God cut Israel short." Sin makes God cut a

people short in their spiritual and civil liberties. *Sin is the womb of sorrow—and the grave of comfort!* Sin turns the body into a hospital. It causes fevers, ulcers, and cancers.

Sin buries the name, melts the estate, pulls away near relations like limbs from our body. Sin is the trojan horse out of which a whole troop of afflictions comes. Sin drowned the old world—and burnt Sodom. Sin made Zion sit in Babylon. Lamentations 1:8, "Jerusalem bath grievously sinned, therefore she is removed." Sin shut up God's affections. Lamentations 2:21, "You have killed and not pitied." Israel sinned and did not repent—and God killed and did not pity. Sin is the great humbler. Did not David's sin bring him low? Psalm 38:3, "There is no rest in my bones because of my sin." Did not Manasseh's sin bring him low? It changed his royal crown into fetters, 2 Chronicles 33:11. For sin, God turned great King Nebuchadnezzar into an animal, "He ate grass like a cow—and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws!" Daniel 4:33.

Sin is like the Egyptian reed—too feeble to support us—but sharp enough to wound us. Jeremiah 2:16, "Egyptians have utterly destroyed Israel's glory and power." The Egyptians were not a warlike but a womanish people, imbecilic and weak, yet these were too hard for Israel and made a spoil of her. Verse 17: "Have you not brought this on yourselves by forsaking the Lord your God?" Is it not your sin, which has brought you low?

Nay, sin not only brings us low—but it embitters affliction. Sin puts teeth into the affliction. Guilt makes affliction heavy. A little water is heavy in a lead vessel—and a little affliction is heavy in a guilty conscience.

**4. Sin brings one low in melancholy.** This is a *black humor* seated chiefly in the mind. Some have dreadful and dismal forebodings. Melancholy clothes the mind in *sable*. It puts a Christian out of tune, so that he is not fit for prayer or praise. Lute

strings will not sound when wet, nor can one under the power of melancholy make melody in his heart to the Lord, Ephesians 5:19. When the mind is troubled, it is unfit to go about work.

Melancholy disturbs reason—and weakens faith. Satan works much on this temper. It is the bath of the devil. He bathes himself with delight in such a person. Through the *black spectacles* of melancholy, everything appears black. When a Christian looks upon sin, he says, "This Leviathan will devour me!" When he looks upon ordinances, these will serve to increase his guilt. When he looks upon affliction, his gulf will swallow him up! Melancholy creates fears in the mind. It excites jealousies and imprisons. I may allude to Psalm 53:5, "They were overwhelmed with dread, where there was nothing to dread."

**5. Sin brings a man low in spiritual plagues.** It brings many a one to a seared conscience—and to spiritual lethargy. Isaiah 29:10: "The Lord has poured out upon you the spirit of a deep sleep—and has closed your eyes." Men are brought low indeed when the sound of Aaron's bell will not awaken them. No sermon will stir them. They are like the blacksmith's dog—which can lie and fast sleep near the anvil when all the sparks fly about. Conscience is in a lethargy. Once a man's speech is gone and his feeling lost—he draws on apace to death. So when the checks of conscience cease and a man is sensible neither of sin nor wrath—you may ring out the death bell. He is past hope of recovery. Thus some are brought low, even to a reprobate sense. This is the threshold of damnation.

**6. Sin brings a man low in temptation.** Paul began to be proud—and he had a messenger of Satan to buffet him, 2 Corinthians 12:7. Some think it was a visible apparition of Satan tempting him to sin. Others, that the devil was now assaulting Paul's faith, making him believe he was a hypocrite. Satan laid the *bomb of temptation*—to blow up the fort of his grace! And this temptation was so sore that he called it "a thorn in the flesh." It put him to much anguish. Such temptations, the godly often fall into. They are tempted to question

the truth of the promises—or the truth of their own graces. Sometimes they are tempted to blasphemy, sometimes to self-murder. Thus, they are brought low; they are almost gone and ready to give consent. The devil nibbles at their *heel*—but God wards off the blow from their *head*.

**7. Sin brings one low in desertion.** This is a deep abyss indeed. Psalm 88:6, "You have laid me in the lowest pit." Desertion is a short hell. Song of Solomon 5:6, "My beloved has withdrawn himself and was gone." Christ knocked—but the spouse was loath to rise off her bed of sloth and open to Him immediately. When the devil finds a person sleeping—he enters. But when Christ finds him sleeping—He is gone. And if this Sun of righteousness withdraws His golden beams from the soul, darkness follows.

Desertion is the *arrow of God* shot into the soul. Job 6:4, "For the Almighty has struck me down with his arrows. He has sent his poisoned arrows deep within my spirit. All God's terrors are arrayed against me." The Scythians, in their wars, used to dip their arrows in the *gall of asps* that their venomous poison might torture the enemy all the more. So the Lord shot His *poisoned arrows of desertion* at Job, under the wounds whereof his spirit lay bleeding.

God is called a *light* and a *fire* in Scripture. The deserted soul feels the fire—but does not see the light. So dreadful is this that the most tormenting pains—are but a pleasure, compared to it. All the delights under the sun, will administer no comfort in this condition. *Worldly things can no more relieve a troubled mind—than a silk stocking can ease a broken leg.* Psalm 88:15, "I have suffered your terrors and am in despair." Luther, in desertion, was close to dying. "He had no color seen in his face, nor was heard to speak—but his body seemed dead," as one wrote in a letter to Melancthon.

**8. Sin brings many low in despair.** This is a gulf which none but reprobates fall into. Jeremiah 18:11, "You said, there is no hope." Despair is a devouring of salvation. It is a millstone tied about the

soul—which sinks it in perdition. Despair looks on God not as a *Father*—but as a *judge*. It refuses the remedy. Other sins need Christ; despair rejects Him. It closes the orifice of Christ's wounds—so that no blood will come out to heal. This is the voice of despair, "My sin is greater than the mercy of God can pardon!" It makes the *wound* broader than the *plaster*.

Despair is a God-affronting sin. It is sacrilege; it robs God of His crown jewels—His power, goodness, and truth. How Satan triumphs to see the honor of God's attributes laid in the dust, by despair! Despair casts away the *anchor of hope*—and then the soul must sink. What will a ship do in a storm without an anchor? Despair locks men up in impenitency. I have read of one *Hubertus* who died despairing. He made his will after this manner, "I yield my goods to the King, my body to the grave, my soul to the devil." Isaiah 38:18, "They that go down into the pit, cannot hope for Your truth." They who go down into this pit of despair cannot hope for the truth of God's promise. And this despair grows at last, into horror and raving.

**9. Without repentance, sin brings a man into the bottomless pit**—and then he is brought low indeed! *Sin draws hell at its heels*. Psalm 9:7, "The wicked shall be turned into hell." Not to speak of the *punishment of loss*, which divines think is the worst part of hell: the being separated from the beatific sight of God, "in whose presence is fullness of joy," Psalm 16:11. The *punishment of sense* is bad enough. The wrath will come upon sinners to the uttermost, 1 Thessalonians 2:16.

If when God's anger is kindled but a little—and a spark of it flies into a man's conscience in this life, it is so terrible—what will it be when He stirs up all His wrath? Psalm 78:38. How sad was it with the infidel Spira, when he only sipped of the cup of wrath. He became a madman. His flesh wasted away—and he became a terror to himself. What is it then to lie *steeping* in hell?

Some may ask, "*where is hell?*" But as Chrysostom said, "Let us not be inquisitive *where* it is—but rather let our care be to *escape* it." But, to satisfy curiosity, hell is some infernal place. It lies low. Proverbs 15:24: "Hell beneath."

**The PLURALITY of hell torments.** In bodily sickness, it is seldom that more than one disease at a time, troubles the patient. But in hell, there is a diversity of torments. There is:

1. **Darkness**, Jude 13. Hell is a *dark* region.

2. There are **bonds** and **chains**, 2 Peter 2:4. God has *golden* cords, which are His precepts tying men to duty. But He also has *iron* chains, which are partly His decree in ordaining men to destruction; and partly His power in bridling and chaining them up under wrath. The binding of the wicked in chains, notes that the damned in hell cannot *move* from place to place, which might perhaps a little alleviate and abate their misery; but they shall be tied to the stake never to stir. The wicked could go from one sin to another—but in hell they shall not move from one place to another.

3. The **worm** which never dies, Mark 9:44. This is a self-accusing conscience, which is so torturing, as if a worm full of poison were gnawing at a man's heart! Such as would not hear the *voice* of conscience—shall be made to feel the *worm* of conscience!

**The SEVERITY of hell torments.** It is expressed by a lake of fire, Revelation 20:15. Fire is the most torturing element.

Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace was but a *painted* fire—compared to hell-fire! It is called a "prepared fire," Matthew 25:41, as if God had been sitting down to devise some exquisite torment. Dives cried out, "O I am tormented in this flame!" Luke 16:24.

1. **The torments of hell shall be in every part of body and soul.** The **BODY** shall be tormented. That body which was so tender and delicate, that it could not bear heat or cold—shall suffer in every

part! The *eyes* shall be tormented with sights of devils, the *ears* with the hideous shrieks of the damned. The *tongue* that was fired with passion, shall now have fire enough! Luke 16:24: "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my *tongue*!"

All the powers of the SOUL shall be tormented. The *mind* will comprehend divine displeasure. The *memory* will remember what mercies have been abused, what means of grace have been slighted—and what a heaven is forfeited! The *conscience* shall be tormented with self-accusations. The sinner shall arraign himself for stifling and resisting the motions of the blessed Spirit.

The wicked shall not only be forced to *behold* the devil—but shall be *shut up in the den with this roaring lion*—and he shall spit fire in their faces!

The wicked shall hear the language of hell. Revelation 16:9: "Men were scorched with heat—and *blasphemed* the name of God." To hear reprobates cursing God and have one's ears chained to their oaths and blasphemies—what a hell will this be!

**2. The torments of hell have *no end* put to them.** Origen falsely imagined a fiery stream in which the souls of sinful men, yes, devils and all, were to be *purged*—and then pass into heaven. But the Scripture asserts that whoever is not purged from sin by Christ's blood (1 John 1:7) is to lie under the torrid zone of God's wrath to all eternity! Revelation 14:11, "The smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever!" The word "forever" burns hotter than the fire! At death, all our worldly sorrows die—but the torments of hell are as long-lived as eternity! Revelation 9:6, "They shall seek death—and shall not find it." Always dying—but never dead. Here on earth, the wicked thought a prayer was long, a church service long, Amos 8:5—but how long will it be to lie in hell forever!

**3. The pains of hell are *without intermission*.** If a man is in pain, yet while he is *asleep* he does not feel it. There is no sleep in

hell. What would the damned give for one hour's sleep? Revelation 4:8. "They have no rest, day nor night." In outward pain, there is some abatement. The burning fit is sometimes off and the patient is more at ease than he was. But the damned soul *never* says, "I have some ease." Those infernal pains are always acute and sharp; there is no drop of water to cool the tongue, in the agony of this fire!

**4. In hell, the wicked shall see the godly advanced to a kingdom—and themselves bound up to eternal misery!** Luke 13:28, "Then shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God—and you yourselves thrust out!" When sinners shall see those whom they hated and scorned—set at Christ's right hand and crowned with glory—and themselves cast out to the devils; nay, when the ungodly shall see those whom they abused and persecuted sit as their judges—and join with Christ in condemning them. How will this aggravate the misery of this hellish crew—and make them gnash their teeth for envy? 1 Corinthians 6:2, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"

**5. In hell, the wicked shall have none to sympathize with them.** It is some comfort to have friends condole us in our sufferings—but the damned have none to compassionate them. God's mercy will not pity them. God's *mercy abused*—turns to *fury*. God the *Father* will not pity them; He will laugh at them. Proverbs 1:26, "I will laugh at your calamity!" Is not this sad, for a damned soul to lie roaring in flames and have God sit and laugh at him! *Jesus Christ* will not pity the wicked. They slighted His blood—and now His blood cries against them! The *angels* will not pity them. It is a desirable sight to men, to see God's justice glorified. The *saints* in heaven will not pity them. They were continually persecuted by them—and "The righteous will be glad when they are avenged!" Psalm 58:10.

Nay, such as were their nearest relations on earth, will not pity them. The father will not pity his child in hell; nor will the wife pity her husband. The reason is, because the glorified saints have their wills



made perfectly subject to God's will—and when they see His will is done—they rejoice, though it is in the damning of their near relations.

Does not sin, then, bring men low—when it brings them to hell! Ezekiel 32:27, "They are gone down to hell." Thus I have shown you how many ways sin brings one low.

### **III. WHY sin must bring a man low**

**1. Because sin is a disease**—and that brings low. Take the healthiest constitution, the most robust complexion, yet, if cancer gets into it, it brings the body low. The beauty withers. The silver cord begins to be loosed. So it is in spiritual things. The soul which was once of an orient brightness, the *mind* angelified, the *will* crowned with liberty, the *affections* as so many seraphims burning in love to God—yet by sin, it has become diseased, Isaiah 1:6—and this disease brings it low. The soul has fallen from its pristine dignity. It has lost its noble and sublime operations—and lies exposed to the second death.

**2. Sin must bring a man low, because the sinner enters into war with God.** He tramples upon God's law and crosses His will. If God is of one mind, the sinner will be of another. He does all he can to spite God, Jeremiah 44:16, "We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like!"

The same Hebrew word for *sin*, signifies *rebellion*. Now, can the Lord endure to be thus saucily confronted by *proud dust*? God will never let his own creature rise up in arms against Him. He will pull down the sinner's plumes—and bring him low! God is called El Elim, the mighty of mighties. When the *angel* wrestled with Jacob, he touched only the hollow of his thigh, Genesis 32:25. But when *God* wrestles with a sinner, He will tear them apart, "Like a bear robbed of her

cubs, I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them; a wild animal will tear them apart!" Hosea 13:8. The Apostle said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Hebrews 10:31. It is good to fall into God's hands, when He is a friend—but it is dreadful falling into His hands, when He is an enemy.

**3. Sin must bring a man low because the sinner labors to do what he can to bring God low.** He has low thoughts of God. He slights His sovereignty, questions His truth, looks upon all God's promises as a forged deed. The sinner, therefore, is said to *despise* God, Numbers 11:20.

Again, the sinner lessens God and brings Him low in the thoughts of others. Ezekiel 8:12, "Have you seen what the leaders of Israel are doing with their idols in dark rooms? They are saying, *The Lord doesn't see us; He has deserted our land!*" Do but secure yourselves from *man's* eye—and as for *God's* taking notice of sin—you need not trouble yourselves. "*The Lord doesn't see us; He has deserted our land!*" Zephaniah 1:12, "I will search with lanterns in Jerusalem's darkest corners to find and punish those who sit contented in their sins, indifferent to the Lord, thinking he will do nothing at all to them." That is—*you need not fear punishment.*

Malachi 2:17, "You say—*Everyone who does evil is good in the Lord's sight—and He is pleased with them. Where is the God of justice?*" Here they blemish God's sanctity. That is, "God is not so holy—but He bears as much favor to the wicked as to the good." "Where is the God of justice?" Here they tax His justice. It is as if they had said, "God does not order things rightly. He does not weigh matters impartially in an equal balance." "Where is the God of justice?" Thus a sinner eclipses the glory of the Godhead—and labors to bring God low in the thoughts of others.

And besides, he does what he can—to extirpate God. He wishes there were no God. He says, "Get out of the way! Rid us of the Holy One of

Israel!" Isaiah 30:11. A wicked man would not only unthrone God—but "kill" God. If he could help it, God would no longer be God. Now, if a sinner is this impious as to endeavor to bring God low, no wonder if God brings him low. Nahum 1, "I will prepare your grave, for you are vile!" That is, "I will bring you (O Sennacherib) from the throne to the tomb. I will kick you into your grave." And Obadiah 4, "Though you soar as high as eagles and build your nest among the stars, I will bring you crashing down. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

**4. Sin must bring a person low, because sin is the only thing God has an antipathy against.** The Lord does not hate a man because he is poor or despised. You do not hate your friend because he is *sick*. But that which draws forth the keenness of God's hatred is *sin*. Jeremiah 44:4, "Do not do this *abominable* thing which I hate." Now, for anyone to espouse that which God's soul hates, it must undo him at last. Is that subject likely to thrive, whom his king hates? The cherishing and countenancing of sin makes the fury come up in God's face, Ezekiel 38:16. And, if His wrath is once kindled, it burns to the lowest hell. The Psalmist said, "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" Isaiah 33:14.

**5. Sin must bring the sinner low, because it exposes him to God's curse**—and God's curse blasts wherever it comes. "If you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out." Deuteronomy 28:15-19 The curse of God haunts the sinner wherever he goes. If he is in the city, it spoils his trade. If he is in the country, it destroys his crop.

God's curse drops poison into everything. It is a moth in the closet, a plague among the cattle, rot among the sheep. If the *flying scroll of curses* enters into a man's house, it consumes the timber and walls of it, Zechariah 5:4. When Christ cursed the fig-tree, it immediately withered, Matthew 21:19. Men's curses are insignificant—they shoot without bullets. But Numbers 22:6 says, "I know that those You bless are blessed—and those You curse are cursed." God's curse kills, Psalm 37:22, "those cursed by Him will be destroyed." If all God's curses are leveled against the sinner—then he must be brought low!

### **Use #1. Information**

**Branch 1.** See then from this that God's punishing either a person or a nation is not without a cause. A father may chastise his son out of a bad temper, when there is no cause—but God never punishes without a just cause. He does not do purely to show His sovereignty, or because He takes pleasure to bring His creatures low. Lamentations 3:33, "He does not *willingly* bring affliction," or, as it is in the Hebrew, "from the heart." But there is some impellent cause. "They were brought low—*for their iniquity.*"

Cyprian writes this concerning the persecution of the Church under the Emperor Valerian. "We must confess that this sad calamity, which has, in a great part wasted our churches, has risen from our own internal wickedness—for we are full of avarice, ambition, emulation, etc." Jeremiah 4:17, "They surround her like men guarding a field, because she has rebelled against Me." As horses or deer in a field are so enclosed with hedges and so narrowly watched that they cannot get out, so Jerusalem was so besieged with enemies and watched that there was no escape for her without danger of life. Verse 18, "Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!"

As we used to say to children when they were sick, "This is because of the green fruit you have eaten, or from your going out in the snow,"

so God says, "This is because of your wickedness." Jeremiah 30:15, "Why do you cry out about your affliction? Your pain has no cure! I have done these things to you because of your enormous guilt and your innumerable sins!" The *sword* which wounds you is of your own whetting! The *CORDS* that pinch you are of your own twisting! Thank your sin for all this! 1 Corinthians 11:30, "For this cause many are sick, and weak, and many fall asleep." The Church at Corinth was punished with physical death, because of coming unworthily to the Lord's Table and profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

The *abuse of holy things* incenses God. Nadab and Abihu found the flames of wrath hot about the altar! Leviticus 10:1-2. So that there is still a cause why God brings any person low. There is no reason why God should love us—but there is a great deal of reason why God should punish us. "They were brought low—for their iniquity."

**Branch 2.** See from this what a mischievous thing sin is—it brings a person and a nation low. Hosea 14:1, "You have fallen by your iniquity." Sin lays men low in the grave—and in hell too, without repentance. Sin is the Achan which troubles. It is the gall in our cup and the gravel in our bread, Proverbs 20:17. Sin and punishment are linked together with adamant chains! Sin sets the world on fire. It is a coal which not only blackens—but burns! Sin conjures up all our afflictions. All the crosses which befall us, all the storms in conscience—sin raises them! Never let anyone think to rise by sin, for the text says that sin brings him low.

Sin first tempts—and then damns! It is first a fox—and then a lion! Sin does to a man—as Jael did to Sisera. First she brought the milk and butter to Sisera—then she pounded the tent peg through his head! Judges 5:26. Sin first brings us pleasures which delight and charm the senses—and then comes with its hammer and nail! Sin does to the sinner, as Absalom did to Amnon. When his heart was merry with wine—then he killed him, 2 Samuel 13:28. Sin's *last act* is always tragic!

How evil a thing is sin that it not only brings a people low—but it makes God delight in bringing them low. Ezekiel 5:13, "When My anger is spent and I have vented My wrath on them—I will be comforted." God does not take delight in punishing. Judges 10:16, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel." He is like a father who chastises his child with tears. But God was so provoked with the Jews, that it seemed a delight to Him to afflict. "When My anger is spent and I have vented My wrath on them—I will be comforted." Oh, what a venomous, accursed thing sin is—which makes a merciful God take comfort in the destruction of His own creature!

**Branch 3.** See, then, what little cause any have to wonder that they are brought low. As the Apostle said, 1 Peter 4:12, "Don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." So do not think it strange if you are as full of eclipses and changes as the moon. Do not wonder if you are under the *black* rod. A sick man may as well wonder that he is in pain—as a sinful man wonder that he is afflicted. Do not vapors cause thunder? Is it a wonder to hear God's thundering voice after the hellish vapors of our sins have been sent up? Sin is a debt. It is set out in Scripture by a debt of millions, Matthew 18:24. Is it a wonder for a man who is in debt to be arrested? Never wonder that God arrests you with His judgments when you are so deeply in arrears.

Sin is a walking contrary to God. And if men walk contrary to God, is it any wonder if God walks contrary to them? Leviticus 26:17, "If you will walk contrary to Me—then I will also walk contrary to you—and I even I will chastise you seven times more for your sins."

Oh, sinner, do not wonder that it is so bad with you—but rather wonder that it is no worse! Are you in the deep of affliction? It is a wonder you are not in the deep of hell! If *Jesus Christ* was brought low, is it a wonder that you are brought low?

Christ was brought low in **poverty**. A feeding trough was His cradle. The cobwebs were His curtains.

He was brought low in **temptation**. Matthew 4:1, "He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." No sooner was Christ out of the water of baptism—than He was in the fire of temptation! Only His Godhead was too strong a bulwark for Satan's fiery darts to enter.

He was brought low in His **agonies**. He *sweat* blood in the garden. He *shed* blood on the cross. If Christ was brought low, who knew no sin, do you wonder that you are brought low, who are so full of sin? Lamentations 3:39, "Why doth a living man complain—for the punishment of his sin?" What, a sinner—and you wonder or murmur that you are afflicted? Sin as naturally draws punishment to it—as the magnet draws iron!

**Branch 4.** See the text fulfilled this day in our eyes. Sin has brought our nation low. We are falling down—if not collapsed. We do not lack for sin. There is a spirit of wickedness in the land. Ours are mighty sins, Amos 5:12; bloody sins, Hosea 4:2. The sins of Denmark, Spain, France, and Italy—are translated into *English*. We have many Sodoms among us—and may fear to have the line of confusion stretched over us. By our impieties and blasphemies, we have sounded a trumpet of rebellion against heaven. *Were our sins engraved upon our foreheads, we would be ashamed to look up!*

Men invent new sins. Romans 1:30, "inventors of evil things." Some invent new *errors*; others invent new *snares*. This age exceeds former ages in sinning. As it is with trades, there may be old trades—but there are some new tradesmen now who have grown more dexterous and cunning in their trade, than they were in former times. So it is with sin. Sin is an old trade—but there are people now alive, who are more skilled in the trade—and have grown more expert in sin, than those who are dead and gone. In former times, sinners were *bunglers at sin*, compared to what they are now. They are skillful at self-damnation. Jeremiah 4:22, "They are foolish children, without understanding. They are *skilled in doing what is evil*—but they do not know how to do what is good."

The *devil's mint* is going every day—and sin is minted faster than money. People sin with greediness, "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more." Ephesians 4:19. "Man, who is vile and corrupt, who drinks up evil like water!" Job 15:16. They have grown rampant in wickedness, having laid aside the veil of modesty. Zephaniah 3:5, "The wicked know no shame." We read that Nebuchadnezzar had the heart of a beast given to him, Daniel 4:16. If all who have the hearts of beasts had the faces of beasts—men would be very scarce!

And if sin is so high, well may it bring us low. While the body is in a burning fever—it cannot thrive. Our nation, being in this burning fever of sin—must waste away. Has not sin brought us low? What wars, pestilences, and fires have broken out among us? The splendor and magnificence of the city has been brought low and laid in ashes! (Editor's Note: Watson is here referring to the *great fire of London*, which demolished much of the city.)

Sin has brought us low in our **reputation**. Proverbs 14:34, "Sin is a reproach to any people." Time was, when God made the sheaves of other nations do obeisance to our sheaf, Genesis 37:7. But our pristine fame and renown is eclipsed. Malachi 2:2, "I have made you base and contemptible." Trading is brought low. Many men's estates are boiled down to nothing—their *gourd* is withered. Their jar of oil fails. Ruth 1:21, "I went out full—but the Lord has brought me home empty!" Sin has brought other nations low—and do we think to escape better than they?

Salvian observes that in Africa, when the Church of God had degenerated from its purity—the land abounded in vice and was filled with sin. Then the *Vandals* entered Africa and the enemy's sword let them bleed. Numbers 32:23, "Be sure your sin will find you out!" Like a bloodhound, it will pursue you.



## What are those sins which have brought this city and nation so low?

**1. The first sin that has brought us low is PRIDE.** Proverbs 29:23, "A man's pride shall bring him low." Pride runs in the blood. Our first parents aspired to Deity. They did not content themselves to know God—but they would be as knowing as God. Augustine calls pride, "the mother of all sin!" The Persian kings would have their image worshiped by all who came into Babylon. Sapor writes of himself—as *brother to the sun and moon, and partner with the stars*. Caligula the Emperor commanded himself to be worshiped as a god. He caused a temple to be erected for him. He used to have the most costly animals sacrificed to him. Sometimes he would sit with a golden beard and a thunderbolt in his hand, like Jupiter; and sometimes with a scepter with three prongs, like Neptune.

Some people would be better if, as Solon said, "we could pluck the *worm of pride* out of their head!" Pride ruins our virtues—and poisons our mercies. The higher we lift ourselves up in pride, the lower God casts us down. Proverbs 15:25, "The Lord will destroy the house of the proud."

There is a **SPIRITUAL pride**, which is three fold:

1. Some take pride in their **abilities**. The Lord enriches them with wit and abilities—and pride fumes from their heart into their head and makes them giddy. Herod was proud of the oration he made, and assumed that glory to himself which he should have given to God. His pride brought him low. "He was eaten of worms," Acts 12:23.

2. Some take pride in their **duties**. This worm of pride, breeds in *sweet fruit*. They have said so many prayers, heard so many sermons. Luke 18:12, "I fast twice a week, and give a tenth of all I get." Now they think they have made God amends—that He is indebted to them and they shall be accepted for their religious performances. What is this but pride? Is this not to make a Christ of

our duties? The devil destroys some by making them neglect duty, and others by making them idolize duty. Better is that infirmity which humbles me—than that duty which makes me proud!

3. Some take pride in their **graces**. This seems strange, seeing grace is given to the humble, that any should be proud of their graces. But pride is not from the *grace* in us—but the *corruption* in us! It is not from the strength of holiness—but the weakness of holiness.

Christians may be said to be proud of their grace when they lay too much stress upon their grace. In Matthew 26:33, Peter says, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." Here was a double pride. First, that he thought he had more grace than the rest of the Apostles. Second, in that he laid much weight upon his grace. He leaned more on his *grace*—than on *Christ*.

Men are proud of their grace when they slight others whom they think are inferior to them in grace. Instead of the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak, Romans 15:1, they are ready to despise the weak. Our Savior saw this pride breeding in his own disciples; therefore He cautioned them against it. Matthew 18:10, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones."

There is a **carnal** pride. I call it carnal because it is conversant about carnal objects.

1. Some are proud of their BODIES. Pride is seen in long and meticulous dressings. People spend that time between the comb and the looking-glass, which should be spent in prayer and holy meditation.

Pride is seen in painting their faces, overlaying God's work with the devil's colors. But *virtue* is most beautiful to God. "Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God." 1 Peter 3:3-4

Pride is seen in spotting themselves. Pimples in the face show that the blood is corrupt. Spots in the face show that the heart is corrupt. Cyprian said, "They who paint and spot their faces may justly fear that at the resurrection their Creator will not know them." Pride is seen in the outlandish fashions with which some people *dress*, or rather *disguise* themselves. They clothe themselves like the rainbow. Adam was ashamed of his nakedness; these should be ashamed of their clothing. They are so plumed and gaudily attired, that they tempt the devil to fall in love with them.

2. Some are proud of their ESTATES. Riches are fuel for pride. Ezekiel 28:5, "Your heart has become proud because of your wealth." Men's hearts rise with their estates—like the boats on the Thames rise with the tide. Now, all this pride will bring a person low. For this sin, God strikes many with frenzy, and so levels the mountain of pride. God has stained the pride of England's glory, Isaiah 23:9. He has stripped us of our jewels. Proverbs 16:8, "Pride goes before destruction." Where pride leads the van, destruction brings up the rear.

**2. Another sin which has brought us low, is neglect of family worship.** Religion in men's families is brought low. There is little reading of *Scripture*. They more often look at a *deck of cards*, than a Bible. There is little *praying*. It is the mark of a reprobate that "he does not call upon God," Psalm 14:4. The atheist never prays at all. The Grecians asked counsel of their pretend gods—by their oracles; the Persians—by their Magi; the Galls—by their Druids; the Romans—by their Augures. Shall pagans pray—and not Christians? Creatures, by the instinct of nature, cry to God. Psalm 147:9, "The young ravens cry to Him for food." Prayer has no enemies, unless they are infernal spirits—and such as are near of kin to them.

Keys that are often used, are bright—but if they are laid aside and never used they grow rusty. So it is with men's hearts. If they are not used to family prayer, they will be rusted over with sin!

For this, God has brought us low. Why did He pull down many houses in this city—but because they were unholy houses. There was no prayer in them.

How can we think to have a blessing from God—if we never ask for it? God would be doing more for us than He did for His own Son. Hebrews 5:7, "In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers, with strong cries and tears."

**3. Another sin which has brought us low, is COVENANT violation.** Psalm 78:10, "They kept not the covenant of God." Verse 50, "He prepared a path for His anger; He did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague." The people of Carthage were noted for covenant breaking. Oh, that this sin had died with them! Does not this *poisonous weed* grow in our soil? Did we not make a vow in baptism to fight under Christ's banner—against the world, the flesh, and the devil? Did we not solemnly covenant to be the Lord's people, to shine in sanctity? Deuteronomy 5:28-29, "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always!" We have much *conforming to the world*—but where is the *conforming to Christ*?

Is not Jesus Christ opposed in His kingly office? This is the great controversy: *Who shall reign—sin or Christ*? For this, God has been like a *moth* to us—and we may fear lest He makes good that threat, Leviticus 26:25, "I will bring a sword that shall avenge the quarrel of My covenant."

**4. Another sin which has brought us low, is the ABUSE of the gospel.** We are sick with Israel's disease. They despised manna. Numbers 21:5, "Our soul loathes this light bread." We have been nauseated by the Bread of Life. The gospel is the visible token of God's presence. It is the *sacred conduit* that empties the *golden oil of mercy* into us! It is the looking-glass in which we see the face of Christ! It is the celestial banquet with which God cheers and revives the souls of His people! Isaiah 25:6. But was there not a *gospel glut*

in England? People had itching ears and did not know what to hear. And has not our curiosity brought us to scarcity? God has no better way to raise the price of the gospel—than by taking it away.

God surely brought us low, when darkness overspread our horizon—and the Lord allowed so many hundred *lights* to be put under a bushel at one time. (Editor's note: Perhaps Watson is talking about the "*Great Ejection*" when the British government persecuted godly pastors—and banned them from preaching.) The Egyptian priests of old told the people that, when any *eclipse* happened, the gods were angry and great miseries would follow. What sad catastrophies have ensued this spiritual eclipse, is not unknown.

**5. Another sin which has brought us low, is COVETOUSNESS.** "Covetousness, which is idolatry." Colossians 3:5. When men, with the serpent, lick the dust—then God lays them in the dust. Isaiah 57:17, "I was angry and punished these *greedy* people. I withdrew myself from them—but they went right on sinning!" Covetousness is the cancer of the soul. Men are set upon the world—when God is plucking it from them. Covetousness is a key which opens the door to further wickedness. 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows!" A covetous man will stop at no sin. Covetousness made Absalom attempt to dethrone his father. Covetousness made Adhab murder the innocent Naboth.

And what is one the better for all his wealth—at death? 1 Timothy 6:10, "We brought nothing into the world—and it is certain we can carry nothing out." When the *rich miser* dies, what scrambling is there! His *friends* are scrambling for his money! The *worms* are scrambling for his body! The *devils* are scrambling for his soul!

This sin is most unlovely in those who profess better. They pretend to live by faith—and yet are as worldly and covetousness as others. These are *spots* in the face of religion. Jeremiah 45:5, "Are you

seeking great things for yourself? Seek them not!" For this sin, God has brought us low. He has made our fig tree to wither—and allowed the caterpillars to eat our vine.

**6. Another sin which has brought us low, is BARRENNESS under the means of grace.** Hosea 10:1, "Israel is an *empty* vine." His juice runs out only into *leaves*. We have had much *pruning* and *dressing*. The *silver drops of heaven* have fallen upon us—but we have not brought forth the *fruits* of humility and repentance. We can *discourse* of religion—but this is only to bring forth *leaves*—not *fruit*. Barrenness has laid us *low*—and we may fear it will lay us *waste*. God may pull up the hedge—and let in a foreign wild boar!

those who fled out of England in Queen Mary's days acknowledged that that calamity befell them for their great unprofitableness under the means of grace. What man will sow seed in barren ground? If the Lord lays out His cost and sees no good return—the next word will be, "Cut down the tree, why does it so uselessly occupy the ground?"

**7. Another sin which has brought us low, is the sin of SWEARING.** Christ said, "Swear not at all," Matthew 5:34—and a godly man is said to fear an oath, Ecclesiastes 9:2. Truly it is a matter of tears—that we can hardly go out in the streets without having our ears crucified with hearing oaths and cursings. Chrysostom spent most of his sermons at Antioch against swearers. We need many Chrysostoms nowadays to preach against this sin. This may well be called "the unfruitful work of darkness," Ephesians 5:11, for it is a sin which has neither pleasure nor profit in it. How men shoot their oaths—as bullets against heaven!

I knew a great swearer, said Robert Bolton, whose heart Satan so filled that on his death bed, that he swore as fast as he could—and desired the bystanders to help him with oaths and swear for him. Will the Lord reckon with men for *idle* words? What will He do for sinful oaths? *For every oath a man swears—God puts a drop of wrath in His vial.* Nay, usually, God's judgments overtake the

swearer in this life. I have read of a German boy who was given to swearing—and used to invent new oaths. The Lord put a canker into his mouth which ate out his tongue!

"But," you say, "it is my *habit* to swear, and I cannot help it."

Is this a good plea? It is as if a thief should plead for a judge not to condemn him, because it is his *habit* to rob and steal. The judge will therefore say, "Then you shall *surely* die!" This sin has brought us low. Jeremiah 23:10, "For because of swearing, the land mourns."

**8. Another sin which has brought us low—and is likely to bring us yet lower, is IMMORALITY.** The unchaste heart is a volcano—burning with lust! Immorality is the shipwreck of chastity—and the murder of conscience. It was said of Rome of old that it had become a brothel. I wish it might not be imitated of many parts of this land.

Immorality is a **brutish** sin. Jeremiah 5:8, "They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each *neighing* for another man's wife." Immorality is a **branded** sin. It not only stigmatizes men's *names*, Proverbs 6:33—but God makes them carry the marks of this sin in their *bodies*. Immorality is a **costly** sin; it proves a purgatory to the purse. Proverbs 6:26, "The prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life." "You will lose your honor and hand over to merciless people everything you have achieved in life. Strangers will obtain your wealth, and someone else will enjoy the fruit of your labor. Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body!" Proverbs 5:9-11

Immorality is a **foolish** sin. "*Why* be captivated, my son, with an immoral woman, or embrace the breasts of an adulterous woman?" Proverbs 5:20. "But the man who commits adultery is an *utter fool*, for he destroys his own soul!" Proverbs 6:32. "Can a man scoop fire into his lap and not be burned? Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? So it is with the man who sleeps with another man's

wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished!" Proverbs 6:27-29.

The immoral person hastens his own death. "She seduces him with her persistent pleading; she lures with her flattering talk. He follows her impulsively like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer bounding toward a trap until an arrow pierces its liver, like a bird darting into a snare—he doesn't know it will cost him his life!" Proverbs 7:21-23. By an early death--the immoral person takes a *shortcut to hell!* "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral." Revelation 22:15. "Nothing impure will ever enter it." Revelation 21:27

Creatures void of reason will rise up in judgment against such. The *dove* is an emblem of chastity. The stork comes into no nest but his own—and if any stork leaves his mate and joins with another, all the rest fall on him and pluck his feathers from him! God will chiefly punish those who walk in the lust of uncleanness, 2 Peter 2:10. This sin has brought us low. The fire of lust has kindled the fire of God's anger.

**9. Another sin which has brought us low, is our unbrotherly animosities.** Matthew 12:25, "A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." The Turks pray that the Christians may be kept at variance. We have, in a great measure, fulfilled the Turks' prayer.

What seeds of dissension are sown among us! How we have crumbled into parties! One is for Paul and another for Apollo—but few, I fear, are for Christ. Our divisions have given much advantage to the Popish adversary. When there is a *breach* made in the wall of a castle—the enemy enters there. If the *Popish* enemy enters, it will be at our breaches. These divisions have cut the lock of hair where our strength laid. Cut off the top of the beech tree and the whole body of the tree withers. Divisions have taken away unity and amity. Here is



the top of the beech tree cut off—and this has made us to wither swiftly.

These are the sins which have brought us low—and, if the Lord does not prevent it, are likely to bring England's gray hairs to the grave with sorrow!

**Branch 5.** If sin brings a person low—then what madness is it for anyone to be in love with sin! 2 Thessalonians 2:12, "Who delighted in wickedness." The devil can so cook and dress sin—that it pleases the sinner's palate. But hear what Job said, Job 20:12, 14 "Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue—yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him!" Herodotus writes of the river *Hypanis* which, near the fountain, the water is sweet—but a short distance away—it is exceedingly bitter. Sin will bring one low—and who would love such an *enemy*! The forbidden fruit is *sauced* with bitter herbs. Sin is a poisonous viper along the path, which bites! Genesis 49:17.

When you are about to commit sin, say to your soul as Boaz said to his kinsman, Ruth 4:4, "The day you buy the field, you must have Ruth with it." So, if you will have the *seed* of sin, you must have the curse with it. It will bring you low. To love sin is to love a disease. A sinner is filled with madness. Solomon speaks of a generation of men thusly, "the hearts of people are full of evil, and *madness is in their hearts*," Ecclesiastes 9:3. It is true of those who love sin, that sin puts a worm into conscience, a thorn into death—yet that men should love sin shows that madness is in their heart. There is no creature who willingly destroys itself—but man. Sin is a silken halter—yet he loves it! Oh, remember that saying of Augustine, "*The pleasure of sin is soon gone—but the sting remains!*"

**Branch 6.** See what little cause we have to envy sinners. Proverbs 3:31, "Do not envy a violent man or choose any of his ways." Men are high in wordly grandeur. God has given them large estates—and they sin with their estates! But though they build among the stars, God

will bring them down. Ezekiel 28:18, "I reduced you to ashes." Who would envy men their greatness—when their sins will bring them low? Deuteronomy 32:35, "Their foot shall slide in due time."

There is a story of a Roman who was condemned to die, for breaking his rank to steal a bunch of grapes. As he was going to execution, some of the soldiers were *envious* that he had grapes while they had none. He said, "*Do you envy me my grapes? I must pay dearly for them.*" So the wicked must pay dearly for what they have!

The prosperity of the wicked is a great temptation to the godly. David stumbled at it and would likely have fallen. Psalm 73:2, "My feet almost slipped; my steps nearly went astray. For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked." We are ready to murmur when we see ourselves low—and envy when we see the wicked high.

Sinners may live in a serene climate, under a perpetual calm. Psalm 73:4-5, "They seem to live such a painless life; their bodies are so healthy and strong. They aren't troubled like other people or plagued with problems like everyone else." But this prosperous state of the wicked is matter for pity—rather than envy. Their sins will bring them low! Isaiah 14:12, "How are you fallen from heaven, Oh, Lucifer, Son of the Morning." This is spoken of the Chaldean monarch who, though high, had a sudden change befall him. Isaiah 47:1, "Come down and sit in the dust." Babylon was the lady of kingdoms—but God says, "Sit in the dust." Verse 2, "Take the millstones and grind." So will God say to the wicked, "Come down from all your pomp and glory, sit in the dust; nay, sit among the damned and there grind at the mill!" The Lord will proportion torment to all the pleasure which the wicked have had. Revelation 18:7, "She has lived in luxury and pleasure—so match it now with torments and sorrows!"

**Branch 7.** See the great difference between sin and grace. Sin brings a man low—but grace lifts him high. Sin tumbles him in the ditch—

but grace sets him upon the throne. Psalm 91:14, "I will set him on high, because he has known My name." *Grace raises a person in four ways.*

**1. Grace raises his AIMS and ASPIRATIONS.** He does not look at things which are seen, 2 Corinthians 4:18. His eye is above the stars. He aims at enjoying God. When a clumsy country bumpkin goes to the court, he is greatly taken with the mirthful pictures and paintings—but when a member of the king's private council passes by those things, he looks at them as scarcely worthy of his notice. His business is with the *king*. So a carnal mind is greatly taken with the things of the world—but a saint passes by these mirthful things with a holy contempt—his business is with God! 1 John 1:3, "Our communion is with the Father and His Son Jesus." A Christian of the right breed, aspires after the things within the veil; his ambition is for the favor of God. He looks no lower than a crown; he is in the altitudes and trades among the angels!

**2. Grace raises a man's REPUTATION.** It embalms his name. 1 Samuel 18:30, "David's name became very famous," or, as the original carries it, "It was precious." Hebrews 11:2, "By faith the elders obtained a good report." How renowned were the godly patriarchs for their sanctity! *Moses* for his self-denial, *Job* for his patience, *Phineas* for his zeal! What a fresh perfume their names send forth to this day! A good name is a saint's heir. It lives when he is dead.

**3. Grace raises a man's WORTH.** Proverbs 12:26, "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor." As the *flower* of the roses in spring, as the *fat* of the peace offering, as the *precious stones* upon Aaron's breastplate, so is a saint in God's eye. Besides the shining luster of the gold, it has an eternal worth and is of great price and eternal value. So grace not only makes a man's name shine—it puts a real worth into him. "He is more excellent than his neighbor." A heart full of love to God, is precious. It is God's delight, Isaiah 62:4; it is the apple of His eye; it is His jewel; it is His garden of spices; it is

His *lesser heaven* where He dwells. Isaiah 57:17, "I dwell with him that is of a humble spirit."

**4. Grace raises a man's PRIVILEGE.** It advances him into the heavenly kindred. By it he is born of God, 1 John 3:1. He is a prince in all lands, Psalm 45:16 (though in this world he is like a prince in disguise). He is higher than the kings of the earth, Psalm 89:27. He is allied to angels!

In short, grace lifts a man up where Christ is, far above all heavens. And grace raises a nation as well as a person. Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalts a nation."

**Branch 8.** If sin brings a man low, see what an imprudent choice they make—who commit sin to avoid trouble. Job 36:21, "Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this have you chosen rather than affliction." This was a false charge against Job—but many may be charged with such folly. They choose iniquity rather than affliction. To avoid poverty, they will lie and deceive. What imprudence is this, when sin draws such dark shadows after it—and entails misery upon all its heirs and successors. By committing sin to avoid trouble, we meet with greater trouble. Origen, to save himself from suffering, sprinkled incense before the idol. Later, preparing to preach, he opened his Bible and accidentally fell upon that text in Psalm 50:16, "But to the wicked God says, what have you to do to declare My statutes, or that

you should take My covenant in your mouth?" At the sight of this Scripture, he fell into a passion of weeping—and was so stricken with grief and consternation that he was not able to speak a word to the people but came down from the pulpit. Spria sinned against his conscience to save his life and estate; he chose iniquity rather than affliction—but what a hell he felt in his conscience. He professed that he envied Cain and Judas, thinking their condition to be more desirable. His sin brought him low.

Oh, what unparalleled folly is it to choose sin, rather than affliction. Affliction is like a tear in a *coat*; sin is like a tear in the *flesh*. He who, to save himself from trouble, commits sin—is like one who, to save his coat, lets his flesh be torn. Affliction has a promise made to it, 2 Samuel 22:28—but there is no promise made to sin, Proverbs 10:29.

Surely, then, those do badly, who choose sin rather than suffering; who, to avoid a lesser evil, choose a greater evil; who, to avoid the stinging of a gnat—run into the teeth of a lion!

**Branch 9.** If God brings His *own* people low for sin (Israel was brought low), then how low will He bring the *wicked*! *David* was in the deep waters, and *Jonah* went down to the bottom of the sea. *Jeremiah* was in the deep dungeon. Then what a deep gulf of misery shall swallow up the reprobate part of the world?

God's people do not allow themselves in sin, Romans 7:15. They tremble at it. They hate it—yet they suffer. If they who *blush* at their failings are brought low, what will become of those who *boast* of their scandals? "If this is done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?" If the godly lie among the *pots*, Psalm 68:13, the wicked shall lie among the *devils*. "If judgment begins at the house of God, what shall be the end of those who don't obey the gospel?" 1 Peter 4:17. If God mingles His people's cup with *wormwood*—He will mingle the sinner's cup with *fire* and *brimstone*! Psalm 11:6. If God *threshes* the wheat—He will *burn* the chaff! If the Lord afflicts those He *loves*—how severe will He be against those He *hates*! They shall feel the second death! Revelation 21:8.

## Use 2. Exhortation

**Branch 1.** If sin brings a person low—then let us fear to come near sin. It will either bring us into affliction—or worse. Its *foul* face may offend—but its *breath* kills! Sin is the Apollyon, the man-devourer. Oh, that we were as wise for our souls—as we are for our bodies!

How afraid are we of that food which we know will bring the gout or stone, or will make our fever return. Sin is feverish food which will put conscience into a shaking fit—and shall we not be afraid to touch this forbidden fruit? Genesis 39:9, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" When the Empress Eudoxia threatened to banish Chrysostom, he said, "*Tell her I fear nothing but sin!*" It was a saying of Anselm, "*If hell were on one side and sin were on the other, I would rather leap into hell than willingly commit sin.*"

Love will be apt to grow wanton, if it is not poised with holy fear. No better curb or antidote against sin—than the fear of God. If we could see hell-fire in every sin—it would make us fear to commit it! The fiercest creatures dread fire. When Moses' rod was turned into a serpent, he was afraid and fled from it. Sin will prove to be a stinging serpent. Oh, fly from it! Most people are like the leviathan—a creature devoid of fear, Job 41:33. They play upon the hole of the asp. Sinners never *fear hell*—until they *feel* hell! Nothing will convince them—but fire and brimstone!

**Branch 2.** If sin brings a person low—then when we are brought low under God's afflicting hand, let us behave wisely and as befits Christians. I shall show:

**What we must not do when we are brought low.** When our condition is low—let not our passions be high. Murmuring against God is not the way to get *out* of trouble—but rather to go lower *into* trouble. What does the child get by struggling—but more blows? Oh, do not lisp out a murmuring word against God! Murmuring is the *scum* which boils off from a discontented heart. Psalm 39:9, "I was silent; I would not open my mouth, for You are the one who has done this!" David's ear was open to hear *the voice of the rod*—but his mouth was not open in complaining. Christian, who should you complain of—but yourself! Your own sin has brought you low.

**1. When we are brought low in affliction—let us search for the sin which is the cause of our trouble.** Job 10:2, "Show me why you contend with me." "*Lord, what is that sin which has provoked You to bring me low?*" Lamentations 3:40, "Let us search and try our ways." As the people of Israel searched the cause when they were beaten in battle—and at last found out the *Achan* who troubled them, and stoned him to death, Joshua 7:18. Just so, let us search out that *Achan* which has troubled us.

Perhaps our sin was *ensorious*. We have been ready to judge and slander others—and now we lie under an evil tongue and have false reports raised on us. Perhaps our sin was *pride* and God has sent poverty as a thorn to humble us. Perhaps our sin was being *remiss* in holy duties. We had forgotten our first love and were ready to fall into slumbering fits—and God has sent a sharp cross to awaken us out of our security. We may oftentimes read our sin, in our punishment. Oh, let us search the *Achan* and say as Job, chapter 34:32, "I have done iniquity—I will do so no more!"

**2. When we are brought low in affliction—let us justify God.** God is just not only when He *punishes the guilty*—but when He *afflicts the righteous*. Let us take heed of entertaining hard thoughts of God, as if He had dealt too severely with us and had put too much *wormwood* in our cup. No, let us *vindicate* God and say as the Emperor Mauritius, when he saw five of his sons slain before his eyes by Phocas, "*Righteous are You, Oh, Lord, in all Your ways.*" Let us speak well of God. If we have ever so much *affliction*—yet we never have one drop of *injustice*. Psalm 97:2, "Clouds and darkness are round about Him, *righteousness* and *justice* are the foundation of His throne."

**3. When we are brought low in affliction—let us bring ourselves low in humiliation.** 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." When we are in the valley of *tears*—we must be in the valley of *humility*. Lamentations 3:19, "Remembering the wormwood and the gall, my soul has them

continually in remembrance—and is humbled in me." If our *condition* is low—then it is time to have our *hearts* lie low.

**4. When we are brought low in affliction—let us be on our knees in prayer.** Psalm 130:1, "Out of the *depths* have I cried to You, Oh, Lord." Psalm 79:8, "Let Your tenderhearted mercies quickly meet our needs, for we are brought low to the dust." Jacob never prayed so fervently as when he was in fear of his life. He oiled the *key of prayer* with tears! Hosea 12:4, "He wept and made supplication." One reason why God lets us be brought low—is to heighten the spirit of prayer.

But what should we pray for in affliction? Let us pray that all our *hell* may be here in *this* world. As Pilate said concerning Christ, Luke 23:22, "I will chastise Him and let Him go," so pray that God, when He does chastise us, will let us go—that He will free us from hell and damnation. Let us pray for the *sanctification* of affliction—rather than the *removal* of it. Pray that the *rod of affliction* may be a *divine pencil* to draw God's image more lively upon our souls! Hebrews 12:10. Pray that affliction may be a furnace to *refine* us—not *consume* us! Pray that if God does correct us, it may not be in anger, Psalm 6:1, that we may taste the *honey of His love* at the end of the rod of affliction. Let it be our prayer that God will lay no more upon us, than He will enable us to bear, 1 Corinthians 10:13—and that if the *burden* is heavier, our *shoulders* may be stronger.

**5. When we are brought low in affliction—let our faith be high.** Let us believe that God intends us no harm. Though He casts us into the deep, He will not drown us. Believe that He is still a Father. He afflicts us in as much mercy—as He gives Christ to us. By His rod of discipline, He fits us for the inheritance, Colossians 1:12. Oh, let this *star of faith* appear in the *dark night of affliction*. Jonah's faith was never more in heaven than when he lay in the belly of hell, Jonah 2:4.



**6. When we are brought low in affliction—let us labor to be bettered by being brought low.** Pick some *good* out of the cross. Get some *honey* out of this lion! The wicked are worse for affliction. Weeds crushed in a mortar are more bitter. 2 Chronicles 28:22, "When trouble came to King Ahaz, he became even more unfaithful to the Lord." But let us labor to be mended and made better by affliction. Christ learned obedience by what He suffered, Hebrews 5:8. If we are brought low in affliction, and get no good—then the affliction is lost.

**Question.** When are we bettered by affliction?

**Answer 1.** We are bettered by affliction—when our **eyes** are more opened and we are not only chastened—but taught, Psalm 94:12. Wormwood is bitter to the taste—but is good to clear the eyesight. *Our spiritual eyesight is cleared:*

1. We are bettered by affliction—when we see more of *God's holiness*. He is a jealous and sin-hating God. He will not allow evil in His own children to go unpunished. If they make light of sin—He will make their chain heavy! Lamentations 3:2.

2. We are bettered by affliction—when we have a clearer insight into *ourselves*. We see more of our hearts than we did before. We see that worldliness, impatience—and distrust of God—which we did not see before. We never thought we had such a mass of corruption, or that there had been so much of the *old* man in the *new* man. The fire of affliction makes that *scum of sin* boil up—which before lay hidden. When our eyesight is thus cleared and both the *rod* and the *lamp* go together—now we are bettered by affliction!

**Answer 2.** We are bettered by affliction—when our **hearts** are softened. Affliction is God's furnace, where He melts His gold. Jeremiah 9:7, "I will melt them in a crucible and test them like metal." We are bettered by affliction—when our *eyes* are more watery, our *thoughts* more serious, our *consciences* more tender,

when we can say as Job, chapter 23:16, "God makes my heart soft." This melting of the heart whereby we are fitted to receive the impression of the Holy Spirit—is a blessed sign we are bettered by affliction.

**Answer 3.** We are bettered by affliction—when our **wills** are subdued. Micah 7:9, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Why does God bring us low—but to tame our cursed hearts? When a wicked man is brought low, he quarrels with God. Therefore he is compared to a *wild bull in a net*, Isaiah 51:20. If you rub a piece of rotten cloth—it frets and tears. Just so, when God rubs a wicked man by *affliction*—he frets and tears himself with *vexation*! Isaiah 8:21, "They shall fret themselves—and curse their King and their God."

But when our spirits are calmed—and we are brought to a sweet submission to God's will—then we accept the punishment, Leviticus 26:41—and in patience possess our souls, Luke 21:19. When we say as Eli, 1 Samuel 3:18, "It is the Lord—let Him do what He thinks best." "*I know this trial is in mercy. God would rather afflict me—than lose me. Let Him hedge me with thorns—if He will only plant me with flowers. Let Him do what He thinks best.*" Now we are bettered by the affliction.

**Answer 4.** We are bettered by affliction—when **sin** is purged out. Isaiah 27:9, "This is all the fruit—to take away iniquity." Our hearts are foul and sinful. Our *gold* is mixed with *dross*—our stars with clouds. Now, when affliction consumes pride, formality, hypocrisy, when God's lance lets out our spiritual abscess—then we are bettered by affliction!

**Answer 5.** We are bettered by affliction—when our hearts are more unglued from the **world**. What are all these earthly things! The *cares* of the world, exceed the *comforts*. The emblem which King Henry VII used, was a crown of *gold* hung in a bush of *thorns*. Many who have escaped the rocks of *scandalous* sins—have been cast away

upon the *golden sands*. The Arabic proverb is, "The world is a carcass—and those who hunt after it are dogs." Has not love of the world become a disease of almost epidemic proportions? If the Lord bestows a plentiful estate upon men, they are apt to make an *idol* of it! Therefore, God is forced to take that out of their *hand*—which kept Him out of their *heart*. Now, when the Lord comes and afflicts any of us in that which we love most—He hits us in the *apple of our eye* and our hearts grow more dead to the world and love-sick for Christ. When God has been *withering our gourd* and our love for the world begins to wither—when He has been digging around our root and we are more *loosened from the earth*—then we are bettered by affliction!

**Answer 6.** We are bettered by affliction—when affliction has produced more appetite for the **Word**. Perhaps in health and prosperity—we and the Bible seldom met, or, if we chanced to read, it was but in a dull, cursory manner. But the Lord, by embittering the breast of the *creature*—has made us run to the breast of a *promise*! Now we can say with David, Psalm 119:103, "How *sweet* are Your words unto my taste; yes, sweeter than honey!" Solomon said, "Truly the *light* is sweet," Ecclesiastes 11:7. But we can say, "Truly the *Word* is sweet!" We have tasted *Christ* in a promise; the Word has caused an exuberance of joy, Psalm 19:8. This is the manna we love to feed upon. Every leaf of Scripture drops myrrh and, as a rich cordial, cheers our spirit. When it is thus, we are bettered by our trials, Psalm 119:50.

**Answer 7.** We are bettered by affliction—when our title to heaven is more **confirmed**. In prosperity, we are more careless in *getting*, at least in *clearing* our spiritual title. People would be afraid—if their evidences for their *land* were no better than their evidences for *heaven*. Many a man's evidence for heavenly glory—is either *forged* or *blotted*. He is not able to read any saving work of God's Spirit. He is wavering and hangs in a doubtful suspense—not knowing whether he has grace or not. Now, when we are brought low by affliction and we fall to the work of self-examination, we see how matters stand between God and our souls. We turn over every leaf of the *book of*

*conscience*. We make a critical examination upon our hearts and, after a thorough survey of ourselves, we can say, "We understood God's grace in all its truth," Colossians 1:6. "We have received the holy anointing," 1 John 2:27. Our grace will bear the *touchstone*, though not the *balance*. Certainly—then, we have made a good proficiency in the time of affliction and are bettered by it.

**Answer 8.** We are bettered by affliction—when we grow more **fruitful** in grace. A Christian should be like the olive tree, "beautiful to see and full of good fruit" Jeremiah 11:16. There is a tree in the Isle of Pomonia, which has its fruit folded and wrapped up in its leaves. This is an emblem of a godly Christian who has the *fruits of grace* wrapped up in the *leaves of his profession*. Now, after *pruning*, what fruits have we brought forth? Have we produced the fruits of obedience, love, self-denial, meekness, heavenliness, and longing to be with Christ? If the *sharp frost of affliction* has brought on the *spring flowers of grace*, which the Apostle calls the "peaceable fruits of righteousness," Hebrews 12:11—then we are bettered by affliction. A fruitful heart, is better than a full crop.

**Answer 9.** We are bettered by affliction—when we really **commiserate** and show pity to those who are in a suffering condition. Jesus Christ, having suffered—is touched with our infirmity, Hebrews 4:15. Having felt hunger and cold, He knows how to pity us. Before we have drunk of the *bitter cup*, instead of *pitying* others in misery, we are ready to *despise* them! Psalm 123:4, "We have endured much ridicule from the proud, much contempt from the arrogant." But when we have been under the *harrow*, and we can sympathize with our suffering brethren—and weep with those who weep—this is a sign we are bettered by the affliction. In music, when one string is touched, all the rest sound. "My *heart laments* for Moab like a harp, *my inmost being* for Kir Hareseth," Isaiah 16:11.

**Answer 10.** We are bettered by affliction—when we have learned to **bless God** in our affliction. Job 1:21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord

has taken away; *may the name of the Lord be praised!*" Many can bless God when He is *giving*. Job blessed Him when He *took away!* This is excellent, not only to praise God when we are upon the *mountain of prosperity*, but also in the *valley of adversity*. Deuteronomy 8:10, "When you eat and are full, you will praise the Lord your God." But it is a greater matter to bless Him when we are *empty* and in *need*. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In *everything* give thanks."

**Question. But what should we bless God for, when we are in affliction?**

**Answer.** We are to bless God that it is no worse with us. He might have put *more gall* in our cup, Ezra 9:14. We are to bless God that He will choose rather to *correct* us in the world—than to *condemn* us with the world! 1 Corinthians 11:32. We are to bless God that He has made affliction a means to prevent sin—that He has proportioned our strength to our trials—that He gives us needed support in our trouble, Psalm 112:4. Though He does not *break* our yoke—He *lines* our yoke with inward peace and makes it soft and pleasant. We are to bless God that He deals with us as *children*, setting His *seal of affliction* on us—and so marking us for His own. We are to bless God that Christ has taken the *sting* out of the affliction, that there is a hope of better things laid up for us in heaven, Colossians 1:5. When we can, upon these considerations, break forth into a holy gratitude and triumph in affliction—this is to be bettered by affliction; and it shows that the Spirit of God and glory rests upon us, 1 Peter 4:14.

To bless God in heaven, when He is *crowning* us with glory is no wonder. But to bless God when He is *correcting* us—to bless Him in a prison, to give thanks on a sickbed, not only to kiss the rod but to bless the hand which holds it—here is the sun in its zenith! This speaks a very high degree of grace, indeed—and very much adorns our sufferings.

If we can find these *sweet fruits of affliction*—we may assure ourselves that the affliction is sanctified. We may say with David, Psalm 119:71, "It is *good* for me that I was afflicted!" And then God will throw away the *rod* and will make us glad after the days of our mourning. Ezekiel 16:42, "Then My wrath against you will subside and My jealous anger will turn away from you; I will be calm and no longer angry."

**Branch 3.** If sin brings us low—let us labor to bring our sins low. Let all our hatred be at sin. Let us pursue it with a holy malice. Sin has brought us even to the dust—and would bring us lower into the abyss of hell! Let us then shed the blood of sin which would shed our blood. Colossians 3:5, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."

We are apt to plead for sin, "Is it not a *little* one?" Who would plead for the one who seeks his life! We are ready to say to the minister concerning sin, as David said to Joab concerning Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:5, "*Deal gently with the young man.*" So, we are ready to say, "*Sir, deal gently with my sins. Oh, do not be too sharp in your reproofs!*"

*Why not?* Does not the sin seek to take away your crown of glory, as Absalom did his father's crown? Would it not bring you low? If, therefore, you are wise—do not spare it! Do with your sin—as Joab did with Absalom. He took three spears and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:14. So take these three spears—the Word of God, prayer, and mortification—and strike through the heart of your lusts, so that they die! Do as Sampson did in dealing with the Philistines. They brought him low, and gouged out his eyes. He never left until he was revenged on them and brought them low. Judges 16:30, "Samson said, '*Let me die with the Philistines!*' Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it!" Sampson died—but *we* live by the

death of our enemies. Oh, that every day, some limb of the old man may drop off!

What is the end of all a Christian's duties, praying, and hearing—but to weaken and mortify lust? Why is this spiritual medicine taken—but to kill the child of sin? Sin will insinuate itself and plead for a reprieve—but show it no mercy. Saul's sparing Agag lost him the kingdom—and your sparing sin will lose you the kingdom of heaven. Do with your sin, what Samuel did to Agag, "He hacked Agag to pieces before the Lord at Gilgal." 1 Samuel 15:33.

**Branch 4.** Lastly, let this make us weary of living in the world, for while we live in sin, sin brings us low. We eat the *forbidden fruit*—and then are sick afterwards. How should this make us to long to be gone and cry, "Oh, that we had the wings of a dove, to fly away and be at rest!" Only then, shall we forever shake off those *vipers* which leaped upon us! 1 Corinthians 3:22, "Death is yours." At death, we shall have an eternal jubilee—and be freed from all sins and troubles.

Sin shall be no more. Death smites a believer—as the angel smote Peter on his side—and made his chains fall off, Acts 12:7. So death smites a believer—and makes the chains of his sins fall off.

Trouble shall be no more. This world is full of storms. Troubles and vexations are some of the thorns, with which the earth is cursed. But in the grave, a believer has his quiet place. "There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest," Job 3:17. God will shortly wipe away all tears, Revelation 7:17. How this should make the saints desire to depart—and be with Christ! Philippians 1:23. Israel's being so often stung with *serpents*—made them weary of the wilderness, and caused them to aspire after Canaan. The discourtesies a prince meets with in a strange land—make him long to be in his own country where the royal crown will be set upon his head. When we are with Christ, we shall be brought low no more. We shall never be fixed stars until we are in heaven.

Oh, the felicity of glorified saints! They have a full-eyed vision of God! Those refulgent beams of glory are darted from His blessed face and will delight, yes, ravish their hearts with ineffable joy! The birds of a certain island, are nourished with perfumes. After death, the saints shall be forever nourished with the aromatics and perfumes of their Savior's love!

## **The Desperateness of Sinners**

"In spite of all this—they kept on sinning!" Psalm 78:32

The people of Israel were called by God's name. They were chosen from all the people of the earth. "The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people—His treasured possession!" Deuteronomy 7:6. The other part of the world was but rubbish; these were God's jewels! The other was *a wilderness*; these are God's special garden. Exodus 19:6, "You shall be unto me a Kingdom of priests." But even Israel had a blot on their name-plate. The text draws up a black charge against them, "*In spite of all this—they kept on sinning!*"

Why was this? God had been very good to Israel. He had bestowed many favors on them. "They forgot what He had done—the wonderful miracles He had shown them, the miracles He did for their ancestors in Egypt, on the plain of Zoan. For He divided the sea before them and led them through! The water stood up like walls beside them! In the daytime He led them by a cloud, and at night by a pillar of fire. He split open the rocks in the wilderness to give them plenty of water, as from a gushing spring. He made streams pour from the rock, making the waters flow down like a river!" Psalms 78:11-16. All this was a special figure of God's protection. The pillar



of cloud was to conduct them and keep off the scorching heat of the sin. The pillar of fire was to be their torch to light them by night. "He commanded the skies to open—He opened the doors of heaven—and rained down manna for them to eat. He gave them bread from heaven. They ate the food of angels! God gave them all they could hold. The people ate their fill. He gave them what they wanted." It was called *angel's food* for the excellence of it, such as the angels might have eaten if they ate food. Israel had the cream of God's blessings—but *"in spite of all this—they kept on sinning!"*

Then, God inflicted punishment on them. After the *sunshine of mercy* came the *thunder of punishment*. Verse 31, "The fire of his wrath burned against them." What this wrath was is specified in verse 49, "He loosed on them his fierce anger—all his fury, rage, and hostility. He dispatched against them a band of destroying angels." These destroying angels smote the people with pestilence. Yet, *in spite of all this—they kept on sinning!"*

This showed the evil hearts of this people. They were worse for all the *medicines* God had used for their healing. *"In spite of all this—they kept on sinning!"*

The text divides itself into three parts:

1. Israel's crime—*they sinned*.
2. The aggravation of their sin—*in spite of all this*.
3. Their continuance in sin—*they kept on sinning*.

**Doctrine:** "None of God's dealings with the wicked, will prevail with them to break off their sins." *"In spite of all this—they kept on sinning!"*

To *keep on sinning* is, first, **heinous**—because it shows a contempt of God. Let God say what He will—yet men go on in sin. This is to

despise God—and bid Him do His worst. Psalm 10:3, "Why do the wicked despise God?"

To *keep on sinning* is, second, **desperate**—because it is to sin against the *remedy!* If no means God uses will prevail—people are incurable. If a gangrened limb is not cut off—there is no help for the patient and he must die. If nothing will do the sinner good and he still continues in sin, this man's case is past hope. There is no way but hell.

### Use 1. Information

**Branch 1. Note the blindness of every sinner.** He does not see that evil in sin, which would make him leave it. "*In spite of all this—they kept on sinning!*" To this day, the veil is upon his heart. Sin is the quintessence of evil—but the unregenerate person is enveloped with ignorance. If he dies in sin—he is irrecoverably damned. But he sports with his own damnation—he keeps on sinning. Sin has made him not only *sick*—but *senseless*. Though *sin* has *death* and *hell* following it—yet he is so blind that he keeps on sinning!

We pity *blind* men. How is every graceless man to be pitied, whom Satan, the god of this world has blinded! 2 Corinthians 4:4. The devil carries a wicked man as people carry a hawk—with a hood over its head. Wicked men go *hoodwinked to hell*. But he does not see the danger he is in. He is like a bird which hastens to the snare—and does not see the snare.

**Branch 2. Note the love and amity between man's heart and sin.** "*They kept on sinning!*" Sin is a *dainty dish* which men cannot forbear. Hosea 3:1, "Who love flagons of wine." Psalm 4:2, "*How long will you love delusions?*" The *heart* and *sin* are like two lovers—which cannot endure to be parted! A sinner is the greatest self-denier. For the love of sin, he will deny himself a part in heaven! One would think, "There is so little in sin, why should it be loved?" Who

would sweet perfume, into a sink? Who would spend so sweet an affection as love, upon so filthy a thing as sin!

Sin is a thorn in the conscience. It is a sword in the bones. Psalm 38:3, "I have no rest in my bones, because of my sin." Whatever deflowers, disturbs. Yet such is the love that a man bears to his sin, that he will venture all for his lusts—the loss of God's favor and the loss of his soul.

**Branch 3. See the desperate obstinance of sinners;** they persist in sin rebelliously. *"They kept on sinning!"* Though God has pronounced a blessing and a curse (a blessing upon those who forsake sin—and a curse upon those who continue in sin)—yet they choose the curse over the blessing! The wicked are unyielding and resolved. *"They kept on sinning!"* The heart of man by nature is like a garrison which holds out in war. Though articles of peace are offered, though it is straightly besieged and one bullet after another is shot—yet the garrison holds out. So the heart is a garrison which holds out against God. Though He uses entreaties, gives warnings, shoots bullets into the conscience—yet the garrison of the heart holds out. The man will not be reclaimed. He is said to have a brow of brass, in regard to his impudence—and a sinew of iron, in regard to his obstinance, Isaiah 48:4. *"They kept on sinning!"*

The sinner is not reformed by all God's judgments. We see metal that melts in the furnace—but take it out and it returns to its usual hardness. The Lord sent one judgment after another on Pharaoh—and though he seemed to be melted (Exodus 9:27, "I have sinned, the Lord is righteous")—yet no sooner was he taken out of the fire and the plague removed but he sinned still. Verse 34, "He sinned yet more and hardened his heart."

Some men, in a fit of sickness, when their consciences are so far awakened as to be brought to a sight of hell—and they begin to smell the fire and brimstone—Oh, what promises they make if only God will spare their lives! But, when they recover, they are worse then

ever before. "*They kept on sinning!*" Isaiah 9:13, "For after all this punishment, the people will still not repent and turn to the Lord Almighty." Amos 4:6, "I gave you absolutely nothing to eat." Verse 7, "I have withheld the rain." Verse 10, "I sent plagues against you like the plagues I sent against Egypt long ago. I killed your young men in war and slaughtered all your horses. The stench of death filled the air! But still you wouldn't return to Me, says the Lord."

What sin do we have left, after all God's judgments which have been upon us? Can we show the head of that *Goliath lust* which is slain? There is so much atheism and hard-heartedness in men, so close an adherence of lust to their souls, that they will go on in sin inflexibly until God, by a miraculous power, stops their course, as He did Paul when he was going with letters to Damascus, Acts 9:2. Oh, the vile obstinance of men! "*They kept on sinning!*" Though they are sometimes convinced that they are in a bad way—yet their *corruptions* are stronger than their *convictions*. If a wicked man could be fetched out of hell and brought back into a capacity of mercy—yet he would in a second life follow his lusts and sin himself into hell again!

**Branch 4. Note how hard it will be for such people to be savingly wrought upon—who go on sinning.** At first the heart is more tender and fearful of evil. But by keeping up the trade of sin, it is deadened and seared. By sinning still, a man is brought to such a state, that he despises the Word and resists the Spirit.

*Reason and conscience are bound like prisoners—with the chains of lust!* By sinning still, men have contracted a *habit* of evil. Jeremiah 13:23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin—or the leopard his spots?" *Habit in sin* stupefies conscience. It is like a gravestone laid upon a man. Oh, how hard their conversion who go on still in their trespasses! That tree will be very difficult to pluck up—which has been long rooting in the earth. How hard will they find it to be plucked up out of their natural estate—who have been many years rooting in sin! He who had been possessed with the devil from his

youth up, found it more difficult to have the devil cast out of him, Mark 9:21.

**Branch 5. See the reason why men's prayers are not heard.**

It is because they persist in sinning. *Sin clips the wings of prayer—so that it will not fly to the throne of grace!* Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart—the Lord will not hear me." In the original it is, "If I look upon sin" so as to lust after it. Suppose a man had never so sweet a breath; yet, if he had the plague, you would not come near him. A sinner may give God many a sweet expression in prayer—but the plague sores still break out in his life! *He keeps on sinning!* Therefore, God will not come near, to receive a petition from him. Malachi 1:10, "I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord Almighty, neither will I accept an offering at your hand."

*Sin makes the heart hard—and God's ear deaf!* Men pray, "Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us." But, *though they pray still—they sin still.* Therefore, God hears their sins—and not their prayers. The Lord loves the mourning of *His doves*--but counts the prayers of the wicked, no better than the howling of a dog. Hosea 7:14, "They have not cried to Me with their heart when they howled upon their bed." *Prayer is a sovereign plaster for a wounded soul—but sin pulls the plaster off—so that it will not heal!*

The prayers of the wicked put God in mind of their sins, and makes Him more speedy in His process of justice against them. Hosea 8:11-13, "Israel has built many altars to take away sin, but these very altars became places for sinning! Even though I gave them all my laws, they act as if those laws don't apply to them. The people of Israel love their rituals of sacrifice, but to me their sacrifices are all meaningless! I will call my people to account for their sins, and I will punish them." Their sacrificing put God in mind of their sin.

**Branch 6. See the reason why we suffer still—because we sin still.** Jeremiah 8:15, "We looked for peace—but no good came." We expected golden days. We persist in sinning. Therefore, God's

hand is stretched out still, Isaiah 9:12. Oh, to what a height, is wickedness boiled up! There are sins in the nation not to be named. Ezekiel 24:13, "It is the filth and corruption of your lewdness and idolatry. And now, because I tried to cleanse you but you refused, you will remain filthy until my fury against you has been satisfied." We pour on the *oil of sin*—therefore God's anger still flames. While the measure of sin fills—the vial of wrath fills. "*They kept on sinning!*" Therefore, we are still under the *black rod* of affliction.

**Branch 7. See our unhappiness in a *lapsed state*.** Being fallen from God, we go further and further from Him. "*They kept on sinning!*" Every sin sets one a step further from God. Jeremiah 2:5, "They are gone far from Me." How far are they from God—who have been all their lives wandering from Him! Psalm 58:3, "They wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born." To keep on sinning, is to take our farewell of God and go with the Prodigal into the hog pens, Luke 15:13. The further one goes from the sun—the nearer he approaches to darkness; the further the soul deviates from God—the nearer it approaches to misery!

**Branch 8. Note hence how vain are all resolutions to leave sin and be converted—until God changes the heart.** "*They kept on sinning!*" Many think to themselves, "Well, now they will become new men; they will never do as before; they will be drunk no more; they will be unclean no more." Alas, they have wind and tide to carry them to hell and, when they are once sinning, they know not where they shall stop.

"*They kept on sinning!*" Let God's afflicting hand lie upon men, though their strength to sin is abated—yet not their appetite. When they grow old, their lusts grow young. Unless the *daystar of grace* arises in their hearts and alters their course, they will never leave sinning—until they have sinned themselves to the devil. A ball rolling down hill, seldom stops in the middle.

**Branch 9. See the exact notice, which God takes of men's impieties.** "*They kept on sinning!*" God observed—and His pen was going in heaven all the while! People, through atheism, think surely that the Lord does not see their sins, nor will He call them to account. Psalm 10:11, "He has said in his heart, God has forgotten, He hides His face, He will never see it." But God takes a full inspection into men's actions. Jeremiah 16:17, "My eyes are upon all their ways, they are not hidden from My face!"

God takes notice of the aggravations of sin against knowledge, mercy and example. To God, the world is a clear, transparent body. He sees *curtain* wickedness. He beholds all the sinful workings of men's hearts like we can see the bees working in their combs in a transparent hive. Matthew 6:4, "He sees in secret." God observes how long a person persists in wickedness, "*They kept on sinning!*"

As a merchant keeps his book of accounts and enters *debts* down in his book, so God has His book of accounts—and He enters down every sin into the book. Psalm 49:9, "He who formed the eye, shall He not see?" The clouds cannot be a canopy, or the night a dark shade to hinder His sight. I think this should be a counter-poison against sin—that God's eye is never off us! He makes a minute examination upon our actions. We may deceive men—but we cannot deceive our omniscient Judge. Ecclesiastes 12:14, "God will bring into judgment every evil thing."

**Branch 10. See the difference between the wicked and the godly.** Nothing can make a wicked man leave off being evil. "*They kept on sinning!*" And nothing can make a godly man leave off being holy; he is godly still. Though there may be death-threatening times, he will pray still, and love God still. Daniel invoked his God, though for all he knew, a prayer might cost him his life, Daniel 6:10. Let the waters be ever so *salty*, the fish will still keep their freshness. Genesis 7:11, "Noah was upright in his generation." When all flesh had corrupted itself, Noah held on to a course of piety. A godly man will still be godly, whatever he suffers. Psalm 44:17, "All this has come

upon us—yet have we not forsaken You, nor dealt falsely in Your covenant."

Gold, though cast in the fire, retains its purity. Acts 20:23, "Chains and afflictions are waiting for me. But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of God's grace." Though the archers shoot at a godly man—yet the bow of his faith abides in strength. Whatever he loses, he holds fast the jewel of a good conscience. He knows the crown of true religion is steadfastness. And though persecution brings death in one hand—piety brings life in the other. Though religion may have thorns strewn in the way—the thorns cannot be as sharp, as the crown is sweet.

**Branch 11.** See from hence how provoking it is to the holy and jealous God, to persist in wickedness. "*They kept on sinning!*" God speaks as if He were very angry. To sin once may be out of ignorance—and when a man comes to know it he repents. Or he might sin out of passion—and when the passion is over he weeps. But to persist in sin highly incenses God and calls aloud for vengeance. Jeremiah 9:3, "They proceed from one evil to another." Verse 9, "Should I not punish them for these things?"

Every sin is treason against the crown of heaven. Now, the more treasons a person commits, the more he enrages his king. To persist in sinning is to dare God's justice; it is to affront Him to His face—and an affront will make God draw His sword!

Is not this spot upon us? Are there not those among us who habituate themselves to evil and rebelliously persist in their impieties? Shall not God punish for these things? Surely England's furnace is heating—and we may sadly suspect God has some other judgments to bring up the rear. Either God will make us weary of our sins—or weary of our lives!



**Branch 12. See here the nature of sin.** One sin makes way for more. *"They kept on sinning!"* The more they sinned, the more fit they were to sin. It is a curse upon sin—that one act of sin prepares for more. Acts 13:2, "And now they sin more and more." In the Hebrew it is "they add to sin." When Jereboam had left off sacrificing to the true God, he did not stop there but set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel for the people to worship, I Kings 12:29. Absalom prevaricated with his father and made religion an excuse for his lie. This sin prepared him for treason, 2 Samuel 15:10. Peter's denial of Christ was seconded with an oath—and that oath backed with a curse. Matthew 26:74, "Then he began lie to curse." Some think he cursed Christ. Cain first *envied* his brother. Then envy begat *anger* and anger begat *murder*. One sin draws on more. If you let a little water out of a pipe it makes way for more. Oh, how dangerous is it to give way to one sin! One sin leads the van—and whole troops follow. *"They kept on sinning!"* When acts of sin are multiplied, men go to hell and never stop sinning!

**Branch 13. See the patience of God towards men.** They persist in sinning—yet God bore with them and, many times, deferred judgment. Psalm 78:38, "Many a time He turned His anger away." How long did God bear with the old world? He strives with men by His Word and Spirit. He comes to them in a still small voice. He would win them with His love. "He waits to be gracious," Isaiah 30:18. God is not like a hasty creditor who requires the payment of the debt, and will give no time for the payment. Revelation 2:21, "I gave her space to repent." The Lord blows the trumpet a long time, before His vengeance is meted out. The wicked sin still—and God is patient still. 2 Peter 3:9, "He is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish."

God's *Justice* says, *"Cut them down!"*

God's *Patience* says, *"Spare them a year longer!"*

When God is going to strike, He waits so long, that He is weary of repenting, as the Prophet speaks, Jeremiah 15:6. We of this nation spin out our sins and God is yet patient. But He will not always be so. If we go on impatiently, the lease of patience will at last be run out. And the longer God is saving His blow, the heavier it will be.

God's patience has bounds set to it. There is a time when God will say, "My Spirit shall no longer strive," Revelation 14:7. The angel cried, "The hour of God's judgment has come," Ezekiel 30:3. Sodom

was the wonder of God's patience—but now has been made a monument of His anger. The Lord may keep off the stroke for a long time—but if men are unreclaimable and persist in sinning, let them know that vengeance is not *dead*—but *sleeping*. Sins against God's patience, exceed the sins of the fallen angels. Therefore, the fiery furnace will be heated seven times hotter!

**Branch 14. See here that which will justify God in damning the wicked: They persist in sinning.** Oh, how righteous God will be, when He shall pass the sentence against them! When a thief goes on stealing and, after he has been reprieved, he still robs—how will all applaud the judge in condemning him! Wicked men are now ready to charge God with partiality and injustice. Ezekiel 18:25, "You have said, *The way of the Lord is not equal.*" They think it very hard that they should die for eating the *apple of sinful pleasure*. But God will say, "Did I not forbid you that fruit? Yet you ate it! nay, you continued eating it. You persisted in sinning. What can you say for yourselves as to why you should not die?"

Sinners will be found speechless. Psalm 51:4, "That You may be clear when You judge." A wicked man will, at the last day, clear God of all injustice. It is a great vindication of a judge when the prisoner at the bar clears his judge and acknowledges that the sentence of death is righteous. Every wicked man's conscience shall set his seal, to the righteousness of God's judgment.

**Branch 15. See what a powerful thing grace is, which gives check to corruption and breaks the heart off from the love of sin!** Though a gracious soul has sin in him—yet he cannot be said properly to *persist* in sinning, 1 John 3:9. He does not allow himself in sin, Romans 7:15. He maintains a combat with it, Galatians 5:17. Though he may *fall* into sin, he does not *lie* in it! A sheep may fall into the mire—but does not lie there. In this sense, a child of God is said to be dead to sin, Romans 6:2. Oh, how mighty and sovereign is divine grace—which divorces a person from sin!

If you consider what power sin has in a man, it is a miracle that he should forsake it. Sin is a man's self, like a member of the body which is not easily parted with. Sin is woven and incorporated into the nature of a man. It is as natural for him to sin—as for fire to burn. Sin has bewitched and stolen away the heart. Now, that sin which has gotten such power over a man—that it should be beaten out of all its forts and castles—what a wonder this is! How is it but from invincible grace! The Spirit draws *sweetly*—but *irresistibly*. The Spirit allures—yet conquers. Grace sits paramount in the soul. It is that strong corrosive which eats asunder the iron chain of sin. Grace repels and beats back corruption. So, in a man who before was under the command of corruption, at last sin flies and is driven back. Why is this? Behold the power of omnipotent grace, which has made such a sudden alteration in him. It has routed sin's forces and caused it to be driven back.

**Branch 16. See the sordid ingratitude of sinners.** "*They kept on sinning!*" Notwithstanding the fact that they had such eminent and signal favors from God—the pillar of fire to lead them, the rock split to give them water—yet mercy could not, with all its oratory, prevail with them to leave their iniquities. "*They kept on sinning!*"

A father bribes his son to obedience by giving him money—yet he still goes on in dissolute courses. So God would draw men from sin by His mercies—yet they will indulge their lusts. Oh, how ungrateful! It is an ill nature—which will not be won with love. *Beasts* are

wrought upon with kindness, Isaiah 1:3—but *sinners* are not. The wicked are worse for God's mercies. They, like vultures—draw *sickness* from these perfumes!

The wicked deal with God as we do with the Thames River. The Thames brings us in our riches—our gold, silks and spices—and we throw all our filth into the Thames. Just so do the wicked deal with God. He gives them all their mercies—and they commit their filthy sins against Him. "They kept on sinning!" Ingratitude is, as Bernard said, the enemy of salvation. If mercy is not a magnet to draw us nearer to God—it will be a millstone to sink us deeper into hell. Nothing so cold as lead—yet nothing more scalding when it is melted. *Nothing is so sweet as God's mercy—yet nothing is so dreadful, when it is abused!* Sinners never escape when mercy draws up their indictment.

**Branch 17. See the detestable folly of sinners.** "*They kept on sinning!*" Though they had felt the smart of sin, verse 21, a fire was kindled in Jacob and anger came up against Israel. Yet for all this, they persist in sinning. This *viper of sin* had pained them—yet they hugged it in their bosom again. Sin has done all the harm to men which it can. It has exhausted their health; it has brought them to a prison and almost to hell—yet they persist in sinning!

While the bears lick the honey around the hive, they are stung with the bees. So, for that little pleasure in sin, men's consciences are stung and in torment—yet they persist in sinning! They would be angry to have others call them *fools*—but the Scripture does, Proverbs 14:9. Nay, the time is coming when they will call themselves fools! Proverbs 11:12, "And you mourn at last saying, How have I hated instruction!" "What, to love those chains which bound me? How foolish I was! How have I hated instruction!"

**Branch 18. See what vast *treasures of wrath* are laid up for unrepentant sinners.** "Do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's

kindness leads you toward repentance? But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed." Romans 2:4-5. "They kept on sinning!" As *guilt* increases—so does *wrath*. *Every sin committed, is a stick to heat hell—and make it burn the hotter!* It is a thing to be lamented, that men should live in the world only to increase their torments in hell. While they commit new sins, they are burdening themselves with more iron chains, which will be so heavy at last, that they will not be able to *bear* them—or *avoid* them. "They kept on sinning!"

Oh, sinner! Know that for every lie you tell, every oath you swear, you are only adding to your torment! Every dish Satan serves you—will increase your fatal reckoning. Every time you defraud others and make your weights lighter, you make your condemnation heavier. Every sin is a *drop of oil* upon hell's eternal furnace!

**Branch 19. See what cause they have to admire the stupendous goodness of God,** who has wrought a change in them—and checked them in their full career of sin! Matthew 11:26, "Even so, Father, for it seems good in Your sight." Christians, you who are vessels of election, were by nature as wicked as others—but God had compassion on you and plucked you as brands out of the fire! He stopped you in your course of sinning, perhaps by an arrow shot out of a pulpit, perhaps by setting a thorn-hedge of affliction in your way. Even as the angel stood in the way to stop Balaam when he was riding on, Numbers 22:31, so God stood in your way and stopped you when you were marching to hell! He turned you back to Him by repentance. Oh, here is the banner of love displayed over you! 1 Timothy 1:13, "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy." Literally, I was "bemerced." Literally, "I was bemerced." Christians, why might not you have been in the number of those who persist in sinning? Because God has bimiracled you with mercy!

Behold sovereign grace! Let your hearts melt in love to God. Admire His royal bounty. Celebrate the memorial of His goodness. Set the crown of all your praises, upon the head of free grace! "By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

**Branch 20. Last, I note from this, how agreeable to reason it is that God should damn men eternally for sin**—not only because sin is acted against an infinite majesty—but because there is an eternity of sin in men's nature. "They kept on sinning!" If men would men live forever—they would sin forever. Some think it harsh that for the sins committed in a few years, they should undergo eternal torment. But here lies the justice and equity of it--it is because sinners have an everlasting principle of sin in them. Their stock of corruption is never spent. They have a never-dying appetite for sin, which is justly punished with a never-dying worm! "Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched!" Mark 9:44. "They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. Revelation 16:9, 11

## **Use 2. Reproof**

It serves to reprove such as persist in sin. He who was unclean—is unclean still; he who was drunk—is drunk still. Hosea 7:10, "They do not return to the Lord." Jeremiah 9:3, "They proceed from evil to evil." Psalm 78:17, "They sinned yet *more* against Him."

Let me not only speak to scandalous sinners, who seem to have 'damnation' written upon their foreheads—but to secret sinners. "Cursed is he who makes an idol and puts it in a secret place." Deuteronomy 27:15. Some of the Jews would not be seen openly bowing to an idol—but they would put it in their closet or some other place and there worship it.

There are many in like manner who will not sin on the balcony, or be like Absalom and sin in the sight of all Israel, 2 Samuel 16:22. But they shut up their windows, and commit their sin in secret. They have a *private back door to hell*--which nobody knows of! Perhaps they live in secret adultery or secret envy and malice or secret neglect of duty. God knows that they are living in secret sins. What an aggravation of sin is this! "Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the Lord." Jeremiah 23:24. "*I have been watching!*" declares the Lord." Jeremiah 7:11. "I have seen your detestable acts! Woe to you! How long will you be unclean?" Jeremiah 13:27

God's watchmen have been sent to warn men of their evil ways. They have told them how damnable a thing it is to persist in sin. The judgments of God, like arrows, have been shot at them for sin. Yet for all this, they persist in sinning. This is worse than to be Balaam the Sorcerer. For when he saw the angel before him with a naked sword, he dared not ride on. But these desperate, heaven-daring sinners, though they see the flaming sword of God's justice before them, resolvedly venture on in sin!

This sin is willful. Willful disobeyers are said to reproach the Lord, Numbers 15:30. To defy a king's authority is to reproach him. Willfulness in sin amounts to daring presumption. Psalm 19:13, "Keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins." Under the Law, there were sacrifices for sins of ignorance—but no sacrifices for sins of presumption, Numbers 11:30. To sin willfully accents and enhances the sin. It is like die to the wool, or like a weight put in the scale which makes it weigh heavier. This leaves men without excuse, John 15:22. A *sea mark* is set up to give notice that there are dangerous rocks. If the mariner will persist in sailing there—and he is shipwrecked, no one will pity him—because he had *warning* given.

Pilate sinned desperately. He knew the Jews had arraigned Christ, out of *envy*, Matthew 27:18. He confessed that he found no fault in Him, Luke 23:14. And God Himself went about to stop him in his sin.

He admonished him through his wife's telling him, to have nothing to do with that just man, Matthew 27:19. Yet for all this, he went on and gave sentence against Christ. While Pilate condemned Christ, he himself was condemned by his own conscience.

Add but one degree of sin more to presumption—*spiting* the Spirit—and it becomes the unpardonable sin. When men sin and will *persist* in sin—it is just with God to harden them and leave them to themselves! Seeing they will be filthy—let them be filthy still, Revelation 22:11. That is a heart-saddening text in Hosea 8:11, "Though Ephraim built many altars for sin offerings, these have become altars for sinning!" It is dreadful for a man to be *left to himself*—like a ship without a rudder or pilot driven out of the winds and dashed upon a rock. Roman 1:24, "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts!"

The condition of that patient is past hope—when his physician gives up on him—and leaves him to his own sick palate. The physician is saying, "Medicine will do him no good; you may let him eat what he pleases, for he will die!"

### **Use 3. Exhortation**

Let it exhort all to take heed of Israel's disease of persisting in sin. John 5:14, "Do not sin any more, so that something worse doesn't happen to you." Oh, sinners, if Christ, glory, or salvation is of any value to you, hearken to this *sacred charm* of the gospel—and be entreated to "break off your iniquities by righteousness," Daniel 4:27. It is not arbitrary—but lies upon you by virtue of a solemn command. Job 22:23, "You shall remove wickedness far from your tent." The Hebrew word there signifies *to put away sin with indignation*—like Paul shook off the viper. Either you must put your sin far away—or God will put you far away from Himself and heaven. It is sad that a man should be so far bewitched with the *woman's hair*—that he does



not read the *lion's teeth*, Revelation 9:7. Oh, break off a course of impiety!

Let your *hearts* be cleansed from the love of sin. Grace begins with the heart. Jeremiah 4:14, "Wash your *heart*, Oh, Jerusalem." *Wash in holy tears!* The salt *water of tears*—kills the *worm of conscience!* To go to cleanse the life before the heart is cleansed—is as if you should wash the channel when the fountain is polluted!

Enter upon a new course of life. Jeremiah 7:3, "Amend your ways and your doings." In the Hebrew it is, "Make good your ways."

**Objection.** But we have no power of ourselves to put a stop to sin. We cannot convert ourselves.

**Answer.** *Do what you can.* Men are not mere logs; they may do more than they do. They may avoid the *occasions* of sin. They may put themselves upon the use of *means*. They may lie at the *pool of an ordinance* and there wait for the angels to stir the water. Those feet which will carry them to a *tavern* or *play*—will carry them to a sermon. They may implore God in prayer to enable them to break off sin. God, who sometimes meets those who are running *from* Him—will not despise those who run *to* Him. There is a promise on record, Jeremiah 29:13, "Then you shall find Me—when you search for Me with all your heart." Go to God, then—and He will give grace. God no sooner speaks—than He creates. When God speaks—the heart opens to Him like the flower opens with the sun!

Poor sinners, if you see yourselves lost and seek Christ—while you are seeking Him, He is seeking you, Luke 19:10. And to encourage you in your earnest addresses to God, remember that God has made a promise not only to those who *have* grace—but to those who *lack* it. Proverbs 1:23, "If you turn to my discipline, then I will pour out my Spirit on you and teach you my words." Pray over this promise and, in due time, God will infuse His Spirit which shall work that in you which He requires of you.

## Some Motives to Divorce Sin

Having answered this objection, let me use some few prevalent motives—to persuade men to put a *bill of divorce* in the hand of their sins!

**1. Consider that, while men go on still in sin, God is their professed enemy!** Psalm 68:21, "God will smash the heads of his enemies, crushing the skulls of those who love their guilty ways." A wound that touches the *brain* is mortal. All God's barbed arrows fly among the wicked. It is dangerous to stand in the place where God's arrows fly! Perhaps, some may think that God's wrath is not so dreadful—as you think that the lion is not as fierce as he is painted. Consult that text, Deuteronomy 32:41, "I sharpen my flashing sword and begin to carry out justice, I will bring vengeance on my enemies and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood!"

Oh, sinner! You who still wallows in your swinish filthiness—do you know what an omnipotent enemy you have! It is He who stretches out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, Isaiah 51:13, who rebukes the wind and bridles the sea! It is He who can look you into your grave—and who can bind you in chains among the devils! And will you go on to provoke Him? Can you overcome the almighty God? "Do you have an arm like God's?" Job 40:9. Can an infant grapple with a an arch-angel? Ezekiel 22:14, "Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong—in the day that I shall deal with you!"

Sinner, you have done enough to damn your soul already—but there is yet a *white flag of mercy* held forth. You may yet make your peace with God. And there is no way to appease God—but by the death of your sins. Oh—then, make haste. Bring to God *the head of your beloved sin* on a platter! There is no pacification of God—but by mortification.

## **2. What is there in sin that anyone should persist in it? It**

is the spirit of evil and destruction; it is a breach of the royal law, 1 John 3:4. It defaces God's image in the soul; it is like a stain to beauty; it is the matter out of which the *worm of conscience* breeds; it is properly the work of the devil. 1 John 3:8, "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." And is there no other employment a man can busy himself about—but the work of the devil! Sin ushers in death, Romans 6:22. Do not say that sin is sweet. What wise man would drink poison—because it is sweet! Who would desire a pleasure—which kills!

**3. The great BENEFIT which accrues to a person by breaking off sin.** Sinner, the day you leave your sins and set upon a course of holiness—God will pardon all your past sins. It shall be as if you had never offended Him. God will pass an *act of oblivion* upon your sins. Jeremiah 31:34, "I will remember your sins no more." The Lord never upbraids a penitent with former sins and unkindnesses.

**Objection.** But may the sinner say, "I am so loaded with guilt that I fear there is no hope of mercy for me?"

**Answer 1.** Though you are guilty—and conscience, like God's attorney, charges you with foul sins—yet, if you are truly humbled and bruised in the sight of God—know that your case is not desperate. 1 John 2:1, "If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous."

Nay, Christ is not only an *Advocate* but a *Surety*, Hebrews 7:22. And, though you are even drowned in debt—yet Christ, by His merit, has satisfied justice and brought in everlasting righteousness for you, Daniel 9:24. Wait but awhile, and He will, in due time, give to your conscience a full discharge sealed with the testimony of His own Spirit.

**Answer 2.** All *winds of providence* shall blow you to heaven. Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good." You shall be a gainer by your losses. Your *crosses* shall be turned into *blessings*. *Poverty* shall starve your lusts. *Sickness* shall refine your grace. *Persecution* shall bring you nearer to God. All the stones the Jews threw at Stephen—only knocked him faster to Christ, the Cornerstone, Isaiah 28:16. Every cut of *God's spiritual diamonds*—makes them sparkle the more. Afflictions are not so much to wound the godly—as to warn them. Afflictions are not the *blows of an enemy*—but the *love-tokens* of a Father! God will *sugar* every affliction with His love. The people of God gather grapes—from thorns. It is a great controversy between the *chemists* and the *physicians*, whether gold may be made liquid and drunk as a cordial. I am sure that, to the people of God, afflictions become gold and, being drunk down, they have been cordial and cheering to their hearts! 2 Corinthians 1:5, "As the *sufferings* of Christ abound in us, so our *consolation* also abounds."

**Answer 3.** God will display the banner of free grace over you! He will smile on you, embrace you in the arms of His mercy—and kiss you with the kisses of His lips! He will lead you into the banqueting house, and feast you with those royal dainties and rare foods with which the angels are delighted. He will give you the *hidden manna* and the *wine of paradise*. He will "put rich garments on you—and set the fair mitre" of glory on your head, Zechariah 3:4-5.

In short, God will say to you, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, Genesis 45:20, "The best of all the land is yours." So, the whole kingdom is before you; the good of that heavenly land is yours; and, as the father of the repenting Prodigal said, Luke 15:21, "Son, all I have is yours!" My *power* is yours to help you. My *Spirit* is yours to comfort you. My *mercy* is yours to save you. *All* I have is yours! I give you not only My *jewels*—but *Myself*! What more can I give you!

Oh, therefore, all you sinners, be persuaded to put a stop to your sins. Do it *sincerely*, Jeremiah 24:7. Hypocrisy in religion will damn

—as well as profaneness. Do it *speedily*, Jeremiah 18:11. Death may be within a few day's march of you. Only part with your lusts—and "this day salvation has come to your house!"

**Objection.** But suppose a few of us break off a course of sinning? What are we the better if the greatest part of the people go on sinning still? Wrath is still likely to come upon the land?

**Answer 1.** Yet if you cannot save the kingdom, you may still save your own souls. And a soul saved—is more than a world gained!

**Answer 2.** Perhaps the reformation of a few may help to keep off wrath from the nation. Jeremiah 5:1, "Run you to and fro—and see now if you can find a man who seeks the truth—and I will pardon it." God would have spared Sodom for ten righteous men—but here He comes lower. If there were but one righteous man, He would pardon. The people of Jerusalem were generally so corrupt that one might have gone up and down the streets in it and scarcely found a man who was sincerely righteous. But if by this word "man" we understand "few," yet that shows us that sometimes the repentance of a few may help to save a nation. A few ears of good corn, may save a whole field of tares from being plucked up.

**Answer 3.** Perhaps, if desolating judgments would come upon others—God may spare you. Zephaniah 2:3, "Beg the Lord to save you—all you who are humble, all you who uphold justice. Walk humbly and do what is right. *Perhaps even yet the Lord will protect you from his anger on that day of destruction.*" The Lord knows in a storm, how to hide His jewels. God hid Jeremiah in captivity. He hid a hundred prophets in a cave, 1 Kings 18:13. He hid several under His wings, in the Marian persecution. The Lord commanded His angel to seal His servants on the forehead (a mark of safety) before He opened His vial and poured His curses upon the earth, Revelation 9:4.

It may be you shall be hidden; nay, if you discard your sins, you shall certainly be hidden. You shall be hidden either *above* ground or *below* ground, Job 14:13. You shall be hidden in the wounds of Christ—and then you are safe. You shall escape, if not the *stroke* of death—yet the *sting* of death—damnation. If your life is not spared—yet your sin shall be pardoned. You shall be hidden within the veil. *God will put all His elect jewels into the cabinet of heaven!*

#### **Use 4. Consolation**

Here is a pillar of support to every soul who has broken off sin and espoused holiness. This is an undoubted evidence that you are a true child of God. Flesh and blood could not reach to this, *only omnipotent grace could conquer your corruptions!* 1 John 3:9, "He who is born of God does not practice sin." He does not sin *deliberately*. He does not sin with *delight*. In his *heart*—he abhors sin; in his *life*—he forsakes it. Here is one who is born of God. And let this comfort the real penitent. Though he cannot get rid of a body of sin—but will have his failings, though he does what he can—yet these failings shall not be charged upon him—but his Surety! God will be propitious through Christ. He will take notice of the *sincerity*—and pass by the *infirmity!*

## **The Last and Great Change!**

"I will wait until my change comes." Job 14:14

If all that has been previously said will not stop men in their sins, I shall add little more. Only let me make this one warning to them—that they would remember their mortality and think seriously how soon death may come—and how terrible it will be to die in their sins!

John 8:21. For this purpose, let them hearken to this death-watch in the text, "I will wait until my change comes."

This book of Job treats much of death and mortality. Job looked upon himself as a man who was not long for this world. Job 17:1, "I am near death. The grave is ready to receive me!" And he loved to be walking often among the tombs—and so to familiarize himself with death. "I will wait until my change comes."

"Until my *change* comes"—that is, until *death* comes.

In the text there is:

**Job's resolution**, "I will wait."

**The length of time he will wait**, "until my change comes."

From which words flow three propositions:

1. Death is a change.
2. This change will come.
3. It is a great part of Christian prudence, to wait until this change comes.

**Doctrine 1. Death is a change.**

There is a threefold change:

A change *before* death.

A change *at* death.

A change *after* death.

**1. There is a change BEFORE death.** Death being ready to approach—changes a man's *OPINION*. When a person comes to die,

he has another opinion of things, than he had before. He now sees with other eyes!

He now has another opinion of the **WORLD** than he had. He sees what a vain thing it is. He could never before, see its nothingness, the devil having cast a *mist* before his eyes. He once doted upon the world. Now, all its jewels are pulled off—and he sees it in its night dress. He sees how the world's paint falls off—and how unable it is to give one drop of *true comfort* at the hour of death!

Death approaching changes a man's opinion about **SIN**. Before, he looked upon sin, as merely a matter of merriment. He thought swearing an oath, drinking to excess—and wasting his precious time in vanity—was but a light thing. He said of sin, as Lot did of Zoar, "*Is it not a little one?*" Genesis 19:20. But when he sees *death's grim face* appear—he now has other apprehensions of sin than he had before. The wine that showed its color in the glass and smiled at him—now bites like a serpent! Proverbs 23:32. Those sins which before were thought to be *light as feathers*—are now like a *ton of lead* ready to sink him.

King Belshazzar was carousing and drinking wine in the cups taken from the Temple of God in Jerusalem; but when there came forth "fingers of a man's hand—and wrote upon the wall—then the King's "face turned pale with fear! Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him!" Daniel 5:6. So, after sinful pleasure enjoyed, when death begins to show itself and put forth its fingers—and a man sees a dreadful handwriting in his conscience—and then oh, how is his opinion about sin changed! How his thoughts trouble him! Now what would he give to have his sins pardoned? He never saw the *face of sin* as ugly as in the looking-glass of death!

When death comes near a man, it changes his opinion about **HOLINESS**. He once thought it a shame to be seen with a Bible in his hand. Holiness before was the object of his scorn and hatred. He



called pious discourses, "mere cant;" repentance, "whining;" fervent praying, "babbling." He baptized true zeal with the name of fanaticism. But when death begins to approach, it changes his judgment. He now sees how mistaken he was—and that without holiness he can never see God, Hebrews 12:14. Now his eyes begin to be opened and he subscribes to that maxim, Job 28:28, "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom!" He now sees the best way to be *safe* is to be *sincerely pious*. Oh, now what would he give for a *grain* of that holiness, which before he despised! How glad he would be to "*die* the death of the righteous," though he hated to *live* their life!

Thus, there is a change made not long *before* death. The sinner now sees himself in a snare and labyrinth! Now the minister must be sent for in all haste, though oftentimes he comes too late!

**2. There is a change AT death.** This is a change in the **BODY**. Job 14:20, "You always overpower them, and then they pass from the scene. You disfigure them in death and send them away." The most lovely complexion is greatly changed, when once the *pale horse of death* rides over it! The *eyes* are hollow. The *cheeks* are ashen. The *jaws* are sunken. That beautiful *face* which once allured—now frightens! Psalm 39:11, "You make his beauty consume away like a moth." Death is a moth which consumes a beauty of the finest spinning. Hence, the body being so discolored by death—and turned into a vile carcass—the patriarchs desired to have their dead buried out of their sight, Genesis 23:4. Death so changes the body and puts it into such a frightful dress—that *none fall in love with it but the worms!*

**3. There is a change AFTER death.** This change is chiefly in regard to the **SOUL**.

To the godly—it is a *blessed* change.

To the wicked—it is a *cursed* change.

The GODLY, after death, have a blessed change. They have a full acquittal from their sins and are put into an actual possession of their blissful inheritance. Faith gives them a *propriety* in glory—and death gives them a *possession* of glory. Oh, blessed change, from a desert—to a paradise; from a house of mourning—to a banquet house; from a bloody battle—to a victorious crown! "Glorified believers shall change their *place*—but not their *company*," said Preston. They shall have transforming sights of God. 1 John 3:2, "When He shall appear—we shall be like Him."

As the souls of the godly shall have a blessed change after death, so shall their bodies at the resurrection, John 6:40 and 1 Thessalonians 4:19. Though the grave is their *long* home, it is not their *last* home. Mother earth shall be in *travail*—and bring forth the bodies of the saints—and they shall shine as the sun in its meridian splendor! "He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours—and change them into glorious bodies like His own!" Philippians 3:21.

Death will make a cursed change to the WICKED. They must go out of the bed of pleasure, and leave all their mirth and music. Revelation 18:21, "Never again will the sound of music be heard there!" The wicked must change from joy—to misery; from a temporary paradise—to an eternal prison! "*I am in agony in this fire!*" Luke 16:19.

## **Doctrine 2. This change WILL come!**

Death can no more be stopped in its race—than the sun. *Death's scythe* cuts asunder, even the royal scepter. God's *messenger of death* finds out *every* man. Ecclesiastes 8:8, "There is no discharge in that war." Among men, if one is summoned to the war—he may find some excuse. He may plead unfitness or he may substitute another in his place. But in this *war with death*—there is no getting off. "There is no discharge in that war." As death sends its challenge to all, so it is sure to conquer. When death, like God's sergeant-at-

arms, arrests men, there is no bribing this sergeant or making resistance.

Death will not be ***bribed***. It was a saying of Beauford, a wicked bishop in King Henry the Sixth's time, "Why should I die, being so rich? Will not death be hired? Will money do nothing?" Ezekiel 7:19, "Their silver and gold will be unable to save them, in the day of the Lord's wrath!"

Death cannot be ***resisted***. Take a man in his best estate. Let him be dignified with *honor* like Solomon, armed with *strength* like Sampson. Were his flesh as hard as bronze—yet God's *bullet of death* would shoot through him! How easily can God *look* us into our grave! Men may set up their *banners*—*but* God always sets up the *trophies*!

That there must be a change, is evident. The body, being but an earthly *tabernacle*, 2 Peter 1:14, the *corde*s of it will soon be loosed. Besides, there is a decree of death passed upon all people, "Man is destined to die once—and after that to face judgment!" Hebrews 9:27. And *how soon* this change will come—we do not know. Death may be within a few days march of us—and when it comes with its letter of summons—we *must* surrender!

### **Use 1. Exhortation**

**Branch 1. Let us all exercise ourselves with THOUGHTS of this great change.** Let us not be of that Emperor's mind—who judged it cowardly to think of death. Job 17:14, "I have said to *corruption*—you are my father; and to the *worm*—you are my mother." Job, by often meditating on death, was as well acquainted with it, as he was with his father and mother. By often handling this *serpent*—it will be less frightful. The serious contemplation on this great change, death—would produce these four excellent effects.

**1. It would HUMBLE us.** Why should we set up banners and trophies of pride—when we are but dust and rottenness! The

thoughts of the grave would bury our pride.

**2. The thoughts of a sudden change would be an antidote against SIN.** Shall we go on in sin—when God may say this night, "Give an account of your stewardship!" The way to give sin a mortal wound—is to set up a *death's-head* on our table—which will make us think of our face after we die!

In particular, the thoughts of our change would keep us from sinful compliance. Some *latitudinarians* can cut their religion according to the fashion of the times. They can be Protestant or Papist. They can sail with any wind that blows to their advantage. But that man will not be for every change—who thinks seriously of his last change.

**3. The thoughts of this change would cure our inordinate love of the WORLD.** A change will come shortly—and then what will this fleeting world be to us? All our money will serve only to buy us a burial sheet! Saladine, the Turkish Emperor, lying at the point of death, commanded that a white sheet should be carried before him to his grave on the point of a spear, with this proclamation, "These are the rich spoils which Saladine the Emperor carries away with him—of all his triumphs and victories obtained—of all his realms possessed. Nothing is left him but this sheet!" After a great feast comes the basket for leftover food. Shortly, death, like such a basket, will take away all our earthly comforts. "But God said to him, '*You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?*' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." Luke 12:20-21.

**4. The serious thoughts of our last and great change, would make us spend our TIME better.** How diligent men would be in Scripture reading, how fervent in prayer, how watchful over our hearts, how useful to our relations! *We should live every day as if it were our dying day.* He who knows how short his time is in his farm, will make the best advantage of it. He who remembers the shortness

of his time here on earth—and how soon a change may come—will improve all the seasons of grace for his soul that he may give a good account of his stewardship.

**Branch 2. Let us PREPARE for this change.** All the changes we meet with in the world, are but to fit us for our *last* change. Men unprepared, being summoned by the *king of terrors* before God's tribunal, go as the prisoner to the bar to receive their fatal doom! The thoughts of this, should be enough to put them into a frenzy. Would it not be sad for a man to have his house on fire—and the fire so fierce that he has no time to get out his goods? Such is the case of many at death. A fever has set their *house of clay* on fire—and they are snatched away so suddenly that they have no time to make provision for their souls!

**Question.** What shall we do to be fitted for our great and last change?

**Answer 1.** Let us labor to get into Christ. It is dreadful when death finds any outside of Christ. As if the avenger of blood had overtaken the manslayer before he had gotten to the city of refuge. You who are in Christ, are as the *dove in the rock*. Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Christ has fully atoned for the sin of believers. Christ's blood turns a deathbed into a bed of roses!

The best way to be fitted for dying, is being *married to Christ*. It does not matter if death unties the knot between the *body* and the *soul*—as long as faith has tied the knot between *Christ* and the soul. The *Prince of Peace* secures against the *king of terrors*.

**Answer 2.** If we would be fitted for our last change—let us labor for a spiritual change. Before our *bodies* are changed, let us labor to have our *hearts* changed. Oh, let us get the holy anointing, 1 John 2:27. Grace is as needful for the soul—as oil is for the lamp, and as breath for the body. John 3:7, "You must be born again." He who is born but

once—shall die twice. Grace makes an admirable change. To be changed from sin to holiness—is as if iron were changed into gold, or dust changed into diamonds. Now, the soul is all glorious within. Oh, labor for this gracious change! At death, a good *face* may change for the worse—but a good *heart* changes for the better.

**Doctrine 3. It is a high point of Christian prudence, to wait until our change comes.** "I will wait." Waiting implies two things:

EXPECTATION. "I will wait *for* my change"—that is, I will look for it. A gracious soul is ever expecting to hear news of his going home to be with Christ. Death does not come to a child of God unawares—but it come as Jonathan's arrow did to David, who went into the field and expected where the arrow would be shot, 1 Samuel 20:24. A godly man looks every hour for the *arrow of death* to be shot at him.

DILIGENCE. "I will wait until my change comes"—that is, I will be setting my soul in order for death. We must not wait and sit still—but *wait* and *work*. He who waits for his master's coming will be careful that everything is in good decorum. Matthew 24:46, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes, shall find so doing." Be often calling yourselves to account; every night review what you have been doing all the day. This is the right waiting for our final change—when we put our souls in a ready posture for *death* and *judgment*.

## **Use 2. Reproof**

**Branch 1.** This reproofs such as are so far from *waiting* for their change, that they cannot endure to *think* of their change. They are no more willing to think of death—than a man drowned in debt is to think of going to prison. Amos 6:3, "You who put far away the evil day." He hopes for long life. The bud of *youth* hopes to come to the flower of manhood—and the flower of manhood hopes to come to old age—and old age hopes to renew its strength as the eagle. Psalm 49:11, "Their inward thought, is that their houses shall continue forever." They would rather be building fine houses—than providing

their tombstone. The *mirthful youth* does not like the noise of the death-bell—and the *powdered hair* forgets his final destiny.

**Branch 2.** It reproves such as wait—but not in the right sense. They wait to fulfill their lusts. "The adulterer waits for the twilight, for he says, *No one will see me then.*" Job 24:15. The unjust man waits for an opportunity to defraud. Is this to wait as Job did? Where do men wait for their change? In a tavern, or at a theater? Alas, their change comes before they are aware! The graves are ready for them—but they are not ready for their graves!

### Use 3. Exhortation

It exhorts Christians to wait for their change. As the *farmer* waits until his seed sown springs up, as the *merchant* waits for the coming home of his ship—so we should wait until death comes to ship us over to the eternal world.

1. Let us wait with **watchfulness**. Mark 13:33, "Watch and pray." Let us watch our hearts—that they neither decoy us into sin, nor charm us asleep in carnal security.

2. Let us wait with **patience**. "I will *wait* until my change comes." That is, "I will be *patient* until my change comes."

The *sufferings* the godly endure in this life—and the *joys* they will have after death—may put them upon desiring this blissful change. But though they should *covet to die*—yet they must be *content to live*. Wait with patience until the appointed time has come. The Father knows when the best season is, to bring his child home. Christian, do not be desirous to be in heaven, before your time. Wait but awhile—and you shall have what you have prayed and wept for. It is but awhile—and God will take the *cross* off your shoulders and set a *crown* upon your head!

## The Furnace Heated Hotter!

*A clear description of such people as shall have a greater share in hell torments.*

*"These shall receive greater damnation."* Mark 12:40

I had thought to have stopped my pen here—but supposing the largest discourses of this nature are little enough to divert wicked people from their excesses, I have one word more to add—that if sinners have not lost their reason, they would be persuaded to reflect a little and consider seriously the damnableness of their state after this life—and lay to heart this text dropped from our Savior's own lips, *"These shall **receive** greater damnation."*

I do not intend to meddle with the *context*—but shall take the words as they lie entirely in themselves. In the text there are three parts:

A fiery furnace—*damnation*.

The furnace heated hotter—*greater damnation*.

The people for whom this furnace is doubly heated—*These shall receive*.

**Doctrine.** The proposition I intend is this: **There are some kinds of sinners who shall be more severely tormented in hell than others.** *"These shall receive greater damnation."*

In respect of the **duration** of torment—all shall be punished alike. All the black regiment of reprobates shall lie in hell forever! But in respect of the **degree** of torment—all shall not be punished alike. Some shall have a more fiery indignation than others, "How much *worse* punishment, do you think one will deserve!" Hebrews 10:29.



Those who have the least punishment in hell shall have enough. The *coolest* part of hell is hot enough punishment—but there are some who shall have a hotter place in hell than others. All shall go into that fiery *prison*—but some sinners God will thrust into the fiery *dungeon*. Those whose *impieties* are more fearfully heightened, and who have sinned at a higher rate than others—God will take His *full* blow at, in hell, and will tear them in His wrath, "Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue!" Psalm 50:22. For such, He will heat the infernal furnace seven times hotter. I shall briefly give you a list and *catalogue* of such sinners as dying in impenitence, shall receive greater damnation.

**1. Such as are willfully ignorant.** It is one thing *not* to know—and another to be *unwilling* to know. They might have the notion of the true God—but they will not. They trample upon this pearl of divine knowledge. They not only *neglect* knowledge, but *reject* it! Hosea 4:6, "Because you have *rejected* knowledge." Or, as the Hebrew word signifies, "you have *hated* it." The Ethiopians curse the sun—just so do these reject the light of saving knowledge. These *knowledge despisers* shall have a greater share in the torments of hell. Isaiah 27:11, "Israel is a foolish and stupid nation, for its people have *turned* away from God. Therefore, the one who made them will show them no pity or mercy." And for God to show no pity—is to take the extremity of the Law upon them.

**2. Such as will neither follow the thing that is good for themselves, nor yet allow others.** Luke 11:52, "How terrible it will be for you experts in religious law! For you hide the key to knowledge from the people. You don't enter the Kingdom yourselves, and you prevent others from entering!" Such as will neither read the Bible themselves, nor allow their children to read it; such as will neither hear a good sermon themselves, and discourage their neighbors from hearing; such as will stop the pipes which are to convey the *water of life* and who eclipse the lamps of the sanctuary—these shall receive greater damnation. 1 Thessalonians 2:16, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, for fear some might be

saved. By doing this, they continue to pile up their sins. But the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost!"

### **3. Such as sin against clear illuminations and convictions.**

These the Apostle speaks of in James 4:17, "He knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it." They are not ignorant that the things they do are sin. Conscience, like the cherubim, stands with a flaming sword to deter them—yet they will eat the *apple of pleasure*—though they die! These men's sins have a vehemence. This made the sin of the fallen angels so great, for which they lie in chains. They had no ignorance, no passion to stir them up, no temptation—but they sinned voluntarily and out of pure choice!

This sinning against conscience, is accompanied with **pride**. Sinners know the mind of God—yet act contrary to it. They set *their* will above *God's* will. They say in their heart as did Pharaoh, Exodus 5:2, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?"

This sinning against conscience, is accompanied with **impudence**. Let what will come of it—let God punish or not—men *will* pursue their sins! Here the veil of modesty is laid aside.

If God has been so dreadful against sins of *infirmity* and *passion*—as we see in Moses and Uzzah—how fierce will His anger be against *tenacious* sinners!

Sins against illumination, and conviction make deep wounds in the soul. Other sins fetch blood; these are a stab in the heart! Every little hole in the roof lets in rain—but a crack in the foundation endangers the fall of the house. Every sin of *weakness* is harmful—but sins against *illumination* crack the conscience, and threaten the ruin of the soul. To sin in this matter makes sin the heavier—and hell the hotter!

Consider this, all you who rebel against gospel light—if you do not repent—you will be more scorched in hell. Luke 12:47, "That servant

who knows his master's will and does not do what his master wants, will be beaten with many blows."

**4. Such as are plotters and contrivers of sin.** Psalm 36:4, "They lie awake at night, hatching sinful plots." Many men's heads ache until they have found out some new sin. Such were those men who invented a decree against Daniel and got the king to sign it, Daniel 6:9. These *inventors of evil things*, shall be more plagued in

hell than others! He who first plots a treason is counted the capital offender, and has the most aggravated tortures. Micah 2:1, "Woe to those who devise iniquity." This *woe* is as a ton of lead to sink them *deeper into damnation*.

**5. Such as are haters of holiness.** The diamond of grace is hated because of its sparkling luster. If men hate the *saints* for their grace, how they would hate *Christ* if He were now upon the earth! Will God lay those in His bosom who hate Him? No! they shall have a lower place in hell than others. Deuteronomy 7:10, "But those who hate Him, He will repay to their face by destruction; He will not be slow to repay to their face, those who hate Him." The repetition shows both the *verity* and *severity* of their punishment.

**6. Such as are lovers of sin.** Jerome said that it is worse to *love* sin—than to *commit* it. He who *loves* sin—his *heart* is in the sin. He follows it with delight—like a man does his game, "They actually rejoice in doing evil!" Jeremiah 11:15. *Sinners say they hate the devil—but they love that which will bring them to the devil!* Lovers of sin shall have more of hell torment. The fire will make them forget the pleasure. Revelation 22:15, "Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and *practices* lying." It is bad enough to *tell* a lie—but he who *loves* a lie shall lie lower in hell.

**7. They shall have a greater degree of torment, who persecute the people of God.** Acts 7:52, "Which of the prophets

have not your fathers persecuted?" The godly are called *sheep*—and the wicked called *briars*. These briars tear not only the *wool*—but the *flesh* of the sheep. These shall be more fearfully punished. What they are to endure afterwards, may be witnessed by the hell many of them feel in their conscience and by the judgments of God upon them in this life.

Charles IX of France, who shed so much Protestant blood in the massacre at Paris, that it dyed the rivers a crimson color—was struck by God with an excessive bleeding in several parts of his body, to the amazement of the beholders. If God in this life ordains His arrows against the persecutors, Psalm 7:13—then surely He will make them His standing mark in hell—at which He will be shooting to all eternity!

**8. Such as are seemingly good—so that they may be really bad.** Those who make *profession* a specious covering for their wickedness so that, under this mask, they may lie and deceive. *They*

*do the devil's work in Christ's uniform!* Proverbs 7:14, "This day have I paid my vows, come let us take our fill of love." Who would have suspected this harlot, having been at church? She made her devotion, a preface to adultery. Luke 20:47, "They devour widow's houses—and for a *show* make long prayers, the same shall receive greater damnation." To make long prayers for this end—that they might do unrighteous actions—was damnable hypocrisy! Those who make religion a covering to carry on their sin more smoothly—these shall lie in the hottest place of hell!

**9. Such as do no works of mercy.** Their hearts are hardened against Christ's poor. These shall have a greater portion in hell torments. James 2:13, "He shall have judgment without mercy—who has showed no mercy." He shall have torment—and nothing but torment. A person may as well be cruel by not relieving the poor—as by wronging him. Such a one shall have judgment without mercy.

**10. Such as die under final unbelief.** Many think none are to be counted infidels, but Turks and pagans. Yes, there are many *infidel professors*—who do not believe God's veracity and holiness. They do not have as much faith as devils, James 2:19. Infidelity is linked with impenitence. Acts 19:9, "Some became hardened and would not believe." Unbelief gives God the lie, 1 John 5:10. Therefore, such people are put in the forefront of those who go to hell. Revelation 21:8, "The unbelieving shall have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur."

**11. Such as have grown *gray* under the gospel—but are never the better.** These have enjoyed the prayers, tears and lessons of God's choicest ministers. They have been put in the fattest pastures of ordinances—but yet they may say with the Prophet, "My leanness, my leanness," Isaiah 24:16. They have had warm preaching—but they freeze in the sun. They can hear ministers preach the most startling messages—and see them throw the flashes of hellfire about in the congregation—but their consciences are no more stirred than the pillars in the church!

Proud they were—and they are proud still. Profane they were—and they are profane still. All the sermons they have heard are like the showers falling on a rock which is never made softer or more fruitful. The lungs of ministers are spent—but no refining work of grace has passed upon them. These certainly shall have greater degrees of torment!

If *heathen* who never heard of Christ are damned, these shall be double-damned. Matthew 11:23-24, "And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to hell. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you that it will be *more tolerable* for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." Jesus Christ preached in Capernaum, there He worked miracles. Therefore, by not repenting and believing, she was in a worse condition than Sodom and would be *more severely* punished.

You who have had God's golden candlestick among you and are not more holy, it would have been better to have lived in Africa where Christ had never been preached, than in London. It will be better with Indians—than with such nominal professors who live in the bosom of the Church.

**12. Such as who apostatize and fall away from the truth.**

There are some in this age, who have not only lost their former strictness in religion—but the very *leaves of their profession* are dropped off. As their sin is more odious because their apostasy brings a scandal upon the ways of God—so their punishment shall be answerable. These renegades shall be hung up in chains in hell. Hebrews 10:38, "If any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." It is as if God should say, "I will execute the fierceness of My anger upon him. He shall drink the dregs of the cup of wrath—and that cup shall never pass away from him!"

**13. Such Ishmael spirits, as scoff at true religion.** The Apostle has foretold it as a sin of the last times. 2 Peter 3:3, "I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire." This is fearful, when men have arrived at such a height of impiety as, with Lucian, to deride holy living. The tongue of the scoffers is *the devil's gun* out of which he shoots his bullets against true religion. There are some who, though they are not good themselves—yet they have a venerable esteem of those who are good. Herod revered John the Baptist. But such the devil has taken great possession of—who reproach others for that wherein they most resemble God.

Take heed of this sin," said Latimer, "for I never knew but one scorner who repented." Scoffers are, for the most part, atheists. When men have outfaced their conscience and lost all principle of sincerity and modesty—then they fall a-scoffing. These shall have greater damnation. Isaiah 28:22, "So scoff no more, or your punishment will be even greater. For the Lord, the Lord Almighty,

has plainly told me that he is determined to crush you." You shall be bound in chains of darkness—and these chains shall be made strong.

**14. Such as have perverted others by their corrupt writings.**

They have set forth books full of error—and others have sucked in the poison of those books and been damned. Some have published to the world that *moral virtue* does not differ from *grace*—and so have caused people to rest in their moralities, never aspiring after the New Birth. Alas, a man may keep a moral decorum—yet there may be some sin which reigns in his heart. The Pharisee could say, "I am no adulterer," Luke 18:11—but he could not say, "I am not proud." Morality may *curb*—but it cannot *change*.

The Socinians have broached many damnable errors in print against the deity of Christ. These shall drink deeper in the cup of wrath. If the *breakers* of God's law are punished seven-fold—then those who teach men to break God's law, shall be punished seventy-seven fold. Revelation 19:20, "The false prophet was taken (he who by his errors had deceived the world) and was cast alive into the midst of the lake of fire!"

**15. Such as make their bodies (which should be the temples of the Holy Spirit) vessels of uncleanness.** Those who burn in lust shall one day (without repentance) burn in hotter flames than others, 2 Peter 2:9. *Oh, who would, for a cup of pleasure, drink a sea of wrath!*

**16. Such as send other men to hell by their bad example.**

The drunken master has made his servant to reel by his example. The swearing father has taught his son to swear, and damned him by his example. Would it not be something to be lamented, if the child should get the plague of his father and die? And is it not often so, in a spiritual sense, that the father poisons and infects his child by his cursed example! Doubtless, such *monsters in wickedness* shall have a greater portion in hell torments. They shall not only be damned for their own sins—but for other men's sins. This was the reason why

Dives desired that some might go preach to his brethren—that they might not come to hell. He had given his brethren a bad example—and he thought that if they were sentenced to hell his torments would be increased, and he would be punished for their sins as well as his own.

**Exhortation 1.** As we should take heed of living in any sin (for the least sin lived in and unrepented of will bring us to hell), so especially let us take heed of being in the black roll of these sinners I have now mentioned. These dying in final impenitence shall be more severely punished. A greater millstone of wrath will fall upon their head. If a spark or two of God's anger is so grievous, what is it when He shall stir up all His wrath! "Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath!" Psalm 78:38.

**Exhortation 2.** Let us labor to fly to Christ by faith. Let us get Him to stand as a screen between us and the fire of God's indignation. Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." God the Father will not condemn them, because He is satisfied in the price paid for them. He will not require the debt twice—from both the *Surety* and the *debtor*. And Jesus Christ will not condemn them, for believers are His spouse; and Christ will not condemn His own spouse. So that, if ever we would be safe, let us get into Christ—and being in this city of refuge, God's justice, that avenger of blood, will not touch us. Having put on the garment of our Lord's righteousness, the fire of hell can never singe this garment! 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath!"