

Human Responsibility

A Sermon

(No. 194)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, May 16, 1858, by the

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at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.” —[John 15:22](#).

THE PECULIAR SIN of the Jews, the sin which aggravated above everything their former iniquities, was their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. He had been very plainly described in the books of the prophets, and they who waited for him, such as Simeon and Anna, no sooner beheld him even in his infant state, than they rejoiced to see him, and understood that God had sent forth his salvation. But because Jesus Christ did not answer the expectation of that evil generation because he did not come arrayed in pomp and clothed with power, because he had not the outward garnishing of a prince and the honors of a king, they shut their eyes against him, he was “a root out of a dry ground,” he was “despised and they esteemed him not.” Nor did their sin stop there. Not content with denying his Messiahship, they were exceeding hot against him in their anger; they hunted him all his life, seeking his blood; nor were they content till their fiendish malice had been fully glutted by sitting down at the foot of the cross, and watching the dying throes and the expiring agonies of their crucified Messiah. Though over the cross itself the words were written, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” yet they knew not their king, God’s everlasting Son; and knowing him not, they crucified him, “for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

Now, the sin of the Jews is every day repeated by the Gentiles; that which they did once, many have done every day. Are there not many of you now present this day, listening to my voice, who forget the Messiah? You do not trouble yourself to deny him; you would not degrade yourselves, in what is called a Christian country, by standing up to blaspheme his name. Perhaps you hold the right doctrine concerning him, and believe him to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary; but still you neglect his claims, and give him no honor, and do not accept him as worthy of your trust. He is not your Redeemer; you are not looking for his second advent, nor are you expecting to be saved through his blood; nay, even worse; ye are this day crucifying him; for know ye not, that as many as put away from them the gospel of Christ, do crucify the Lord afresh and open wide his wounds? As often as ye hear the Word preached and reject it, as often as ye are warned, and stifle the voice of your conscience, as often as ye are made to tremble, and yet say, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee,” so often do you in effect grasp the

hammer and the nail, and once more pierce the hand, and make the blood issue from the side. And there are other ways by which you wound him through his members. As often as ye despise his ministers, or cast stumbling blocks in the way of his servants, or impede his gospel by your evil example, or by your hard words seek to pervert the seeker from the way of truth, so often do you commit that great iniquity which brought the curse upon the Jew, and which hath doomed him to wander through the earth, until the day of the second advent when *he* shall come who shall even by the Jew be acknowledged the King of the Jews, for whom both Jew and Gentile are now looking with anxious expectation, even Messiah, the Prince who came once to suffer, but who comes again to reign.

And now I shall endeavor this morning to show the parallel between your case and that of the Jew; not doing so in set phrase, but yet incidentally, as God shall help me; appealing to your conscience, and making you feel that in rejecting Christ, you commit the same sin and incur the same doom. We shall note, first of all, *the excellence of the ministry, since Christ comes in it, and speaks to men*: “If I had not spoken to them.” We shall notice, secondly, *the aggravation of sin caused by the rejection of Christ’s message*: “If I had not spoken to them they had not had sin.” Thirdly, *the death of all excuses, caused by the preaching of the Word*: “Now they have no cloke for their sin.” And then, in the last place, we shall briefly, but very solemnly announce *the fearfully aggravated doom of those who thus reject the Saviour, and increase their guilt by despising him*.

I. In the first place, then, this morning it is ours to say, and to say truly too, that in THE PREACHING OF THIS GOSPEL, THERE IS TO MAN’S CONSCIENCE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE SPEAKING OF THE SAVIOUR THROUGH US. When Israel of old despised Moses and murmured against him, Moses meekly said, “Ye have not murmured against us, but ye have murmured against the Lord God of Israel.” And truly the minister may, with Scripture warrant, say the same: he that despiseth us, despiseth not us, but him that sent us. he who rejecteth the message rejecteth not what we say, but rejecteth the message of the everlasting God. The minister is but a man; he has no priestly power, but he is a man called out of the rest of mankind, and endowed with the Holy Spirit, to speak to his fellow-men; and when he preacheth the truth as with power sent down from heaven, God owns him by calling him his ambassador. and puts him in the high and responsible position of a watchman on the walls of Zion, and he bids all men take heed that a faithful message, faithfully delivered, when despised and trampled on, amounts to rebellion against God, and to sin and iniquity against the Most High. As for what I may say, as a man, it is but little that I should say it, but if I speak as the Lord’s ambassador, take heed that ye slight not the message. It is the Word of God sent down from heaven which we preach with the power of the Holy Spirit, earnestly beseeching you to believe it, and remember, it is at the peril of your own souls that you put it from you, for it is not we that speak, but the Spirit of the Lord our God who speaketh in us. With what a solemnity does this invest the

gospel ministry! O ye sons of men, the ministry is not the speaking of men, but the speaking of God through men. As many as are the real called and sent servants of God, are not the authors of their message; but they first hear it from the Master, and they speak it to the people, and they see ever before their eyes these solemn words—"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee," and they hear behind them this awful threatening—"If thou warn them not they shall perish, but their blood will I require at thine hand." Oh! that ye might see written in letters of fire before you this day the words of the prophet—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord;" for as far as our ministry is true and untainted by error, it is God's Word, and it hath the same right and claim to your belief as if God himself should speak it from the top of Sinai, instead of speaking it through the humble ministry of the Word of God.

And now let us pause over this doctrine, and let us ask ourselves this solemn question. Have we not all of us grossly sinned against God, in the neglect that we have often put upon the means of grace? How often have you stayed away from the house of God, when God himself was speaking there? What would have been the doom of Israel if, when summoned on that sacred day to hear the Word of God from the top of the mountain, they had perversely rambled into the wilderness, rather than attend to hear it? And yet so have you done. You have sought your own pleasure, and listened to the syren song of temptation; but ye have shut your ear against the voice of the Most High; and when he has himself been speaking in his own house, ye have turned aside unto crooked ways, and have not regarded the voice of the Lord your God. And when ye have come up to the house of God, how often has there been the careless eye, the inattentive ear! Ye have heard as though ye heard not. Your ear has been penetrated, but the hidden man of the heart has been deaf, and you have been like the deaf adder; charm we never so wisely, you would not listen nor regard us. God himself has spoken, too, at times in your conscience, so that you have heard it. You have stood in the aisle, and your knees have knocked together, you have sat in your pew, and while some mighty Boanerges has thundered out the word, you have heard it said, as with an angel's voice, "*Prepare to meet thy God—consider thy way—set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.*" And yet you have gone out of God's house, and have forgotten what manner of men you were. You have quenched the Spirit, you have done despite to the Spirit of grace; you have put far from you the struggles of your conscience; you have throttled those infant prayers that were beginning to cry in your heart; you have drowned those newborn desires that were just springing up; you have put away from you everything that was good and sacred; you have turned again to your own ways, and have once more wandered on the mountains of sin, and in the valley of iniquity. Ah! my friends, just think, then, for a moment, that *in all this you have despised God*. I am certain, if the Holy Spirit would but apply this one solemn truth to your consciences this morning, this Hall of Music would be

turned into a house of mourning, and this place would become a Bochim, a place of weeping and lamentation. Oh to have despised God, to have trampled under foot the Son of Man, to have passed by his cross, to have rejected the wooings of his love and the warnings of his grace! How solemn! Did you ever think of this before? You have thought it was but despising man, will ye now think of it as despising Christ? For Christ has spoken to you. Ah! God is my witness, that oftentimes Christ hath wept with these eyes, and spoken to you with these lips. I have sought nothing but the winning of your souls. Sometimes with rough words have I endeavored to drive you to the cross, and at other times with weeping accents have I sought to weep you to my Redeemer; and sure I am, I did not speak myself then, but Jesus spoke through me, and inasmuch as ye did hear and weep, and then went away and did forget, remember that Christ spoke to you. 'Twas he who said, "Look unto *me* and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;" 'twas he who said, "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden;" 'twas he who warned you, that if you neglected this great salvation you must perish; and in having put away the warning and rejected the invitation, you have not despised us, but you have despised our Master; and woe unto you, except ye repent, for 'tis a fearful thing to have despised the voice of him that speaketh from heaven.

II. And now we must notice the second point, namely, that THE REJECTION OF THE GOSPEL, AGGRAVATES MEN'S SIN. Now, do not let me be misunderstood. I have heard of persons who, having gone to the house of God, have been filled with a sense of sin, and at last they have been driven almost to despair, for Satan has tempted them to forsake the house of God; for says he, "The more you go, the more you increase your condemnation." Now I believe that this is an error; we do not increase our condemnation by going to the house of God; we are far more likely to increase it by stopping away; for in stopping away from the house of God there is a double rejection of Christ; you reject him even with the outward mind, as well as with the inward spirit; you neglect even the lying at the pool of Bethesda, you are worse than the man who lay at the pool, but could not get in. You will not lie there, and therefore, neglecting the hearing of the Word of God, you do indeed incur a fearful doom; but if you go up to the house of God, sincerely seeking a blessing, if you do not get comfort—if you do not find grace in the means, still, if you go there devoutly seeking it, your condemnation is not increased thereby. Your sin is not aggravated merely by the hearing of the gospel, but by the wilful and wicked rejection of it when it is heard. The man who listens to the sound of the gospel, and after having heard it, turns upon his heel with a laugh, or who, after hearing time after time, and being visibly affected, allows the cares and the pleasures of this wicked life, to come in and choke the seed—such a man does in a fearful measure increase his guilt.

And now we will just notice why, in a two-fold measure, he does this. Because, in the first place *he gets a new sin altogether, that he never had before* and beside that, he aggravates all his other sins. Bring me here a Hottentot, or a man from Kamschatka, a wild savage who

has never listened to the Word. That man may have every sin in the catalogue of guilt except one; but that one I am sure he has not. He has not the sin of rejecting the gospel when it is preached to him. But you, when you hear the gospel, have an opportunity for committing a fresh sin; and if you have rejected it, you have added a fresh iniquity to all those others that hang about your neck. I have often been rebuked by certain men who have erred from the truth, for preaching the doctrine that it is a sin in men, if they reject the gospel of Christ. I care for every opprobrious title: I am certain that I have the warrant of God's Word in so preaching, and I do not believe that any man can be faithful to men's souls and clear of their blood, unless he bears his frequent and Solemn testimony upon this vital subject. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me." "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you." "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward. how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." I have been quoting, you see, some scripture passages, and if they do not mean that unbelief is a sin, and *the* sin, which, above all others, damns men's souls, they do not mean anything at all, but they are just a dead letter in the Word of God. Now, adultery and murder and theft, and lying—all these are damning, and deadly sins; but repentance can cleanse all these, through the blood of Christ. But to reject Christ, destroys a man hopelessly. The murderer, the thief, the drunkard, may yet enter the kingdom of heaven, if, repenting of his sins, he will lay hold on the cross of Christ, but with these sins, a man is inevitably lost, if he believeth not on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my hearers, will you consider for one moment what an awful sin this is, which you add to all your other sins. Everything lies in the bowels of this sin—the rejecting of Christ. There is murder in this; for if the man on the scaffold rejects a pardon, does he not murder himself? There is pride in this; for you reject Christ, because your proud hearts have turned you aside. There is rebellion in this; for we rebel against God when we reject Christ. There is high treason in this; for you reject a king; you put far from you, him, who is crowned king of the earth, and you incur therefore the weightiest of all guilt. Oh! to think that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven—to think for a moment that he should hang upon the tree—that there he should die in agonies extreme, and that from that cross he should this day look down upon you, and should say, “Come unto me, ye weary and ye heavy laden;” that you should still turn away from him,—it is the unkindest stab of all. What more brutish, what more devilish, than to turn away from him who gave his life for you? Oh that ye were wise, that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end!

But again, we do not only add a new sin to the catalogs of guilt but *we aggravate all the rest*. You cannot sin so cheap as other people, you, who have had the gospel. When the unenlightened and ignorant sin, their conscience does not prick them; and there is not that guilt in the sin of the ignorant, that there is in the sin of the enlightened. Did you steal before? that was bad enough; but hear the gospel and continue a thief, and you are a thief indeed. Did you lie before you heard the gospel? The liar shall have his portion in the lake; but he after hearing it: and it seems as if the fire of Tophet should be fanned up to a seven-fold fury. He who sins ignorantly, hath some little excuse; but he who sins against light and knowledge, sins presumptuously; and under the law there was no atonement for this, for presumptuous sins were out of the pole of legal atonement, although blessed be God, Christ hath atoned for even these, and he that believeth shall be saved, despite even his guilt. Oh! I beseech you, recollect that the sin of unbelief blackens every other sin. It is like Jeroboam. It is said of him, he sinned and made Israel to sin. So unbelief sins itself and leads to every other sin. Unbelief is the file by which you sharpen the axe; and the coulter, and the sword, which you use in rebellion against the Most High. Your sins become more exceeding sinful, the more you disbelieve in Christ, the more you know of him, and the longer you reject him. This is God’s truth; but a truth that is to be spoken with reluctance, and with many groanings in our spirits. Oh to have such a message to deliver to you, to *you* I say, for if there be a people under heaven to whom my text applies, it is you. If there is one race of men in the world, who have more to account for than others, it is yourselves. There are doubtless others, who are on an equality with you, who sit under a faithful and earnest ministry; but as God shall judge betwixt you and me at the great day, to the utmost of my power I have been faithful to your souls. I have never in this pulpit sought by hard words, by technical language, to magnify my own wisdom. I have spoken to you plainly; and not a word, to the best of my knowledge, has escaped these lips, which every one of you could not understand. You have

had a simple gospel. I have not stood here and preached *coldly* to you. I could say as I came up yon stairs, “The burden of the Lord was upon me;” for my heart has come here heavy, and my soul has been hot within me, and when I have preached feebly, my words may have been uncouth, and the language far from proper, but *heart* never has been wanting. This whole soul has spoken to you; and if I could have ransacked heaven and earth to find language that might have won you to the Saviour, I would have done so. I have not shunned to reprove you, I have never minced matters. I have spoken to this age of its iniquities, and to you of your sins I have not softened down the Bible to suit the carnal tastes of men. I have said *damn*, where God said damn—I have not sweetened it into “condemn.” I have not minced matters, nor endeavored to veil or conceal the truth, but as to every man’s conscience in the sight of God, have I endeavored to commend the gospel, earnestly and with power, and with a plain, outspoken, earnest, and honest ministry. I have not kept back the glorious doctrines of grace, although by preaching them the enemies of the cross have called me an Antinomian; nor have I been afraid to preach man’s solemn responsibility, although another tribe have slandered me as an Arminian. And in saying this, I say it not in a way of glorying, but I say it for your rebuke, if you have rejected the gospel, for you shall have sinned far above that of any other men; in casting away Christ, a double measure of the fury of the wrath of God shall fall on you. Sin, then, is aggravated by the rejection of Christ.

III. And now, in the third place, THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TAKES AWAY ALL EXCUSE FROM THOSE WHO HEAR IT AND REJECT IT. “Now have they no cloke for their sin.” A cloak is a very poor covering for sin, when there is an all-seeing eye to look through it. In the great day of the tempest of God’s wrath a cloak will be a very poor shelter; but still man is always fond of a cloak. In the day of cold and rain we see men gathering their cloaks about them, and if they have no shelter and no refuge, still they feel a little comforted by their garment. And so it is with you; you will gather together, if you can, an excuse for your sin, and when conscience pricks you, you seek to heal the wound with an excuse. And even in the day of judgment although a cloak will be a sorry covering, yet it will be better than nothing at all. “But now ye have no cloke for your sin.” The traveler is left in the rain without his covering, exposed to the tempest without that garment which once did shelter him. “Now ye have no cloke for your sin,”—discovered, detected, and unmasked, ye are left inexcusable, without a cloak for your iniquity. And now let me just notice how the preaching of the gospel, when it is faithfully performed, takes away all cloaks for sin.

In the first place, one man might get up and say, “I did not know I was doing wrong when I committed such and such an iniquity.” Now, *that* you cannot say. God has by his law told you solemnly what is wrong. There stand the ten commandments; and there stands the comment of our Master where he has enlarged upon the commandment, and told us that the old law “thou shalt not commit adultery,” forbad also all sins of the lascivious look

and the evil eye. If the Sepoy commits iniquity, there is a cloak for it. I doubt not that his conscience tells him that he does wrong, but his sacred books teach that he is doing right, and therefore he has that cloak. If the Mahommedan commits lust, I doubt not his conscience doth prick him, but his sacred books give him liberty. But you profess to believe your Bibles, and have them in your houses, and have the preachers of them in all your streets; and therefore when you sin, you sin with the proclamation of the law upon the very wall, before your eyes—you do wilfully violate a well-known law which has come from heaven, and come to you.

Again, you might say, “When I sinned, I did not know how great would be the punishment.” Of this also, by the gospel, you are left without excuse; for did not Jesus Christ tell you, and does he not tell you every day, that those who will not have him shall be cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth? Hath he not said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal?” Does he not himself declare that the wicked shall be burned up with unquenchable fire? Has he not told you of a place where their worm dieth not and where their fire is not quenched? And the ministers of the gospel have not shunned to tell you this too. You have sinned, though you knew you would be lost by it. You have taken the poisonous draught, not thinking that it was harmless you knew that every drop in the cup was scalding with damnation, and yet you have taken the cup and drained it to its dregs. You have destroyed your own souls with your eyes open; you have gone like a fool to the stocks, like an ox to the slaughter, and like a lamb you have licked the knife of the butcher. In this, then, you are left without excuse.

But some of you may say, “Ah, I heard the gospel, it is true, and I knew that I was doing wrong, but I did not know what I must do to be saved.” Is there one among you who can urge such an excuse as this? Methinks you will not have the impudence to do so. “Believe and live,” is preached every day in your hearing. Many of you these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years have been hearing the gospel, and you dare not say, “I did not know what the gospel was.” From your earliest childhood many of you have listened to it. The name of Jesus was mingled with the hush of lullaby. You drank in a holy gospel with your mother’s milk and yet despite all that, you have never sought Christ. “Knowledge is power,” men say. Alas! Knowledge, when not used, is *wrath*, WRATH, WRATH to the uttermost, against the man who knows, and yet doth that which he knoweth to be wrong.

Methinks I can hear another say, “Well, I heard the gospel preached, but I never had a good example set me.” Some of you may say that, and it would be partially true; but there are others of you, concerning whom I may say that this would be a lying excuse. Ah! man; you have been very fond of speaking of the inconsistencies of Christians. You have said, “They do not live as they ought;” and alas, there is too much truth in what you have said. But there was one Christian whom you knew, and whose character you were compelled to admire; do not you remember her? It was the mother who brought you forth. That has always

been the one difficulty with you up to this day. You could have rejected the gospel very easily, but your mother's example stood before you, and you could not overcome that. Do you not remember amongst the first early darklings of your recollection, how you opened your little eyes in the morning and you saw a mother's loving face looking down upon you, and you caught her with a tear in her eye, and you heard her say, "God bless the child, may he call the Redeemer blessed!" You remember how your father did often chide you; *she* did seldom chide, but she often spoke in tones of love. Recollect that little upper room where she took you aside, and putting her arms round your neck, dedicated you to God, and prayed that the Lord would save you in your childhood. Remember the letter she gave you, and your book in which she wrote your name when you left the parental roof to go abroad, and the sorrow with which she wrote to you when she heard you had begun to plunge in gaiety and mix with the ungodly: recollect that sorrowful look with which she did wring your hand the last time you left her. Remember how she said to you, "You will bring my hairs with sorrow to the grave, if you walk in the ways of iniquity." Well, you knew that what she said was not cant; there was reality in that. You could laugh at the minister, you could say it was *his business*, but at her you could not scoff; she was a Christian, there was no mistake about it. How often did she put up with your angry temper, and bear with your rough manners, for she was a sweet spirit, almost too good for earth—and you recollect that. You were not there when she was dying, you could not arrive in time; but she said to her friend as she was dying, "There is only one thing that I want, then I could die happy—oh, that I could see my children walking in the truth." Now, I apprehend such an example leaves you without a cloak for your wickedness, and if you commit iniquity after that, how fearful! must be the weight of your woe.

But others of you can say that you had no such mother; your first school was the street, and the first example you ever had was that of a swearing father. Recollect, my friend, there is one perfect example—Christ, and that you have read of, though you have not seen him. Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, was a perfect man; in him was there no sin, neither was there guile in his mouth. And if you have never seen anything like Christian worth any where else, yet you can see it in Christ; and in venturing such an excuse as this, remember you have ventured upon a lie, for the example of Christ, the works of Christ, as well as the words of Christ, leave you without excuse for your sin.

Ah, and I think I hear one more excuse offered, and that is this: "Well, I certainly had many advantages, but they were never sent home to my conscience so that I felt them." Now, there are very few of you here who can say that. Some of you will say, "Yes, I heard the minister, but he never made an impression upon me." Ah, young men and young women, and all of you this morning, I must be a witness against you in the day of judgment that this is untrue. For, but now, your consciences were touched; did I not see some soft tears of repentance—I trust they were such—flowing but just now. No, you have not always been un-

moved by the gospel you have grown old now, and it takes a deal to stir you, but it was not always so. There was a time in your youth, when you were very susceptible of impressing. Remember, the sins of your youth will cause your bones to rot, if you have still persevered in rejecting the gospel. Your old heart has grown hard, still you are without excuse; you did feel once, ay, and even now you cannot help feeling. I know there are some of you that can scarcely keep your seats at the thought of your iniquities; and you have almost vowed, some of you, that this day you will seek God, and the first thing you will do, will be to climb to your chamber, and shut the door, and seek the Lord. Ah, but I remember a story of one, who remarked to a minister, what a wonderful thing it was to see so many people weeping. "Nay," said he, "I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door." And you will do this. Still, when you have done it, you will recollect that you have not been without the strivings of God's Spirit. You will remember that God has, this morning, as it were, put a hurdle across your road, digged a ditch in your way, and put up a hand-post, and said, "Take warning! beware, beware, beware! you are rushing madly into the ways of iniquity!" And I have come before you this morning, and in God's name I have said, "Stop, stop, stop, thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die O house of Israel?" And, now, if ye will put this from you, it must be even so; if you will put out these sparks, if ye will quench this first burning torch, it must be so! On your own head be your blood; at your own door lay your iniquities.

IV. But now I have one thing more to do. And it is awful work; for I have as it were to PUT ON THE BLACK CAP AND PRONOUNCE THE SENTENCE OF CONDEMNATION. For those who live and die rejecting Christ there is a most fearful doom. They shall perish with an utter destruction. There are degrees of punishment; but the highest degree is given to the man who rejects Christ. You have noticed that passage, I dare say, that the liar and the whoremonger, and drunkards shall have their portion—whom do you suppose with?—with *unbelievers*; as if hell was made first of all for unbelievers—as if the pit was digged not for whoremongers, and swearers, and drunkards, but for men who despise Christ, because that is the A 1 sin, the cardinal vice, and men are condemned for that. Other iniquities come following after them, but this one goes before them to judgment. Imagine for a moment that time has passed, and that the day of judgment is come. We are all gathered together, both quick and dead. The trumpet-blast waxes exceeding loud and long. We are all attentive, expecting something marvellous. The exchange stands still in its business; the shop is deserted by the tradesman; the crowded streets are filled. All men stand still; they feel that the last great business-day is come, and that now they must settle their accounts for ever. A solemn stillness fills the air: no sound is heard. All, all is noiseless. Presently a great white cloud with solemn state sails through the sky, and then—hark! the twofold clamor of the startled earth. On that cloud there sits one like unto the Son of Man. Every

eye looks, and at last there is heard a unanimous shout—"It is he! It is he!" and after that you hear on the one hand, shouts of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Welcome, Welcome, Welcome Son of God." But mixed with that there is a deep bass, composed of the weeping and the wailing of the men who have persecuted him, and who have rejected him. Listen! I think I can dissect the sonnet, I think I can hear the words as they come separately, each one of them, tolling like a death knell What say they? They say, "Rocks hide us, mountains fall upon us, hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And shall you be among the number of those who say to the rocks "Hide us?"

My impenitent hearer, I suppose for a moment that you have gone out of this world, and that you have died impenitent, and that you are among those who are weeping, and wailing, and gnashing their teeth. Oh! what will then be your terror! Blanched cheeks, and knocking knees are nothing, compared to thy horror of heart, when thou shalt be drunken, but not with wine and when thou shalt reel to and fro, with the intoxication of amazement, and shall fall down, and roll in the dust for horror and dismay. For there he comes, and there he is, with fierce, fire-darting eye; and now the time is come for the great division. The voice is heard, "Gather my people from the four winds of heaven, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." They are gathered at the right hand, and there they are. And now saith he, "Gather up the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn." And you are gathered, and on the left hand there you are, gathered into the bundle. All that is wanted is the lighting of the pile. Where shall be the torch that shall kindle them? The tares are to be burned: where is the flame? The flame comes out of *his* mouth, and it is composed of words like these—"Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels." Do you linger? "*Depart!*" Do you seek a blessing? "*Ye are cursed.*" I curse you with a curse. Do ye seek to escape? *It is everlasting fire.* Do ye stop and plead? No, "*I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hands, and ye regarded me not, therefore I will mock at your calamity, I will laugh when your fear cometh.*" "*Depart,* again, I say; depart for ever!" And you are gone. And what is your reflection? Why, it is this: "Oh! would to God that I never had been born! Oh! that I had never heard the gospel preached, that I might never have had the sin of rejecting it!" This will be the gnawing of the worm in your conscience—"I knew better but I did not do better."—As I sowed the wind, it is right I should reap the whirlwind; I was checked, but I would not be stopped; I was wooed, but I would not be invited. Now I see that I have murdered myself Oh! thought above all thoughts most deadly. I am lost, lost, lost! And this is the horror of horrors: I have caused myself to be lost; I have put from me the gospel of Christ; I have destroyed myself.

Shall this be so with thee, my hearer? Shall this be so with thee? I pray it may not! O may the Holy Spirit now constrain thee to come to Jesus, for I know that thou art too vile to yield, unless he compels thee. But I hope for thee. Methinks I hear thee say, "What must I do to be saved?" Let me tell you the way of salvation, and then farewell. If thou wouldest

be saved, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;” for the Scripture says, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned!” There he hangs, dying on his cross! look to him and live.

“Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude;
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”

Be you wicked, filthy, depraved degraded, you are still invited to Christ. The devil’s castaways Christ takes in—the offscouring, the dross, the scum, the draff, the sewerage of this world, is now invited to Christ. Come to him now, and obtain mercy. But if ye harden your hearts,

“The Lord in anger dress’d
Shall lift his hand and swear,
’You that despis’d my promis’d rest,
Shall have no portion there.”