

come when it shall be known to be a reality. Ahab scoffed at Micaiah, when he said he should never come home alive; the men of Noah's generation laughed at the foolish old man (as they thought him), who bid them take heed, for the world should be drowned; but when they were climbing to the tree-tops, and the floods were following them, did they then say that the prophecy was untrue? and when the arrow was sticking in the heart of Ahab, and he said, "Take me from the battle, for I must die"; did he then think that Micaiah spoke an untruth?

And so it is now. Ye tell us we speak lies, when we warn you of judgment to come; but in that day when your mischief shall fall on yourselves, and when destruction shall overwhelm you, will you say we were liars then? Will you then turn around and scoff, and say we spake not the truth? Rather, my hearers, the highest honor will then be given to him who was the most faithful in warning men concerning the wrath of God. I have often trembled at the thought that, here I am standing before you, and constantly engaged in the work of the ministry, and what if, when I die, I should be found unfaithful to your souls, how doleful will be our meeting in the world of spirits. It would be a dreadful thing if you were able to say to me in the world to come, "Sir, you flattered us; you did not tell us of the solemnities of eternity; you did not rightly dwell upon the awful wrath of God; you spoke to us feebly and faintly; you were somewhat afraid of us; you knew we could not bear to hear of eternal torment, and therefore you kept it back and never mentioned it!" Why, methinks you would look me in the face and curse me throughout eternity, if that should be my conduct.

But by God's help it never shall be. When I die, God helping me, I shall be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men." So far as I know God's truth I will endeavor to speak it; and though I be scorned, I'll hail it and welcome it, if I may but be faithful to this unstable generation, faithful to God, and faithful to my own conscience. Let me, then, endeavor—and by God's help I will do it as solemnly and as tenderly as I can—to address such of you as have not yet repented, most affectionately reminding you of your future doom, if you should die impenitent. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

I. First, let me endeavor to explain to you the NATURE OF THE TURNING HERE MEANT. It says—"If he turn not, he will whet his sword." This turning is actual, not fictitious—not that which stops with promises and vows, but that which deals with the real acts of life. Possibly one of you will say today, "From this time forth I will not sin, my vices and crimes shall be abandoned, and I turn to God with full purpose of heart"; but, perhaps, tomorrow you will have forgotten this; you will weep a tear or two under the preaching of God's word, but by tomorrow every tear shall have been dried, and you will utterly forget that you

ever came to the house of God at all. There must be a true and actual abandonment of sin, and a turning unto righteousness in reality in everyday life. Do you say you are sorry, and repent, and yet go on from day to day, just as you always went? Will you now bow your heads, and say, "Lord, I repent," and in a little while commit the same deeds again? If you do, your repentance is worse than nothing, and shall but make your destruction yet more sure. Repentance to be true, must be a repentance which really affects our outward conduct.

In the next place, repentance to be sure must be entire. How many will say, "Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other; but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep and hold." O sirs, in God's name let me tell you, it is not the giving up of one sin, nor fifty sins, which is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If you harbor one of those accursed vipers in your heart, your repentance is but a sham. If you indulge in just one lust, and give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up your outward vices, or cut off the more corrupt sins of your life; it is all or none which God demands. "Repent," says he; and when he bids you repent, he means repent of all your sins, otherwise he never can accept your repentance as being real and genuine. Let us remember, then, that for repentance to be sincere it must be entire repentance.

Again, when God says, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword," he means immediate repentance. You say, when I am nearing the last extremity of mortal life, then I will change my ways. Do not delude yourself. It is few who have ever changed after a long life of sin. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Put no faith in the repentances which you promise yourself on your death bed. There are ten thousand arguments against one, that if you repent not in health, you will never repent in sickness. Too many have promised themselves a quiet season before they leave the world, when they could turn their face to the wall and confess their sins; but how few have found that time of repose! Sinner! God saith, "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." When God the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, they will never talk of delays. You may never have another day to repent. Immediate repentance is that which God demands, for he has never promised that you shall have any hour to repent in, except the one that you have now.

And true repentance must be perpetual. It is not my turning to God during today that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is the forsaking of my sin throughout my entire life, until I sleep in the grave. You need not imagine that to be upright for a week will be proof that you are saved; it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change which God works is neither a transitory nor a superficial change. You may today go home and pretend to pray, be

serious and honest, but yet if you return, as Scripture has it, "like the dog to its vomit, and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire," your repentance shall but sink you deeper into hell, instead of being a proof of divine grace in your heart.

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance; however, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished. Legal repentance is a fear of damning; evangelical repentance is a fear of sinning. Legal repentance makes us fear the wrath of God; evangelical repentance makes us fear the cause of that wrath, even sin. When a man repents with that grace of repentance which God the Spirit works in him, he repents not of the punishment which is to follow the deed, but of the deed itself; and he feels that if there were no pit dug for the wicked, if there were no ever-gnawing worm, and no fire unquenchable, he would still hate sin. It is such repentance as this which every one of you must have, or else you will be lost. It must be a hatred of sin. Do not suppose, that because when you come to die you will be afraid of eternal torment, therefore that will be repentance. Every thief is afraid of the prison; but he will steal tomorrow if you set him free. Most men who have committed murder tremble at the sight of the gallows, but they would do the deed again could they live. It is not the hatred of the punishment that is repentance; it is the hatred of the deed itself. Do you feel that you have such a repentance as that? If not, these thundering words must be preached to you again, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

When a man is possessed of true repentance—I mean the gospel repentance which saves the soul—he not only hates sin for its own sake, but loathes it so extremely and utterly that he feels that no repentance of his own can avail to wash it out, and he acknowledges that it is only by an act of sovereign grace that his sin can be washed away. Now, if any of you suppose that you repent of your sins, and yet imagine that by a course of holy living you can blot them out, you have yet to truly repent; for true repentance makes a man feel, that

*"Could his zeal no respite know,
Could his tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ alone."*

II. My second point is yet more terrible to dwell upon, and if I consulted my own feelings I should not mention it; but we must not consider our feelings in the work of the ministry, any more than we should if we were physicians of men's bodies. We must sometimes use the knife, where we feel that mortification would ensue without it. We must often make sharp gashes into men's consciences, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will bring them to life. We assert, then, that there is a NECESSITY that God should whet his sword and punish men if they will not turn. Earnest Baxter

used to say, "Sinner! turn or burn; it is thine only alternative: TURN OR BURN!" And it is so. We think we can show you why men must turn or else they must burn.

I. First, we cannot suppose the God of the Bible could suffer sin to go unpunished. Some may suppose it; they may dream their intellects into a state of intoxication, so as to suppose a God apart from justice; but no man whose reason is sound and whose mind is in a healthy condition can imagine a God without justice. You cannot suppose a king without it to be a good king; you cannot dream of a good government that should exist without justice, much less of God, the Judge and King of all the earth, without justice in his bosom.

II. But to imagine that there shall be no punishment for sin, and that man can be saved without repentance, is to fly in the face of all the Scriptures. What! Are the records of divine history nothing? And if they be anything, must not God have mightily changed, if he does not now punish sin? What! Did he once blast Eden, and drive our parents out? Did he drown a world with water? And will he not punish sin? Let the burning hail which fell on Sodom tell you that God is just.

III. Your own consciences tell you that God must punish sin. You may laugh at me, and say that you have no such belief. Let me tell you a striking story that sets out in a true light how easily men will be brought in times of danger to believe in a God, and a God of justice too, though they have denied him before. In the backwoods of Canada there resided a good minister, who one evening, went out to meditate, as Isaac did, in the fields. He soon found himself on the borders of a forest, which he entered, and walked along a track which had been trodden before him; musing, musing still, until at last the shadows of twilight gathered around him, and he began to think how he should spend a night in the forest. He trembled at the idea of remaining there, with the poor shelter of a tree into which he would be compelled to climb. On a sudden he saw a light in the distance among the trees, and imagining that it might be from the window of some cottage where he could find a hospitable retreat, he hastened to it, and to his surprise, saw a space cleared and trees laid down to make a platform, and upon it a speaker addressing a multitude. He thought to himself, "I have stumbled on a company of people, who in this dark forest have assembled to worship God, and some minister is preaching to them"; but to his surprise and horror, when he came nearer, he found a young man declaiming against God, daring the Almighty to do his worst upon him, speaking terrible things in wrath against the justice of the Most High, and venturing most bold and awful assertions concerning his own disbelief in a future state. It was altogether a singular scene; it was lighted up by pine-knots, which cast a glare here and there, while the thick darkness in

other places still reigned. The people were intent on listening to the orator, and when he sat down thunders of applause were given to him; each one seeming to emulate the other in his praise.

Thought the minister, "I must not let this pass; I must rise and speak; the honor of my God, and his cause demands it." But he feared to speak, for he knew not what to say, having come there suddenly; but he would have ventured, had not something else occurred. A man of middle age, hale and strong, rose, and leaning on his staff he said, "My friends, I have a word to speak to you tonight, I am not about to refute any of the arguments of the orator; I shall not criticise his style; I shall say nothing concerning what I believe to be the blasphemies he has uttered; but I shall simply relate to you a fact, and after I have done that you shall draw your own conclusions. Yesterday, I walked by the side of yonder river; I saw on its floods a young man in a boat. The boat was unmanageable; it was going fast towards the rapids; he could not use the oars, and I saw that he was not capable of bringing the boat to the shore. I saw that young man wring his hands in agony; by-and-bye he gave up the attempt to save his life, kneeled down and cried with desperate earnestness, 'O God! save my soul! If my body cannot be saved, save my soul.' I heard him confess that he had been a blasphemer, I heard him vow that if his life were spared he would never be such again; I heard him implore the mercy of heaven for Jesus Christ's sake, and earnestly plead that he might be washed in his blood. These arms saved that young man from the flood; I plunged in, brought the boat to shore, and saved his life. That same young man has just now addressed you, and cursed his Maker. What say you to this, sirs!" The speaker sat down. You may guess what a shudder ran through the young man himself, and how the audience in one moment changed their notes, and saw that after all, whilst it was a fine thing to brag and bravado against Almighty God on dry land, and when danger was distant, it was not quite so grand to think ill of him when near the verge of the grave. We believe there is enough conscience in every man to convince him that God must punish him for his sin, therefore we think this text will wake an echo in every heart—"If he turn not, he will whet his sword."

I am tired of this terrible work of endeavoring to show you that God must punish sin; let me just utter a few of the declarations of his Holy Word, and then let me tell you how repentance is to be obtained. O sirs! ye may think that the fire of hell is indeed a fiction; but if you are believers in the Bible you must believe that it cannot be so. Did not our Master say, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." You say it is a metaphorical fire. But what meant he by this—"He is able to cast both body and soul into hell?" Is it not written that there is reserved for the devil and his angels fearful torment? and do you not know that our Master said, "These shall go away into everlasting

punishment"; "Depart, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? I beseech you, lay hold of this thought—unless you repent, all the dreadful torments of the future world must inevitably be yours.

III. Now briefly, what is the MEANS of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe any man can repent with evangelical repentance of himself. You ask me then to what purpose is this sermon? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God, by its conclusion. Sinner! you are so desperately set on sin, that I have no hope you will ever turn from it of yourself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sin." Do you feel that you are a sinner? If so, ask Christ for true repentance, for he can work repentance in your heart by his Spirit, though you cannot work it there yourself. Is your heart like iron? He can put it into the furnace of his love and make it melt. Is your soul like the nether millstone? His grace is able to dissolve it like the ice is melted before the sun. He can make you repent, though you cannot make yourself repent.

I shall never forget the hour when God's mercy first looked on me. I went to a little chapel bowed down with guilt, laden with transgression. The minister walked up the pulpit stairs, opened his Bible, and read that precious text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and beside me there is none else"; and as I thought, fixing his eyes on me, before he began to preach to others, he said, "Young man! look! look! look! You are one of the ends of the earth; you feel you are; you know your need of a Savior; you are trembling because you think he will never save you. He says this morning, 'Look!' Oh, how my soul was shaken within me then! What! thought I, does that man know me, and all about me? He seemed as if he did. And it made me "look!" Well, I thought, lost or saved, I will try; and in that moment by his grace I looked upon Jesus, and though desponding, downcast, and ready to despair, and feeling that I could rather die than live as I had lived, at that very moment it seemed as if a young heaven had its birth within my soul.

Oh! if one such should be here this morning! Where art thou, thou chief of sinners, thou vilest of the vile? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"; for his word and mandate is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." □

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
"Prince of Preachers"
1834-1892



COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All of your preparation for eternity is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and forever accepted. The salvation of the chief of sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ (*Eph 1:6; Col 2:10*).

Your eye of faith must be directed entirely out of and from yourself to Jesus. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet God in yourself. It is all in Christ. God does not accept you on the basis of a broken heart, or a clean heart, or a praying heart, or a believing heart. He accepts you wholly and entirely on the ground of the perfect atonement of his blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement—"Christ dying for the ungodly" (*Rom 5:6*)—and you are saved!

Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe" (*Rom 3:22*). He, then, is justified, and prepared to die and meet God, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed "City of Refuge"—the Lord Jesus—and hides himself there from the "avenger of blood" (*Joshua 20*), exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (*Rom 8:1*).

Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart; look to Jesus for a clean heart; look to Jesus for a believing heart; look to Jesus for a loving heart; and Jesus will give you all.

One faith's touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (*Isaiah 45:22*). God is prepared to accept you in his blessed Son, and for his sake he will cast all your sins behind his back, and take you to glory when you die (*Isaiah 38:17*)—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (*Heb 8:12*).

Never was Christ known to reject a poor sinner that came to him empty and with "nothing to pay" (*Luke 7:42*). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Mat 11:28*). God will glorify his free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you—just as you are, "without money and without price" (*Isaiah 55:1*). Paul responded immediately to the anxious jailor who asked what he must do to be saved—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (*Acts 16:31*).

No matter what you have been, or what you are, plunge into "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (*Zech 13:1*), and you shall be clean, "washed whiter than snow" (*Psalms 51:7; Isaiah 1:18*). "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (*1 John 1:7*). □

TURN OR BURN

by C. H. Spurgeon

"God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready" —Psalm 7:11,12

"If the sinner turn not, God will whet his sword." So, then, God has a sword, and he will punish man on account of his iniquity. This evil generation hath labored to take away from God the sword of his justice; they have endeavored to prove to themselves that God will "clear the guilty," and will by no means "punish iniquity, transgression and sin."

Two hundred years ago the predominant strain of the pulpit was one of terror: it was like Mount Sinai. It thundered forth the dreadful wrath of God. Perhaps some of the Puritanic fathers may have gone too far, and have given too great a prominence to the terrors of the Lord in their ministry: but the age in which we live has sought to forget those terrors altogether, and if we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, they say that we want to frighten them into religion. Now we care not what men mockingly impute to us; we feel it our duty, when men sin, to tell them they shall be punished, and so long as the world will not give up its sin we feel we must not cease our warnings. But the cry of the age is that God is merciful, that God is love. Ay; who said he was not? But remember, it is equally true, God is just, severely and inflexibly just. He is not God, if he is not just; he could not be merciful if he is not just. Punishment of the wicked is demanded by the highest mercy to the rest of mankind.

Rest assured, however, that he is just, and that the words I am about to read you from God's Word are true—"The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God"; "God is angry with the wicked every day"; "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." Because this age is wicked it would have no hell; and because it is hypocritical it would have only pretended punishment. This doctrine is so prevalent as to make even the ministers of the gospel flinch from their duty in declaring the day of wrath. How few there are who will solemnly tell us of the judgment to come. They preach of God's love and mercy as they ought to do, and as God has commanded them; but of what avail is it to preach mercy unless they preach also the doom of the wicked?

I fear that in too many places the doctrine of future punishment is rejected and laughed at; but the day will