



TURN OR BURN

CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

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TURN OR BURN

If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.—Psalm 7:12

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 and transgression and sin” (Exo 34:7).

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; and from the lips of a Baxter or a Bunyan, you heard most terrible sermons, full to the brim with warnings of judgment to come. 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, it is charged upon us that we want to bully them into religion. And if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness.

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 were not God, if He were not just. He could not be merciful if He were not just, for 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” (Psa 9:17); “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11); “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” (Psa 7:12-13). Forsooth,¹ because this age is wicked it is to have no hell; and because it is hypocritical it

¹ forsooth – indeed.

would have but feigned 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? And how shall we hope to effect the purpose of preaching unless we warn men that if they "turn not, he will whet his sword"?

I fear that in too many places the doctrine of future punishment is rejected and laughed at as a fancy and a chimera²; but the day will come when it shall be known to be a reality. Ahab scoffed at Micaiah when he said he should never come home alive (1Ki 22:17-28). 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" (see 1Ki 22:34); 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 ye then turn round and scoff, and say we spake not the truth? Rather, my hearers, the highest meed³ of 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. Come fair or foul, when I die I shall, God helping me, be able to say, "I am clear of the blood of all men" (see Act

² **chimera** – grotesque product of the imagination.

³ **meed** – deserved share.

20:26). So far as I know God's truth I will endeavor to speak it; and though on my head opprobrium⁴ and scandal be poured to a ten-fold greater extent than ever, 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."

In the first place, what is the turning here meant? In the second place, let us dwell on the necessity there is for men's turning, otherwise God will punish them; and then thirdly, let me remind you of the means whereby men can be turned from the error of their ways, and the weakness and frailty of their nature amended by the power of divine grace.

1. The Nature of the Turning

In the first place, my hearers, 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."

To commence then: the turning here meant 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 this morning, "Lo, I turn to God; from this time forth I will not sin, but I will endeavor to walk in holiness. My vices shall be abandoned, my crimes shall be thrown to the winds, and I will turn unto God with full purpose of heart." But, mayhap,⁵ 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. How many of us are like men who see their faces in a glass, and straightway go away and forget what manner of men they are (Jam 1:23, 24)!

Ah, my hearers, it is not thy promise of repentance that can save thee. It is not thy vow, it is not thy solemn declaration, it is not the tear that is dried more easily than the dewdrop by the sun, it is not the transient emotion of the heart which constitutes a real turning to God. There must be a true and actual abandonment of sin and a turning unto righteousness in real act and deed 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

⁴ **opprobrium** – reproach mingled with contempt or disdain.

⁵ **mayhap** – perhaps.

repent,” and in a little while commit the same deeds again? If ye do, your repentance is worse than nothing, and shall but make your destruction yet more sure; for he that voweth to his Maker, and doth not pay, hath committed another sin, in that he hath attempted to deceive the Almighty, and lie against the God that made him (Deu 23:21; Ecc 5:4, 5). Repentance to be true, to be evangelical, 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 thou dost harbor one of those accursed vipers in thy heart, thy repentance is but a sham. If thou dost indulge in but one lust, and dost give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up thy outward vices; fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of thy life. It is all or none which God demands. “Repent,” says He; and when He bids you repent, He means repent for all thy sins, otherwise He never can accept thy repentance as being real and genuine. The true penitent hates sin in the race, not in the individual—in the mass, not in the particular. He says, “Gild thee as thou wilt, O sin, I abhor thee! Ay, cover thyself with pleasure, make thyself gaudy, like the snake with its azure scales—I hate thee still, for I know thy venom, and I flee from thee, even when thou comest to me in the most specious⁶ garb.” All sin must be given up, or else you shall never have Christ; all transgression must be renounced, or else the gates of heaven must be barred against you. 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. Ye say, When we are nearing the last extremity of mortal life, and when we are entering the borders of the thick darkness of futurity, then we will change our ways. But, my dear hearers, do not delude yourselves. It is few who have ever changed after a long life of sin. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” (Jer 13:23). If so, let him that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well. Put no faith in the repentances which you promise yourselves on your death beds. 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

⁶ **specious** – deceptively attractive.

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! Do not men drop down dead in the streets—ay, even in the house of God? Do they not expire in their business? And when death is gradual, it affords but an ill season for repentance. Many a saint has said on his death-bed, “Oh, if I had now to seek my God, if I had now to cry to him for mercy, what would become of me? These pangs are enough, without the pangs of repentance. It is enough to have the body tortured, without having the soul wrung with remorse.”

Sinner, God saith, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation...When your fathers tempted me, [and] proved me” (Heb 3:7-9). When God the Holy Spirit convinces men of sin, they will never talk of delays. You may never have another day to repent in. Therefore saith the voice of wisdom, “Repent now.” The Jewish rabbis said, “Let every man repent one day before he dies; and since he may die tomorrow, let him take heed to turn from his evil ways today.” Even so we say; immediate repentance is that which God demands, for He hath never promised thee that thou shalt have any hour to repent in, except the one that thou hast now.

Furthermore, the repentance here described as absolutely necessary is *heartly* repentance. It is not a mock tear; it is not hanging out the ensigns of grief, whilst you are keeping merriment in your hearts. It is not having an illumination within, and shutting up all the windows by a pretended repentance. It is the putting out of the candles of the heart; it is sorrow of soul which is true repentance. A man may renounce every outward sin, and yet not really repent. True repentance is a turning of the heart as well as of the life; it is the giving up of the whole soul to God, to be His for ever and ever. It is a renunciation of the sins of the heart as well as the crimes of the life. Ah, dear hearers, let none of us fancy that we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance. Let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature; let us not dream that we have savingly turned to God, when perhaps we have only turned to ourselves. And let us not think it enough to have turned from one vice to another, or from vice to virtue. Let us remember, it must be a turning of the whole soul, so that the old man is made anew in Christ Jesus; otherwise we have not answered the requirement of the text—we have not turned unto God.

And lastly, upon this point, this 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 the entirety of my life, until I sleep in the grave. You need not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a 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; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but an eradication of it; not the sweeping away of the dust of one day, but the taking away of that which is the cause of the defilement.

In old times, when rich and generous monarchs came into their cities they made the fountains run with milk and wine; but the fountain was not therefore a fountain of milk and wine always; on the morrow it ran with water as before. So you may today go home and pretend to pray. You may today be serious, tomorrow you may be honest, and the next day you may pretend to be devout. But yet if thou return, as Scripture has it, like the dog to its vomit, and like “the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2Pe 2:22), your repentance shall but sink you deeper into hell, instead of being a proof of divine grace in your hearts.

It is very hard to distinguish between legal repentance and evangelical repentance; however, there are certain marks whereby they may be distinguished. And at the risk of tiring you, we will just notice one or two of them; and may God grant that you may find them in your own souls! 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 digged 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 for 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 to-morrow if you set him free. Most men who have committed murder tremble at the sight of the gallows-tree, 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.”

But one more hint here. When a man is possessed of true and evangelical 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—if you suppose that by walking uprightly in future you can obliterate your past transgressions—you have not yet truly repented; 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.*

And if it is so killed in thee that thou hatest [it] as a corrupt and abominable thing, and wouldst bury it out of thy sight, but that thou feelest that it will never be entombed unless Christ shall dig the grave, then thou hast repented of sin. We must humbly confess that we deserve God's wrath, and that we cannot avert it by any deeds of our own, and we must put our trust solely and entirely in the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. If ye have not so repented, again we exclaim in the words of David, "If you turn not, he will whet his sword."

2. The Necessity of Punishment

And now the second point: it is a yet more terrible one 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 mortification⁷ would ensue without it. We must frequently 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.

a. First we cannot suppose the God of the Bible could suffer sin to be 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. Ye cannot suppose a king without it to be a good king; ye 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. To suppose Him all love and no justice, were to undeify Him and make Him no

⁷ **mortification** – gangrene.

longer God. He were not capable of ruling this world if He had not justice in His heart. There is in man a natural perception of the fact that if there be a God, He must be just; and I can scarcely imagine that ye can believe in a God without believing also in the punishment of sin. It were difficult to suppose Him elevated high above His creatures, beholding their disobedience, and yet looking with the same serenity upon the good and upon the evil. You cannot suppose Him awarding the same meed⁸ of praise to the wicked and to the righteous. The idea of God supposes justice; and it is but to say justice when you say God.

b. 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 doth not now punish sin? What! Did He once blast Eden, and drive our parents out of that happy garden on account of a little theft, as man would style it? Did He drown a world with water, and inundate creation with the floods which He had buried in the bowels of this earth? And will He not punish sin? Let the burning hail which fell on Sodom tell you that God is just. Let the open mouth of the earth which swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram warn you that He will not spare the guilty. Let the mighty works of God which He did in the Red Sea, the wonders which He wrought on Pharaoh, and the miraculous destruction which He brought on Sennacherib tell you that God is just.

And it were perhaps out of place for me in the same argument to mention the judgments of God even in our age; but have there never been such? This world is not the dungeon where God punishes sin, but still there are a few instances in which we cannot but believe that He actually did avenge it. I am no believer that every accident is a judgment. I am far from believing that the destruction of men and women in a theater is a punishment upon them for their sin, since the same thing has occurred in divine service to our perpetual sorrow. I believe judgment is reserved for the next world; I could not account for providence if I believed that God punishes here. "Those...[men], upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay" (Luk 13:4, 5). It has injured religion for men to take up every providence, and say, for instance, that because a boat was upset on the Sabbath day, it was a judgment on the

⁸ **meed** – reward.

persons that were in it. We assuredly believe that it was sinful to spend the day in pleasure, but we deny that it was a punishment from God.⁹

God usually reserves His punishment for a future state; but yet, we say, there have been a few instances in which we cannot but believe that men and women have been by Providence in this life punished for their guilt. I remember one which I scarcely dare relate to you. I saw the wretched creature myself. He had dared to imprecate on his head the most awful curses that man could utter. In his rage and fury he said he wished his head were twisted on one side, that his eyes were put out, and that his jaws were made fast: but a moment afterwards the lash of his whip—with which he had been cruelly treating his horse—entered his eye, brought on first inflammation, and then lock-jaw, and when I saw him, he was just in the very position in which he had asked to be placed, for his head was twisted round, his eye-sight was gone, and he could not speak except through his closed teeth. You will remember a similar instance happening at Devizes, where a woman declared that she had paid her part of the price of a sack of meal, when she had it in her hand, and immediately dropped down dead on the spot. Some of these may have been singular coincidences; but I am not so credulous as to suppose that they were brought about by chance. I think the will of the Lord was in it. I believe they were some faint intimations that God was just, and that although the full shower of His wrath does not fall on men in this life, He does pour a drop or two on them, to let us see how He will one day chasten the world for its iniquity.

c. But why need I go far to bring arguments to bear on you, my hearers? Your own consciences tell you that God must punish sin. You may laugh at me and say that you have no such *belief*. I do not say you have; but I say that your conscience tells you so, and conscience has more power over men than what they think to be their belief. As John Bunyan said, Mr. Conscience had a very loud voice; and though Mr. Understanding shut himself up in a dark room, where he could not see, yet he used to thunder out so mightily in the streets, that Mr. Understanding used to shake in his house through what Mr. Conscience said. And it is often so. You say in your understanding, “I cannot believe God will punish sin”; but you know He will. You would not like to confess your secret fears, because that were to give up what you have so often

⁹ God does bring punishments on men in this life for sin; however, the ultimate punishment is not meted out in this life. Sometimes it seems to us that the wicked get off easier than the righteous in this life. However, as Psalm 73 assures us, their Day of Judgment is coming.

most bravely asserted. But because you assert it with such boast and bombast, I imagine you do not believe it, for if you did, you would not need look so big while saying it. I know this, that when you are sick none sooner than you cry out for mercy. I know that when you are dying you will believe in a hell. Conscience makes cowards of us all, and makes us believe, even when we say we do not, that God must punish sin.

Let me tell you a story. I have told it before; but it is a striking one, and 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 (Gen 24:63). 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, at this late hour of the evening, concerning the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." 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 criticize 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 that our 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, and that the flames of the nethermost pit are but popish dreams; but if ye are believers in the Bible ye must believe that it cannot be so. Did not our Master say, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mar 9:44, 46, 48). You say it is a metaphorical fire. But what meant He by this—He “is able to destroy both soul and *body* in hell” (Mat 10:28)? Is it not written that there is reserved for the devil and his angels fearful torment (Mat 25:41)? And do you not know that our Master said, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Mat 25:46)? “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41).

“Yes,” you say, “but it is not philosophical to believe that there is a hell; it does not consort with reason to believe there is.” However, I should like to act as if there were, even if there is no such place; for as the poor and pious man

once said, “Sir, I like to have two strings to my bow. If there should be no hell, I shall be as well off as you will; but if there should, it will go hard with you.” But why need we say “if”? You know there is. No man has been born and educated in this land without having his conscience so far enlightened as to know that to be a truth. All I need to do is to press upon your anxious consideration this thought: Do you feel that you are a fit subject for heaven now? Do you feel that God has changed your heart and renewed your nature? If not, I beseech you lay hold of this thought, that unless you be renewed, all that can be dreadful in the torments of the future world must inevitably be yours. Dear hearer, apply it to thyself, not to thy fellow-men, but to thine own conscience, and may God Almighty make use of it to bring thee to repentance.

3. The Means of Repentance

Now briefly what are 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 the sermon I have endeavored to preach, proving the necessity of repentance? Allow me to make the sermon of some purpose, under God, by its conclusion.

Sinner, thou art so desperately set on sin, that I have no hope thou wilt ever turn from it of thyself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high “to give repentance...and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31). Dost thou this morning feel that thou art a sinner? If so, ask of Christ to give thee repentance; for He can work repentance in thine heart by His Spirit, though thou canst not work it there thyself. Is thy heart like iron? He can put it into the furnace of His love and make it melt. Is thy soul like the nether millstone? His grace is able to dissolve it like the ice is melted before the sun. He can make thee repent, though thou canst not make thyself repent. If thou feelest thy need of repentance, I will not say to thee, “Repent,” for I believe there are certain acts that must precede a sense of repentance. I should advise you to go to your houses, and if you feel that you have sinned, and yet cannot sufficiently repent of your transgressions, bow your knees before God and confess your sins. Tell Him you cannot repent as you would. Tell Him your heart is hard; tell Him it is as cold as ice. You *can* do that if God has made you feel your need of a Savior. Then if it should be laid to your heart to endeavor to seek after repentance, I will tell you the best way to find it. Spend an hour first in endeavoring to remember thy sins; and when conviction has gotten a firm hold on thee, then spend another hour—where? At Calvary, my hearer. Sit down and read that chapter which contains the history and mystery of the God that

loved and died. Sit down and think thou seest that glorious Man, with blood dropping from His hands, and His feet gushing rivers of gore; and if that does not make thee repent, with the help of God's Spirit, then I know of nothing that can.

An old divine says, "If you feel you do not love God, love Him till you feel you do; if you think you cannot believe, believe till you feel you believe." Many a man says he cannot repent, while he is repenting. Keep on with that repentance, till you feel you have repented. Only acknowledge thy transgressions. Confess thy guiltiness; own that He were just if He should destroy thee. And say this, solemnly—

*My faith doth lay its hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.*

Oh, what would I give if one of my hearers should be blessed by God to go home and repent! If I had worlds to buy one of your souls, I would readily give them, if I might but bring one of you to Christ.

I shall never forget the hour when I hope God's mercy first looked on me. It was in a place very different from this, amongst a despised people, in an insignificant little chapel, of a peculiar sect. I went there 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 there is none else" (Isa 45:22); 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; sink or swim, I will run the risk of it; and in that moment I hope 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 conscience. I went home, no more cast down. Those about me, noticing the change, asked me why I was so glad, and I told them that I had believed in Jesus, and that it was written, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1).

Oh, if one such should be here this morning! Where art thou, thou chief of sinners, thou vilest of the vile? My dear hearer, thou hast never been in the house of God perhaps these last twenty years; but here thou art, covered with thy sins, the blackest and vilest of all! Hear God's word: "Come, now, and let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18). And all this for Jesus' sake; all this for His blood's sake! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:31); for His word and mandate is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

Sinner, turn or burn!

