

The Enchanted Ground

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon warns Christians against spiritual lethargy on the Enchanted Ground, urging vigilance and active faithfulness as they await Christ's return.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Matthew 25:1-13, Psalm 91:5, John 10:28, Revelation 1:7

Topics: "Spiritual Vigilance", "Christian Perseverance", "End Times"

Description

In 'The Enchanted Ground,' C.H. Spurgeon vividly describes the spiritual danger of complacency and lethargy among Christians, likening it to a perilous stretch on the pilgrim's journey. He exhorts believers to remain vigilant, active, and watchful, emphasizing the urgency of Christ's imminent return and the need for earnest soul-winning. This devotional sermon challenges the church to awaken from spiritual sleep and live with fervent faithfulness.

Transcript

"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others: but let us watch and be sober."—1 Thess. 5:6

As the spiritual guide of the flock of God along the intricate mazes of experience, it is the duty of the gospel minister to point out every turning of the road to heaven, to speak concerning its dangers or its privileges, and to warn any whom he may suspect to be in a position peculiarly perilous. Now, there is a portion of the road which leadeth from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, which has in it, perhaps, more dangers than any other portion of the way. It doth not abound with lions; there are no dragons in it; it hath no dark woods, and no deep pitfalls; yet more seeming pilgrims have been destroyed in that portion of the road than anywhere else, and not even Doubting Castle, with all its host of bones, can show so many who have been slain there. It is the part of the road called the Enchanted Ground. The great geographer, John Bunyan, well pictured it when he said:

"I then saw in my dream that they went on till they came into a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy, if he came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull, and heavy of sleep; wherefore he said unto Christian, I do now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes; let us lie down here, and take one nap.

Christian: "By no means, said the other, lest sleeping we never awake more."

Hopeful: "Why, my brother? Sleep is sweet to the laboring man; we may be refreshed if we take a nap."

Christian: "Do you not remember that one of the shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping; wherefore, 'let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.'"

There are no doubt, many of us, beloved, who are passing over this plain; and I fear that this is the condition of the majority of churches in the present day. They are lying down on the settles of Lukewarmness, in the Arbors of the Enchanted Ground. There is not that activity and zeal we could wish to see among them; they are not, perhaps, notably heterodox; they may not be invaded by the lion of persecution, but they are somewhat worse than that,—they are lying down to slumber, like Heedless and Too-Bold in the Arbor of Sloth. May God grant that his servants may be the means of arousing the church from its lethargy, and stirring it up from its slumbers, lest haply professors should sleep the sleep of death.

This morning I intend to show you what is meant by the state of sleep into which Christians sometimes fall; secondly, I shall use some considerations, if possible, to wake up such as are slumbering; thirdly, I shall mark sundry times when the Christian is most liable to fall asleep; and shall conclude by giving you some advice as to the mode in which you should conduct yourselves when you are passing over the Enchanted Ground, and feel drowsiness weighing down your eyelids.

I. First, what is that state of sleep into which the Christian man may fall? It is not death. He was dead once, but he is now alive in Christ Jesus; and therefore shall never die; but though a living man shall never die, being quickened by an immortal life, yet that living man may sleep; and that sleep is so nearly akin to death that I have known slumbering Christians mistaken for dead, carnal sinners. Come, beloved, let me picture to you the state of the Christian while he is in a condition of sleep.

First, sleep is a state of insensibility; and such is that state which too often falls upon even the best children of God. When a man is asleep he is insensible. The world goes on, and he knows naught about it. The watchman calls beneath his window, and he sleeps on still. A fire is in a neighboring street, his neighbor's house is burned to ashes, but he is asleep, and knows it not. Persons are sick in the house, but he is not awakened; they may die, and he weeps not for them. A revolution may be raging in the streets of his city; a king may be losing his crown; but he that is asleep shares not in the turmoil of politics. A volcano may burst somewhere near him, and he may be in imminent peril; but he escapeth not; he is sound asleep, he is insensible. The winds are howling, the thunders are rolling across the sky, and the lightnings flash at his window; but he that can sleep on careth not for these, and is insensible to them all. The sweetest music is passing through the street; but he sleeps, and only in dreams doth he hear the sweetness. The most terrific wailings may assail his ears; but sleep has sealed them with the wax of slumber, and he hears not. Let the world break in sunder, and the elements go to ruin, keep him asleep, and he will not perceive it. Christian, behold your condition. Have you not sometimes been brought into a condition of insensibility? You wished you could feel; but all you felt was pain because you could not feel. You wished you could pray. It was not that you felt prayerless, but it was because you did not feel at all. You sighed once; you would give a world if you could sigh now. You used to groan once; a groan now would be worth a golden star if you could buy it. As for songs, you can sing them, but then your heart does not go with them. You go to the house of God; but when "the multitude that keep holy day" in the full tide of song send their music up to heaven, you hear it, but your heart does not leap at the sound. Prayer goeth solemnly like the evening sacrifice up to God's throne; once you could pray, too; but now, while your body is in the house of God, your heart is not there. You feel you have brought the chrysalis of your being; but the fly is gone away from it; it is a dead, lifeless case. You have become like a formalist; you feel that there is not savor, that unction, in the preaching that there used to be. There is no difference in your minister,

you know; the change is in yourself. The hymns and the prayers are just the same, but you have fallen into a state of slumber. Once, if you thought of a man's being damned, you would weep your very soul out in tears; but now you could sit at the very brink of hell, and hear its wailings unmoved. Once the thought of restoring a sinner from the error of his ways would have made you start from your bed at midnight, and you would have rushed through the cold air to help rescue a sinner from his sins. Now, talk to you about perishing multitudes, and you hear it as an old, old tale. Tell you of thousands swept by the mighty flood of sin onwards to the precipice of destruction, you express your regret, you give your contribution, but your heart goeth not with it. You must confess that you are insensible.—not entirely, but too much so. You want to be awake: but you groan because you feel yourselves to be in this state of slumber.

Then, again, he that sleepeth is subject to divers illusions. When we sleep, judgment goeth from us, and fancy holdeth carnival within our brain. When we sleep, dreams arise and fashion in our head strange things. Sometimes we are tossed on the stormy deep, and anon we revel in king's palaces. We gather up gold and silver as if they were but the pebbles of the sea; and anon we are poor and naked, shivering in the blast. What illusions deceive us! The beggar in his dream becomes richer than Plautus, and the rich man as poor as Lazarus: the sick man is well, the healthy man hath lost his limbs, or is dead. Yea, dreams do make us descend to hell, or even carry us to heaven. Christian, if thou art one of the sleepy brotherhood, thou art subject to divers illusions. Strange thoughts come to thee which thou never hadst before. Sometimes thou doubtest if there be a God, or if thou dost exist thyself. Thou tremblest lest the gospel should not be true, and the old doctrine which once thou didst hold with a stern hand, thou art almost inclined to let go. Vile heresies assail thee. Thou thinkest that the Lord that bought thee was not the Son of God. The devil tells thee that thou art none of the Lord's, and thou dreamest that thou art cast away from the love of the covenant. Thou criest

"I would, but cannot sing;

I would, but cannot pray;"

and thou feelest as if it were all in question whether thou art one of the Lord's or no. Or perhaps thy dreams are brighter, and thou dreamest that thou art somebody, great and mighty, a special favorite of Heaven; pride puffs thee up; thou dreamest that thou art rich, and hast need of nothing, whilst thou art naked, poor, and miserable. Is this thy state, O Christian? If so, may God wake thee up from it!

Again, sleep is a state of inaction. No daily bread is earned by him that sleepeth. The man who is stretched upon his couch neither writeth books, nor tilleth the ground, nor plougheth the sea, nor doth aught else. His hands hang down, his pulse beateth, and life there is, but he is positively dead as to activity. O beloved, here is the state of many of you. How many Christians are inactive! Once it was their delight to instruct the young in the Sabbath-school, but that is now given up. Once they attended the early prayer-meeting, but not now. Once they would be hewers of wood and drawers of water, but alas! they are asleep now. Am I talking of what may happen! Is it not too true almost universally? Are not the churches asleep? Where are the ministers that preach? We have men that read the manuscripts, and talk essays: but is that preaching? We have men that can amuse an audience for twenty minutes. Is that preaching? Where are the men that preach their hearts out, and say their soul in every sentence? Where are the men that make it, not a profession, but a vocation, the breath of their bodies, the marrow of their bones, the delight of their spirits? Where are the Whitefields and Wesleys now? Are they not gone, gone, gone? Where are the Rowland Hills now, who preached every day, and three times a day, and were not afraid of preaching everywhere the unsearchable riches of Christ? Brethren, the Church slumbers. It is not merely

that the pulpit is a sentry-box with the sentinel fast asleep; but the pews are affected. How are the prayer-meetings almost universally neglected! Our own church stands out like an almost solitary green islet in the midst of a dark, dark, sea; one bright pearl in the depths of an ocean of discord and confusion. Look at neighboring churches. Step into the vestry, and see a smaller band of people than you would like to think of, assembled round the pastor, whose heart is dull and heavy. Hear one brother after another pour out the dull monotonous prayer that he has said by heart these fifty years; and then go away and say: "Where is the spirit of prayer, where the life of devotion?" Is it not almost extinct? Are not our churches "fallen, fallen, fallen from their high estate?" God wake them up, and send them more earnest and praying men!

Once more. The man who is asleep is in a state of insecurity. The murderer smiteth him that sleeps: the midnight robber plundereth his house that resteth listlessly on his pillow. Jael smiteth a sleeping Sisera. Abner taketh away the spear from the bolster of a slumbering Saul. A sleeping Eutychus falleth from the third loft, and is taken up dead. A sleeping Samson is shorn of his locks, and the Philistines are upon him. Sleeping men are ever in danger; they cannot ward off the blow of the enemy, or strike another. Christian, if thou art sleeping, thou art in danger. Thy life, I know, can never be taken from thee; that is hid with Christ in God. But O! thou mayest lose thy spear from thy bolster; thou mayest lose much of thy faith; and thy cruse of water, wherewith thou dost moisten thy lips, may be stolen by the prowling thief. O! thou little knowest thy danger. Even now the black-winged angel takes his spear, and standing at thy head, he says to Jesus (to David), "Shall I smite him? I will smite him but once." (David says) Our Jesus whispers, "Thou shalt not smite him. Take his spear and his cruse, but thou shalt not kill him." But O! awake, thou slumber! Start up from the place where thou now liest in thy insecurity! This is not the sleep of Jacob, in which ladders unite heaven and earth, and angels tread their ascending rounds; but this is the sleep where ladders are raised from hell, and devils climb upward from the pit to molest thy spirit.

II. This brings me to the second point, Some considerations to wake up sleepy Christians. I remember, once in my life, having a sleepy congregation. They had been eating too much dinner, and they came to the chapel in the afternoon very sleepy, so I tried an old expedient to rouse them. I shouted with all my might, "Fire! fire! fire!" when, starting from their seats, some of the congregation asked where it was; and I told them it was in hell, for such sleepy sinners as they were. So, beloved, I might cry "Fire! fire!" this morning, to waken sleepy Christians; but that would be a false cry, because the fire of hell was never made for Christians at all, and they need never tremble at it. The honor of God is engaged to save the meanest sheep; and whether that sheep is asleep or awake, it is perfectly safe, so far as final salvation is concerned. There are better reasons why I should stir up a Christian, and I shall use a very few of them.

And first, O Christian! awake from thy slumber, because thy Lord is coming. That is the grand reason used in the text. The apostle says, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day." "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." "Ye brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." O Christians! do you know that your Lord is coming? In such an hour as ye think not, the man who once hung quivering on Calvary will descend in glory; "The head that once was crowned with thorns" will soon be crowned with a diadem of brilliant jewels. He will come in the clouds of heaven to his church. Would you wish to be sleeping when your Lord comes? Do you want to be like the foolish virgins, or like the wise ones, either, who, while the bridegroom tarried, slumbered and slept? If our Master were to appear this morning, are there not half of us in such a state that we should be afraid to see him? Why, you know, when a friend comes to your house, if he is some great man, what brushing and dusting there is. Every corner of the room has its cobwebs removed; every carpet is turned

up; and you make every effort to have the house clean for his coming. What! and will you have your house dusty, and the spiders of neglect building the cobwebs of indolence in the corners of your house, when your Lord may arrive tomorrow? And if we are to have an audience with the Queen, what dressing there is! How careful will men be that everything should be put on aright, that they should appear properly in court dress! Do you not know, servant of the Lord, that you are to appear before the king in his beauty, and to see him soon on earth? What! will ye be asleep when he comes? When he knocks at the door, shall he have for an answer, "The good man is asleep; he did not expect you"? Oh, no; be ye like men who watch for their Lord, that at his coming he may find you ready. Ah! ye carnal professors, who attend plays and balls, would you like Christ to come and find you in the middle of your dance? would you like him to look you in the face in the opera? Ah! ye carnal tradesmen, ye can cheat, and then pray after it. Would you like Christ to find you cheating? Ye devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers. You would not mind him coming in the middle of your long prayer; but he will come just at that poor widow's house is sticking in your throat, just as you are swallowing the lands of the poor oppressed on, and putting in your pocket the wages of which you have defrauded the labourer. Then he will come; and how terrible will he be to such as you! We have heard of the sailor, who, when his ship was sinking, rushed to the cabin to steal a bag of gold, and though warned that he could no swim with it, tied it about his loins, leaped into the sea with it, and sank to rise no more. And I am afraid there be some rich men who know not how to use their money, who will sink to hell, strangled by their gold, hanging like millstones round their necks. O Christian, it shall not be so with you; but wake from thy slumbers, for thy Lord cometh.

But again, Christian, thou art benevolent; thou lovest men's souls, and I will speak to thee of that which will touch thy heart. Wilt thou sleep while souls are being lost? A brother here, some time ago, rushed into a house which was burning, and he saved a person from it; he then returned to his wife, and what did she say to him? "Go back again, my husband, and see if you cannot save another. We will not rest till all are delivered." Methinks that this is what the Christian man would say: "If I have been the means of saving one soul, I will not rest until I have saved another." Oh, hast thou ever thought how many souls sink into hell every hour? Did the dreary thought that the death-knell of a soul is tolled by every tick of yonder clock, ever strike thee? Hast thou never thought that myriads of thy fellow creatures are in hell now, and that myriads more are hastening thither? and yet dost thou sleep? What! physician, wilt thou sleep while men are dying? Sailor, wilt thou sleep when the wreck is out at sea, and the life-boat is waiting for hands to man it! Christian, wilt thou tarry while souls are being lost? I do not say that thou canst save them—God alone can do that—but thou mayest be the instrument; and wouldst thou lose the opportunity of winning another jewel for thy crown in heaven? wouldst thou sleep while work is being done? Well, said the British king, at the battle of Agincourt, "Come on, and conquer."

And gentlemen in England—now a-bed,

Shall think themselves accursed they were not here:

And hold their manhood cheap, when any speaks

That fought with us upon this glorious day."

So methinks, when souls are being saved, Christians in bed may think themselves accursed they are not here. Sleep Christian, let me shout in thine ears—thou art sleeping while souls are being lost—sleeping while men are being damned—sleeping while hell is being peopled—sleeping while Christ is being dishonored—sleeping while the devil is grinning at thy sleepy face—sleeping while demons are dancing

around thy slumbering carcase, and telling it in hell that a Christian is asleep. You will never catch the devil asleep; let not the devil catch you asleep. Watch, and be sober, that ye may be always up to do your duty.

I have no time to use other considerations, though the subject is large enough, and I should have no difficulty in finding sticks enough to beat a sleeping dog with. "Let us not sleep as do others."

III. Now it may be asked, When is the Christian most liable to sleep?

First, I answer, he is most liable to sleep when his temporal circumstances are all right. When your nest is well feathered you are then most likely to sleep; there is little danger of your sleeping when there is a bramble-bush in the bed. When all is downy, then the most likely thing will be that thou wilt say, "Soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thy rest, eat, drink, and be merry." Let me ask some of you, when you were more straightened in circumstances, when you had to rely upon providence each hour and had troubles to take to the throne of grace, were you not more wakeful than you are now? The miller who hath his wheel turned by a constant stream goes too sleep; but he that attendeth on the wind, which sometimes bloweth hard and sometimes gently, sleeps not, lest haply the full gust might rend the sails or there should not be enough to make them go round. Those who live by the day often sleep not by day, but they sleep in the night,— the sleep of the beloved. Easy roads tend to make us slumber. Few sleep in a storm; many sleep on a calm night. He is a brave boy, indeed, who can have his eyes sealed when "upon the high and giddy mast, in bosom of the rude imperious surge;" but he is no wonder who sleepeth when there is no danger. Why is the church asleep now? She would not sleep if Smithfield were filled with stakes, if Bartholomew's tocsin were ringing in her ears; she would not sleep if Sicilian Vespers might be sung tomorrow's eve; she would not sleep if massacres were common now. But what is her condition? Every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig tree, none daring to make him afraid. Tread softly! she is fast asleep. Wake up, church! or else we will cut down the fig tree about thine ears. Start up! for the figs are ripe, they hang into thy sleepy mouth, and thou art too lazy to bite them off.

Now another dangerous time is when all goes well in spiritual matters. You never read that Christian went to sleep when lions were in the way; he never slept when he was going through the river Death, or when he was in Giant Despair's castle, or when he was fighting with Apollyon. Poor creature! he almost wished he could sleep then. But when he got halfway up the Hill Difficulty, and came to a pretty little arbor, in he went, and sat down and began to read his roll. O, how he rested himself! How he unstrapped his sandals and rubbed his weary feet! Very soon his mouth was open, his arms hung down, and he was fast asleep. Again, the enchanted ground was a very easy, smooth place, and liable to send the pilgrim to sleep. You remember Bunyan's description of some of the arbors: "Then they came to an arbor, warm, and promising much refreshing to the weary pilgrims; for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, and furnished with benches and settles. It had also in it a soft couch, where the weary might lean." "The arbor was called the Slothful's Friend, and was made on purpose to allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims to take up their rest there when weary." Depend upon it, it is in easy places that men shut their eyes and wander into the dreamy land of forgetfulness. Old Erskine said a good thing when he remarked, "I like a roaring devil better than a sleeping devil." There is no temptation half so bad as not being tempted. The distressed soul does not sleep; it is after we get into confidence and full assurance that we are in danger of slumbering. Take care, thou who art full of gladness. There is no season in which we are so likely to fall asleep as that of high enjoyment. The disciples went to sleep after they had seen Christ transfigured on the mountain-top. Take heed, joyous Christian, good frames are very dangerous; they often lull you into a sound sleep.

Yet there is one more thing; and, if I ever were afraid of anything, I should fear to speak before my grave and reverend fathers in the faith the fact that one of the most likely places for us to sleep in is when we get near our journey's end. It is ill for a child to say that, and I will therefore back it up by the words of that great pilot John Bunyan: "For this enchanted ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy to pilgrims has; wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way, and so it standeth against us with the more advantage. For when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary? and when so like to be weary as when almost at their journey's end? Therefore it is, I say, that the enchanted ground is placed so nigh to the land Beulah, and so near the end of their race. Wherefore let pilgrims look to themselves, lest it happen to them as it has done to these that, as you see, are fallen asleep, and none can awake them." May a child speak to those who are far before him in years and experience? But I am not a child when I preach. In the pulpit we stand as ambassadors of God, and God knoweth nothing of childhood or age; he teacheth whom he willeth, and speaketh as he pleases. It is true, my brethren, that those who have been years in grace are most in danger of slumbering. Somehow we get into the routine of the thing; it is usual for us to go to the house of God; it is usual for us to belong to the church, and that of itself tends to make people sleepy. Go into some of your churches in London, and you will hear a most delicious sermon preached to a people all sound asleep. The reason is that the service is all alike; they know when they have got to the third "Our Father which art in heaven." when they have passed the confession general, and when they have got to the sermon,—which is the time to sleep for twenty minutes. If the minister should smite his fist ecclesiastic upon the Bible, or enliven his faculties with a pinch of snuff, or even use his pocket handkerchief, the people would wake up, because it would be something out of the usual course. Or if he uttered an odd sentiment, they might be aroused, and would probably think that he had broken the 59th commandment, in making some of the congregation smile. But he never violates decorum; he stands, the very mirror of modesty and the picture of everything that is orderly. I have digressed, but you will see what I mean. If we are always going on the same road we are liable to sleep. If Moab gets at ease, and is not emptied from vessel to vessel, he sleeps on, for he knows no change, and when years have worn our road with a rut of godliness, we are apt to throw the reins on our horse's neck and sleep soundly.

IV. Now, lastly let me give a little good advice to the sleeping Christian. But, Christian, if thou art asleep, thou wilt not hear me. I will speak gently, then, and let thee sleep on. No, I will not, I will shout in thine ears, "Awake, thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise. Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. Put on thy glorious array, thou church of the living God."

But now what is the best plan to keep awake when you are going across the enchanted ground? This book tells us that one of the best plans is to keep Christian company, and talk about the ways of the Lord. Christian and Hopeful said to themselves, "Let us talk together, and then we shall not sleep." Christian said, "Brother, where shall we begin?" And Hopeful said, "We will begin where God began with us." There is no subject so likely to keep a man awake as talking of the place where God began with him. When Christian men talk together they won't sleep together. Hold Christian company, and you will not be so likely to slumber. Christians who isolate themselves and stand alone are very liable to lie down and sleep on the settle or the soft couch, and go to sleep; but, if you talk much together, as they did in old time, you will find it extremely beneficial. Two Christians talking together of the ways of the Lord will go much faster to heaven than one; and when a whole church unite in speaking of the Lord's loving kindness, verily, beloved, there is no way like that of keeping themselves awake.

Then let me remind you that if you will look at interesting things you will not sleep; and how can you be kept awake in the enchanted ground better than by holding up your Saviour before your eyes? There are some things, it is said, which will not let men shut their eyes if they are held before them. Jesus Christ crucified on Calvary is one of them. I never knew a Christian go to sleep at the foot of the cross; but he always said—

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,

Which before the cross I spend.”

And he said, too—

“Here I’d sit, for ever viewing

Mercies’ streams in streams of blood.”

But he never said, “Here I would lay down and sleep;” for he could not sleep with that shriek, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,” in his ears. He could not sleep with “It is finished!” going into his very soul. Keep thou near to the cross, Christian, and thou wilt not sleep.

Then I would advise thee to let the wind blow on thee; let the breath of the Holy Spirit continually fan thy temples, and thou wilt not sleep. Seek to live daily under the influence of the Holy Ghost; derive all thy strength from him, and thou wilt not slumber.

Lastly, labor to impress thyself with a deep sense of the value of the place to which thou art going. If thou rememberest that thou art going to heaven, thou wilt not sleep on the road. If thou thinkest that hell is behind thee, and the devil pursuing thee, I am sure thou wilt not be inclined to sleep. Would the man-slayer sleep if the avenger of blood were behind him, and the city of refuge before him? Christian, wilt thou sleep whilst the pearly gates are open; the songs of angels waiting for thee to join them; a crown decorated with delight to be worn upon thy brow? Ah, no!

“Forget the steps already trod,

And onward urge thy way.”

“Weak as thou art, thou shalt not faint,

Or, fainting, shalt not die;

He feeds the strength of every saint,

He’ll help thee from on high.”

Dearly beloved, I have finished my sermon. There are some of you that I must dismiss, because I find nothing in the text for you. It is said, “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” There are some here who do not sleep at all, because they are positively dead; and, if it takes a stronger voice than mine to wake the sleeper, how much more mighty must be that voice which wakes the dead. Yet even to the dead I speak; for God can wake them, though I cannot. O, dead man! dost thou not know that thy body and thy soul are worthless carrion? that whilst thou art dead thou liest abhorred of God, abhorred of man? that soon the vultures of remorse will come and devour thy lifeless soul; and, though thou hast

lived in this world these seventy years (perhaps) without God and without Christ, in thy last hour the vulture of remorse shall come and tear thy spirit; and, though thou laughest now at the wild bird that circles in the sky, he will descend upon thee soon, and thy death will be a bed of shrieks, howlings, and wailings, and lamentations and yells! Dost thou know more still, that afterwards that dead soul will be cast into Tophet; and, as in the East they burn the bodies, so thy body and thy soul together shall be burned in hell? Go not away and dream that this is a metaphor. It is truth. Say not it is a fiction; laugh not at it as a mere picture. Hell is a positive flame; it is a fire that burns the body, albeit that it burns the soul, too. There is physical fire for the body, and there is spiritual fire for the soul. Go thy way, O man; such shall be thy fate. E'en now thy funeral pile is building, thy years of sin have laid huge trees across each other; and see, the angel is flying down from heaven with a brand already lit; thou art lying dead upon the pile; he puts the brand to the base thereof; thy disease proves that the lower parts are kindling with the flame; those pains of thine are the crackling of the fire. It shall reach thee soon, thou poor diseased one; thou art near death, and when it reaches thee thou shalt know the meaning of the fire that is unquenchable, and the worm that dieth not. Yet while there is hope I will tell thee the gospel. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be," must be "damned." He that believeth on the Lord Jesus, that is, with a simple, naked faith, comes and puts his trust in him, shall be saved, without anything else; but he that believeth not shall inevitably—hear it, men, and tremble—he that believeth not shall assuredly be damned.

P.S.—It is frequently objected that the preacher is censorious: he is not desirous of defending himself from the charge. He is confident that many are conscious that his charges are true, and if true, Christian love requires us to warn those who err; nor will candid men condemn the minister who is bold enough to point out the faults of the church and the age, even when all classes are moved to anger by his faithful rebukes, and pour on his head the full vials of their wrath. IF THIS BE VILE, WE PURPOSE TO BE VILER STILL.—C.H.S.

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