

The Wailing of Risca

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon powerfully exhorts believers to recognize the suddenness of death and bereavement, urging them to live with eternal perspective and fervent prayer for the salvation of loved ones.

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:20, Hebrews 9:27, Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, Psalm 90:10, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Revelation 1:7

Topics: "Salvation"

Description

In 'The Wailing of Risca,' C.H. Spurgeon reflects on a tragic mining disaster to deliver a solemn message about the suddenness of death and the fragility of life. He calls believers to live with an eternal perspective, loving their families as mortal and transient, and to be diligent in prayer for the salvation of loved ones. Spurgeon's heartfelt lamentation serves as a powerful devotional urging readiness to meet God and a deeper commitment to faith.

Transcript

"Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment."—Jeremiah 4:20.

THE sorrow of the weeping prophet was exceeding heavy when he uttered these words of bitter lamentation. A great and present burden from the Lord is weighing so heavily upon our hearts this morning, that we cannot spare so much as a moment for sympathy with the griefs of past ages. God has visited our land, and his strokes have been exceeding hard. We are constrained to take up a wailing, and cry aloud, "Suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment." There is a spot in South Wales which has frequently yielded me a quiet and delightful retreat. Beautiful for situation, surrounded by lofty mountains, pierced by romantic valleys, the breathing of its air refreshes the body, and the sight of the eyes makes glad the heart. I have climbed its hills, I have seen the ever widening landscape, the mountains of Wales, the plains of England, and the seas sparkling afar. I have descended the hills and marked the mist creeping up the side of the hills and covering the woods in clouds. I have mingled with its godly men and women, and worshipped God in their assemblies. These lips have ministered the Word in that once happy valley. I have been fired with the glorious enthusiasm of the people when they have listened to the Word. Well doth my soul remember one night, which I shall never forget in time or in eternity, when, crowded together in the place of worship, hearty Welsh miners responded to every word of Christ's minister, with their "gogonians" encouraging me to preach the Gospel, and crying "Glory to God" while the message was proclaimed. I remember how they constrained me, and kept me well nigh to midnight, preaching three sermons, one after another, almost without rest, for they loved to listen to the

gospel. God was present with us, and many a time has the baptismal pool been stirred since then by the fruit of that night's labour. Nor shall I ever forget when standing in the open air beneath God's blue sky, I addressed a mighty gathering within a short distance of that spot; when the Spirit of God was poured upon us, and men and women were swayed to and fro under the heavenly message, as the corn is moved in waves by the summer winds. Great was our joy that day when the people met together in thousands, and with songs and praises separated to their homes, talking of what they had heard. But now our visitation of that neighbourhood must ever be mingled with sorrow. How hath God been pleased to smite down strong men, and to take away the young men upon a sudden! "How suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment." Oh! vale of Risca, I take up a lamentation for thee: the Lord hath dealt sorely with thee. Behold, and see if there be sorrow in any valley like unto thy sorrow which is done unto thee. The angel of death has emptied out his quiver upon thee; the awful reaper hath gathered to himself full sheaves from thy beautiful valley.

You all know the story; it scarce needs that I should tell it to you. Last Saturday week some two hundred or more miners descended in health and strength to their usual work in the bowels of the earth. They had not been working long, their wives and their children had risen, and their little ones had gone to their schools, when suddenly there was heard a noise at the mouth of the pit;—it was an explosion,—all knew what it meant. Men's hearts failed them, for well they prophesied the horror which would soon reveal itself. They wait awhile, the foul gas must first be scattered, brave men with their lives in their hands descend into the pit, and when they are able to see with the dim miner's lamp, the light falls upon corpse after corpse. A few, a handful are brought up alive, and scarce alive, but yet, thank God, with enough of the vital spark remaining to be again kindled to a flame; but the great mass of those strong men have felt the grip of death. Some of them were brought up to the top with their faces burned and scarred, with their bodies disfigured by the fire; but many are discovered whose faces looked as if they sweetly slept, so that it was scarcely possible to believe that they really could be dead, so quietly had the spirit quitted the habitation of clay. Can you picture to yourselves the scene? The great fires lit around the pit, flaming both night and day, the thick mist, the pouring rain drenching the whole of the valley. Do you see the women as they come clustering round the pit, shrieking for their sons, and their husbands, and their fathers. Do you hear that shrill scream as yonder woman has just discovered the partner of her soul; and there do you mark another bending over the form of her two stalwart sons, now alas taken from her for ever? Do you mark the misery that sits upon the face of some who have not found their sons, or their fathers, or their husbands, or their brothers, and who know not where they are, and feel a thousand deaths themselves because they feel convinced that their precious ones have fallen, though their corpses cannot be found? The misery in that valley is past description; those who have witnessed it, fail to be able to picture it. As the cry of Egypt in the night when the destroying angel went through all the land and smote the firstborn; as the wail of Rachel when she could not be comforted for her children, because they were not; such has been the howling, the weeping, the lamentation of that fair but desolate valley.

My friends, this judgment has a voice to us, and the scarce buried bodies of those men which lie around us in vision, have each a sorrowful lesson. The cry of the widow, and of the childless mother, shall come up into our ears to-day; and, O Lord God of Sabaoth, may it so arouse us that we may hear, and fear, and tremble, and turn unto thee—that this dread calamity may be to us the means of our salvation, or if saved, the means of stirring us up more earnestly to seek the salvation of our fellow men.

There are three points upon which I shall try to address you this morning, though I feel inadequate to such a task. First, I shall say somewhat upon sudden bereavements; then I shall dwell awhile upon the fact of

sudden death; and afterwards we will say but a little, for we know but little, of the sudden exchange which sudden death shall bring both to saints and sinners.

I. Our first sorrowful theme is SUDDEN BEREAVEMENTS.

Alas! alas! how soon may we be childless; how soon may we be widowed of the dearest objects of our affections! O Lord, thou hast shown to us this day, how soon thou canst blast our gourds and wither all the fruits of our vineyard. The dearest ones, the partners of our blood, how soon can death proclaim a divorce between us—our children, the offspring of our loins, how soon canst thou lay them beneath the sod. We have not a single relative who may not become to us within the next moment a fountain of grief. All that are dear and precious to us are only here by God's good pleasure. What should we be to-day if it were not for those whom we love, and who love us? What were our house without its little prattlers? What were our habitation without the wife of our bosom? What were our daily business without our associates and friends to cheer us in our trials? Ah! this were a sad world indeed, if the ties of kindred, of affection, and of friendship all be snapped; and yet it is such a world that they must be sundered, and may be divided at any moment.

From the fact that sudden bereavements are possible—not only to miners and to women whose husbands are upon the sea, but to us also—I would that we would learn profitable lessons. And first let us learn to set loose by our dearest friends that we have on earth. Let us love them—love them we may, love them we should—but let us always learn to love them as dying things. Oh, build not thy nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe. "Set not thine affections on things on earth," for the things of earth must leave thee, and then what wilt thou do when thy joy is emptied, and the golden bowl which held thy mirth shall be dashed to pieces? Love first and foremost Christ; and when thou lovest others, still love them not as though they were immortal. Love not clay as though it were undying—love not dust as though it were eternal. So hold thy friend that thou shalt not wonder when he vanishes from thee; so view the partakers of thy life that thou wilt not be amazed when they glide into the land of spirits. See thou the disease of mortality on every cheek, and write not Eternal upon the creature of an hour.

Take care that thou puttest all thy dear ones into God's hand. Thou hast put thy soul there, put them there. Thou canst trust him for temporals for thyself, trust thy jewels with him. Feel that they are not thine own, but that they are God's loans to thee; loans which may be recalled at any moment—precious benisons of heaven, not entailed upon thee, but of which thou art but a tenant at will. Your possessions are never so safe as when you are willing to resign them, and you are never so rich as when you put all you have into the hand of God. You shall find it greatly mitigate the sorrow of bereavements, if before bereavement you shall have learned to surrender every day all the things that are dearest to you into the keeping of your gracious God.

Further, then, you who are blessed with wife and children, and friends, take care that you bless God for them. Sing a song of praise to God who hath blessed you so much than others. You are not a widow, but there are many that wear the weeds, and why is it not your lot? You are not bereaven of your spouse, but there is many a man whose heart is rent in twain by such a calamity,—why is it not your portion too? You have not to follow to-morrow your little ones to their narrow graves—early flowers that did but bud and never ripened, withering alas! too soon. Oh! by the sorrow which you would feel if they were taken away, I exhort you to bless God for them while you have them. We sorrow much when our gifts are taken away, but we fail to thank God that he spared them to us so long. Oh! be not ungrateful, lest thou provoke the Lord to smite very low the mercy which thou dost not value. Sing unto the Lord, sing unto his name. Give

unto him the blessing which he deserves for his sparing favors which he has manifested towards you in your household.

And then permit me to remind you that if these sudden bereavements may come, and there may be a dark chamber in any house in a moment, and the coffin may be in any one of our habitations, let us so act to our kinsfolk and relatives as though we knew they were soon about to die. Young man, so treat thy hoary father as thou wouldst behave to him if thou knewest he would die to-morrow. When thou shalt follow him to the grave, amidst all thy tears for his loss, let there not be one tear of repentance because of thine ill behaviour to him. And you godly fathers and mothers, to you I have a special message—your children are committed to your care; they are growing up, and what if after they be grown up they should plunge into sin and die at last impenitent! Oh, let not the fierce regret sting you like an adder,—“Oh that I had prayed for my children! Oh that I had taught them before they departed.” I pray you so live, that when you stand over your child’s dead body you may never hear a voice coming up from that clay, “Father, thy negligence was my destruction. Mother, thy want of prayer was the instrument of my damnation.” But so live, that when you hear the funeral knell, for a neighbour even, you may be able to say, “Poor soul, whether he is gone to heaven or to hell, I know I am clear of his blood.” And with double earnestness be it so with your children. “Yes,” says one “but I have thought of teaching my children more of Christ, and being more earnest in prayer for them bye-and-bye,” but what if they should die to-morrow? “Yes,” says the wife, “I have thought of speaking to my ungodly husband, and trying to induce him to attend the house of God with me, but I was afraid he would only laugh at me, so I put it off for a month or two.” Ah! what if he dies before you have cleared your conscience of him? Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.

In the light, then, of sudden bereavements, let not another hour pass over your head, when you have reached home, before you have freed your conscience of the blood of your children’s souls. Gather them together around you this afternoon, and say to them, “My dear children, I have learned to day that you may die; I knew it before, but I have had it impressed upon my mind by a solemn incident. My dear children, I cannot help telling you, that as you must die, I am anxious that God’s Holy Spirit should graciously lead you to repent of sin and seek a Saviour.” And then, when you have told them the way to salvation in simple terms, put your arms about their necks, and bid the little ones kneel down and pray, “O God! upon their infant hearts, stamp thou, the image of thyself. As they are in the image of the earthy, so make them in the image of the heavenly, that at the last I may be able to say, ‘Here am I, and the children thou hast given me.’”

II. The second head of my discourse this morning was to be, SUDDEN DEATH, AS WE VIEW IT MORE PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO OURSELVES.

The miners of Risca had no more idea of dying that Saturday morning than you or I have, nor did there seem much likelihood that they would. They had gone up and down the pit, some of them, many thousands of times in their lives. It is true that some had perished there, but then, how very many had gone up and down and had not perished. Nay, they had grown so fearless of danger, that some of them even thrust themselves into it, and in defiance of every regulation for the preservation of human life, they were bold and careless, and would gratify a selfish indulgence when a spark might have caused the destruction of them all. We will not say that it was any negligence that caused this accident—God forbid that we should lay anything to the charge of those who have now departed, and have to answer before

their God—but, at any rate, sure it is that men who have most to do with danger are generally the most callous, and those who are most exposed are usually utterly careless about the very danger which others see but which they will not see themselves. Any warning you or I might have given them would have been thought unnecessary, if not impertinent. “Why need I be so careful? I have done this fifty times before. Why may I not do it again?” But as in a moment, although there was no lightning flash, no earthquake, no opening of a pit to swallow them up, quick in a moment the gas explodes and they stand before the Eternal God. It was but the twinkling of an eye, even as though the last trump had sounded (and indeed it did sound as far as they were concerned), and down fell the lifeless corpse, and the spirit returned to God who made it. And you and I are in danger too. We are not in the pit in the midst of explosive air, but there are a thousand gates to death. How many there be who have fallen dead in the streets? How many sitting in their own homes? I stayed but a week or two ago with an excellent Christian man, who was then in the halest and most hearty health. I was startled indeed when I heard immediately after that he had come home, and sitting down in his chair had shut his eyes and died. And these things are usual, and in such a city as ours we cannot go down a street without hearing of some such visitation. Well, our turn must come. Perhaps we shall die falling asleep in our beds after long sickness, but probably we shall be suddenly called in such an hour as we think not to face the realities of eternity. Well, if it be so, if there be a thousand gates to death, if all means and any means may be sufficient to stop the current of our life, if really, after all, spiders’ webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life, if we are but a vapour, or a dying taper that soon expires in darkness, what then? Why, first, I say, let us all look upon ourselves as dying men, let us not reckon on to-morrow. Oh! let us not procrastinate, for taken in Satan’s great net of procrastination we may wait, and wait, and wait, till time is gone and the great knell of eternity shall toll our dissolution. To-day is your only time. O mortal men, the present moment is the only moment you may call your own, and oh! how swift its wings! This hour is yours; yesterday is gone; to-morrow is with God, and may never come. “To-day if ye hear his voice harden not your hearts.” Many have had their first impressions from thoughts of death, and hence it is that Satan never likes to let a man think of the grave. I know a family in which the governess, the daughter of a Christian minister, was told upon her entering her office, that she was never to mention the subject of death to the children. They were never to know even that children might die. I did not marvel when I knew the infidelity of the head of the household. What better atmosphere for an infidel to breathe in, than where the blast of death is never felt? Infidels ought to be immortal. They ought to live in a world where they can never die, for their infidelity will never be able to pass the stream of Jordan. There are infidels on earth, but there are none in heaven, and there can be none in hell. They are convinced—convinced by terrible facts—convinced that there is a God while they are crushed beneath his vengeance, and made to tremble at his eternal power. But I pray you, sirs, be not such fools as to live as though your bones were iron and your ribs were brass. Let us not be such madmen as to run as though there were no bounds to our race; let us not play away our precious days as though days were common as sands on a sea shore. That hour-glass yonder contains all the sands of your life. Do you see them running? How swiftly do they empty out! With some of you, the most of the sands are in the bottom bulb of the glass, and there are only a few to go trickling through the narrow passway of its days. Ah! and that glass shall never be turned again; it shall never run a second time for you. Let it once run out and you will die. Oh! live as though you meant to die. Live as though you knew you might die to-morrow. Think as though you might die now, and act this very hour as though I could utter the mandate of death, and summon you to pass through the portals of the tomb.

And then take care, I pray you, that you who do know Christ not only live as though you meant to die, but live while you live. Oh what a work we have to do, and how short the time to do it! Millions of men unconverted yet, and nothing but our feeble voice with which to preach the Word! My soul, shalt thou ever

condemn thyself in thy dying moments for having preached too often or too earnestly? No, never. Thou mayest rebuke thy soul, but thou canst never bemoan thy excessive industry. Minister of Christ! in thy dying hour it will never be a theme of reproach to you that you preached ten times in the week, that you stood up every day to preach Christ, and that you so preached that you spent yourself, and wasted your body with weakness. No, it will be our dull sermons that will haunt us on our dying beds, our tearless preaching, our long studyings, when we might have preached better had we come away and preached without them; our huntings after popularity, by gathering together fine words, instead of coming right up, and saying to the people, "Men and women, you are dying, escape for your life and fly to Christ;" preaching to them in red-hot simple words of the wrath to come and of the love of Christ. Oh! there are some of you members of our churches, who are living, but what are you living for? Surely you are not living to get money—that is the worldling's object. Are you living merely to please yourselves? Why that is but the beast's delight. Oh! how few there are of the members of our churches who really live for God with all their might. Do we give to God as much as we give to our own pleasures? Do we give Christ's service as much time as we give to many of our trifling amusements? Why, we have professional men of education, men of excellent training and ability, who when they once get into a church, feel that they could be very active anywhere else, but as Christians they have nothing to do. They can be energetic in parish vestries or in the rifle corps, but in the church they give their name, but their energies are dormant. Ah! my dear hearers, you who love the Saviour, when we shall come before Christ in heaven, if there can be a regret, it will be that we did not do more for Christ while we were here. I think as we fall down before his feet and worship him, if we could know a sorrow, it would be because we did not bring him in more jewels for his crown—did not seek more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked—did not give more to his cause, and did not labour more that the lost sheep of the house of Israel might be restored. Live while you live; while it is called to-day, work, for the night cometh wherein no man can work.

And let us learn never to do anything which we would not wish to be found doing if we were to die. We are sometimes asked by young people whether they may go to the theatre, whether they may dance, or whether they may do this or that. You may do anything which you would not be ashamed to be doing when Christ shall come. You may do anything which you would not blush to be found doing if the hand of death should smite you; but if you would dread to die in any spot, go not there; if you would not wish to enter the presence of your God with such-and-such a word upon your lip, utter not that word; or if there would be a thought that would be uncongenial to the judgement-day, seek not to think that thought. So act that you may feel you can take your shroud with you wherever you go. Happy is he that dies in his pulpit. Blessed is the man that dies in his daily business, for he is found with his loins girt about him serving his Master; but, oh, unhappy must he be to whom death comes as an intruder, and finds him engaged in that which he will blush to have ever touched, when God shall appear in judgment. Power supreme; thou everlasting King; permit not death to intrude upon an ill-spent hour, but find me rapt in meditation high; hymning my great Creator; proclaiming the love of Jesus, or lifting up my heart in prayer for myself and my fellow-sinners. Let me but serve my God, and then, Death, I will not say to thee when thou mayest come—come when thou wilt; but if I might choose, come to me while I am yearning after souls; come to me when the cry of inviting love is on my lip, and when I am weeping over the souls of men. Come to me, then, that men may say,

"He did his body with his charge lay down,

He ceased at once to work and live."

But I may talk thus about sudden death and the likelihood of it, but ah! sirs, I cannot stir your hearts, for I cannot stir my own as I would. The fact that so many die each day has very little force in it for us, because it is so trite an event, we have heard of it so many times. We look down the catalogue of deaths and take the average, and we say, "Fifty below the average, or a hundred above the average," but our dying never comes home to us. All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves. If there were a great Hydra in the city of London, which every day ate ten of the inhabitants of London alive, we should be dreadfully miserable, especially if we never knew when it would be our turn to be eaten too. If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-bye, but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble as we passed by the huge monster's den, and say, "When will it be my time?" and that would cast a cloud over the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog. But here is a monster, Death, which devours its hundreds at its meal; and with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps crying out for more; its greedy and insatiable maw never being filled; its teeth never being blunted; its ravenous hunger never being stayed. And here we are, and though it will be our turn by-and-bye to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do we think about it! One reason I think is, because we so seldom visit the dying. I stood once by the side of a poor boy whom I had taught as a Sunday-school teacher; he had received very little good training at home, and though he was but a lad of seventeen, he became a drunkard and drank himself to death at one debauch. I saw him, and talked to him, and tried to point him to the Saviour, and heard at last the death-rattle in his throat, and as I went down stairs I thought everybody a fool for doing anything except preparing to die. I began to look upon the men who drove the carts in the street, the men who were busy at their shops, and those who were selling their wares, as being all foolish for doing anything except their eternal business, and myself most of all foolish for not pointing dying sinners to a living Christ, and inviting them to trust in his precious blood. And yet in an hour or so all things took their usual shape, and I began to think that I was not dying after all, and I could go away and be as heartless as before. I could begin to think that men were after all wise in thinking of this world, and not the next; I mean not that I really thought so, but I fear I acted as if I thought so; the impression of the dying-bed was so soon obliterated. If you could see all die who die, perhaps the impression would be different. I would liken the sons of men to a company of South Sea Islanders, whose canoe being disabled, floated upon a raft, and they were attacked by sharks; they disappeared one by one, till but three or four were left. Can you conceive the despair which would settle upon the countenances of these few? If they knew a God, do you not think they would then indeed call on him? And in what respect, except that death was more apparent to them, were they different from us? Man after man is being taken away from us by the devouring monster. Friends and kinsfolk have been snatched into the deep, and some of us remain upon the edge of the raft. You gray-haired man may be the next that is carried away. The hosts of God are crossing the flood; some have already passed it and are singing the eternal song, and

"We are to the margin come,

And soon expect to die."

God help us so to live in the expectation of death, that Christ may be glorified in us whether we sleep or wake, and that we may be able to say, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

III. I shall detain you but a few minutes longer, while I dwell upon the third theme, which is, THAT SUDDEN EXCHANGE WHICH A SUDDEN DEATH WILL CAUSE.

You see yonder Christian man, he is full of a thousand fears, he is afraid even of his interest in Christ, he is troubled spiritually, and vexed with temporal cares. You see him cast down and exceedingly troubled, his

faith but very weak; he steps outside your door, and there meets him a messenger from God, who smites him to the heart, and he is dead. Can you conceive the change? Death has cured him of his fears, his tears are wiped away once for all from his eyes; and, to his surprise, he stands where he feared he should never be, in the midst of the redeemed of God, in the general assembly and church of the first-born. If he should think of such things, would he not upbraid himself for thinking so much of his trouble, and for looking into a future which he was never to see? See yonder man, he can scarcely walk, he has a hundred pains in his body, he says he is more tried and pained than any man. Death puts his skeleton hand upon him, and he dies. How marvellous the change! No aches now, no casting down of spirit, he then is supremely blest, the decrepid has become perfect, the weak has become strong, the trembling one has become a David, and David has become as the angel of the Lord. Hark to the song which pours from the lips of him who just now groaned; look at the celestial smile which lights the features of the man just now racked with pain and tormented with anguish! Was ever change so surprising, so marvellous? When I think of it, I could almost long for it to come across myself this morning; to go from the thousand eyes of you that look upon me, to look into the eyes of Christ, and to go from your songs, to the songs of spirits before the throne, to leave the sabbath work on earth for an eternal sabbath of rest: to go from unbelieving hearts, from Christians who need to be cheered and sinners to be convinced, to be with those who need no preaching, but who in one eternal song, sing "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb." I can imagine that when a man dies thus suddenly, one of the first emotions he experiences in the next world will be surprise. I can conceive that the spirit knows not where it is. It is like a man waking up from a dream. He looks about him. Oh, that glory! how resplendent you throne! He listens to harps of gold, and he can scarce believe it true. "I, the chief of sinners, and yet in heaven? I, a doubting one, and yet in paradise?" And then when he is conscious that he is really in heaven, oh! what overwhelming joy; how is the spirit flooded with delight, covered over with it, scarcely able to enjoy it because it seems to be all but crushed beneath the eternal weight of glory. And next, when the spirit has power to recover itself, and open its eyes from the blindness caused by this dazzling light, and to think—when its thoughts have recovered themselves from the sudden effect of a tremendous flood of bliss,—the next emotion will be gratitude. See how that believer, five minutes ago a mourner, now takes his crown from off his head, and with transporting joy and gratitude bows before his Saviour's throne. Hear how he sings; was ever song like that, the first song he ever sang that had the fulness of Paradise and perfection in it—"Unto him that loved me and washed me from my sins in his blood, unto him be glory." And how he repeats it, and repeats it again, and looks round to cherubim and seraphim, and prays them to assist him in his song, till all the harps of heaven re-taught the melody of gratitude, re-tuned by the one faithful heart, send up another hallelujah, and yet another, and another; while the floods of harmony surround the eternal throne of God.

But what must be the change to the unconverted man? His joys are over for ever. His death is the death of his happiness—his funeral is the funeral of his mirth. He has just risen from his cups; he has another cup to drain, which is full of bitterness. He has just listened to the sound of the harp and the viol, and the music of them that make merry; an eternal dirge greets his ears, mixed with the doleful chorus of the shrieks of damned souls. What horror and surprise shall seize upon him! "Good God," he says, "I thought it was not so, but lo, it is. What the minister said to me is true; the things I would not believe are at last really so." When the poor soul shall find itself in the hands of angry fiends, and lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments so hot, so feverish, so thirsty, that it shall seem in that first moment as though it had been athirst for a million years, what will be his surprise! "And am I," he will say, "really here? I was in the streets of London but a minute ago; I was singing a song but an instant before, and here am I in hell! What! so soon damned? Is the sentence of God like a lightning-flash? Does it so instantaneously rive the spirit and destroy its joys? Am I really here?" And when the soul has convinced itself that it is actually in hell, can

you imagine next the overwhelming horror that will roll over it. It, too, will be stunned with a mighty flood, not with a flood of glory but with a flood of anger, of wrath, of divine justice. Oh! how the spirit is tormented now—tormented beyond thought. And then at last, when the wave recedes a moment, and there is a pause, what black despair shall then seize upon the spirit! Have you ever seen men die without a hope? I read but yesterday a case of a young woman who had procrastinated many times, and at last she was told by the physician that within nine hours he really believed she would be a corpse. Then, when death really became a matter of fact to her, she rose up in the bed upon which she had been laid by the sudden stroke of God, and she prayed—prayed till she fell back fainting, and her lips were livid and her cheek was pale, while she cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Friends talked to her, consoled and comforted her, and bade her trust in Christ; but she said, “It is of no use for you to comfort me; no, it is too late. I made a fatal resolve some months ago that I would again enjoy the world, and that resolve destroyed by soul.” And then she rose up in bed again, with eyes starting from their sockets, and prayed again till she was breathless, and groaned and cried, and fell down again in a faint, needing to be restored once more. And so she did, till with ghastly look—an awful look of horror—as though she felt the anguish of another world, she expired.

Now if such is the remorse of a spirit before it feels the wrath of God—if the first drops are sufficient thus to destroy all hope and beat in pieces all our boastings, what will the eternal hail be—what will the everlasting sleet of divine wrath be when once it is poured out? Sodom and Gomorrah! Why all their fiery hail from heaven shall be nothing compared with the eternal fire that must fall upon the sinner. Do you think I love to speak on such a theme as this? My soul trembles while she thinks of it. No, I would sooner preach of other things by far, but it is needful that men may be awakened. Oh! I implore you, men and brethren, ye that know not God, and are still condemned, because you believe not in Christ, I pray you think of these things. Oh that I had a Baxter’s heart, that I could weep over sinners as he did; but my soul feels as true an anguish for your souls as ever Baxter felt. Oh that you would be saved! My eyes ache; my brow is full of fire now, because I cannot preach as I wanted to preach to you. Oh that God would take up the work and send that truth right home. I know I shall soon die and you too, and I shall face each of you, and your eyes shall stare on me for ever and ever, if you be lost through my unfaithfulness. And shall it be—shall it be? Oh that we had a hope that all of us might see the face of God and live! “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

Spirit of God, convince of sin, and bring the heart to Christ, and may we all without exception see thy face in joy and glory, and praise thee, world without end. Amen.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ch-spurgeon/the-wailing-of-risca/>

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