

The Difficulty of Escaping the Damnation of Hell

by Edward Payson

The difficulty of escaping the damnation of hell is due to the numerous obstacles that oppose conversion, including the tendency to lose serious impressions and the difficulty of convincing men of their sinfulness.

Scripture: Psalm 51:17, Proverbs 28:13, Matthew 23:33, Luke 13:3, John 3:18, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 7:10, Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:7

Topics: "Hell And Damnation", "Repentance And Faith"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the urgent need for sinners to recognize the dangerous and almost desperate situation they are in, emphasizing the obstacles that hinder their escape from final condemnation. He highlights the necessity of repentance and faith in Christ for salvation, pointing out the difficulties in awakening sinners to the importance of religion and the challenges in maintaining a consistent pursuit of faith. Payson stresses the critical importance of acknowledging one's own sinfulness and the insurmountable obstacles that a sinful, hard, unbelieving heart presents in accepting God's grace. He concludes by urging both sinners and believers to fervently seek God's help and intercede for the lost souls who are unaware of their impending doom.

Transcript

My hearers, I am not without apprehensions, that the passage, which I have chosen for the subject of this discourse, will sound harshly in your ears; and that its first effect will be to excite, in many breasts, feelings by no means favorable to the reception of truth. But it is a passage, which was uttered by the compassionate Savior of sinners, and I cannot, I dare not, pretend to be more merciful than he; I dare not suffer either a false tenderness, or a fear of giving offence, to prevent me from calling your attention to his words; words, which, if properly regarded, cannot fail to produce the most salutary effects. The words, to which I refer, are recorded in Matthew xxiii. 33. How can ye escape the damnation of hell?

This appalling question was addressed by our Lord to the scribes and pharisees. It evidently intimates that their situation was exceedingly dangerous, if not desperate;--that it was almost, if not quite, impossible for them to escape final condemnation. My impenitent hearers, I will not assert that your situation is equally dangerous, or that your escape from the dreadful retributions of eternity is equally improbable. But the word of God will justify the assertion, and a regard to your eternal interest constrains me to assert, that your situation is exceedingly dangerous; that the obstacles which oppose your salvation are very great

and numerous; and that the improbability of your escaping the wrath to come, is by no means small. To produce in your minds a conviction of this truth, is my object in the present discourse. Could you be thoroughly convinced of it, one great obstacle, which now opposes your salvation, would be removed. So far as I have observed, nothing more effectually prevents men from flying from the wrath to come, than a groundless persuasion, that to escape it is easy. Nothing so much encourages men to neglect religion, as a false belief; that they can easily become religious at any time. Nothing prevents more persons from obtaining a well founded hope of salvation, than a delusive hope that they shall, some how or other, be saved. Could this delusive hope, this groundless persuasion, be destroyed; could they be made to see their real situation, and the obstacles, which oppose their escape, they would, at once, be alarmed; their false peace would be effectually disturbed, and they would begin to cry, with earnestness, what shall we do to be saved? How shall we escape the wrath to come?

It is for these reasons, my careless hearers, and not to gratify myself; that I call your attention to this subject. It is much more for your interest, than it can be for mine, that you should entertain just views respecting it. Let me then hope for your attention, while I endeavor to show you, from the word of God, what your situation actually is: what are the obstacles which oppose your escape and which render it highly improbable that you will escape final condemnation.

In the first place, permit me to remind you, that you are, even now, under sentence of condemnation. You are already doomed to eternal death by the righteous law of God. This is a truth, which persons of your character are ever apt to forget. Many who assent to the fact that sinners will be condemned at the judgment day, do not seem to be aware, that they are condemned already. Yet nothing can be more certain. On this point the declarations of scripture are explicit and full. They assure us, that all have sinned, that the wages of sin is death, that the soul that sinneth shall die, that sinners are under the curse, or condemnatory sentence of God's violated law, that he who believeth not is condemned already, and that the wrath of God abideth on him. This being the case, it is evident, unless the execution of this sentence can be averted, unless you can obtain pardon of your offended God, you must perish forever. But the inspired writers assure us, with one voice, that the execution of this sentence cannot be averted, that pardon cannot be obtained, without the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ. On these terms alone salvation is offered, and if we neglect them there is no escape. Now that you may exercise repentance and faith, or become truly religious, several things are necessary, each of which is attended with great difficulties.

It is necessary that you should be roused from that careless, secure state, in which all men naturally live; that you should see religion to be all-important, and thus be led to attend to it with earnestness. To use the language of inspiration, you must be awakened; for with respect to your spiritual and eternal interests, you are asleep. Now it is evident, that no man will attend seriously to religion, unless he sees it to be an object of importance. No man will exert himself to escape a danger, which he does not perceive; no man will think seriously of flying from the wrath to come, until he sees that he is exposed to this wrath. And it is equally evident, that no man, who, in a spiritual sense, is asleep, will see that he is exposed to this wrath, until he is roused from his slumbers, until he becomes awake to eternal realities.

Of this, your own experience and observation must convince you. You cannot but know, that religion does not appear in your view to be all important; that you do not perceive yourselves to be exposed to the wrath of God; and you know also, that so long as this continues to be the case you will make no exertions to escape it. You cannot but be sensible, that should you live a hundred years in your present state of religious indifference and insensibility, you would not advance a single step towards preparation for death,

nor make one effort to become truly religious. It is then evidently necessary, that you should be roused from this spiritual lethargy to a sense of your danger; your slumbers must be disturbed; your dreams of security and of worldly happiness must be banished, and you must awake to the realities of the eternal world; awake to a conviction that religion is the one thing needful, and that without it you must perish forever. Until this is done, nothing can be done. Until this is done you will no more take one step towards heaven, than a man buried in sleep will commence a journey. But to rouse you from this slumbering, careless state, to fix your attention on religious subjects, is exceedingly difficult. Of this, too, your own experience may convince you. The speaker has been laboring for many years to effect this object by every means in his power; but with how little success, you well know. Nay more, God has long been using means to rouse you. He has called you, Awake thou that sleepest; rise up, ye that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; woe to them that are at ease in Zion! He has enforced attention to these calls by the dispensations of his providence. He has sent mercies and afflictions. Many of you he has visited with sickness, and thus brought you near to the eternal world; and he has caused all of you to witness, in repeated instances, the death of friends and acquaintance. But all in vain. You still slumber on, and dream of worldly objects, while death is daily approaching to hurry you to the bar of God. You still feel a strong unwillingness to have your false peace disturbed, and to commence a religious life. To every messenger of God, to every friendly monitor you reply, I pray thee have me excused. A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. Here then is one great difficulty, which opposes your conversion. And is there not great reason to fear, that it will prove insuperable? Does it not render your conversion, and consequently your escape from final condemnation, highly improbable? Since you have already lived so many years without becoming religious, and even without being persuaded to make it an object of earnest attention, is it not probable that you will continue to live in the same manner till death arrives, especially since all means have been tried in vain, and no new means remain to be employed?

But this is not all. That you may escape final condemnation it is necessary, not only that you should be roused to think seriously of religion, but that you should be induced to pursue it with constancy and perseverance. You must be awakened, and you must be kept awake; and the latter is the more difficult thing. For though it is by no means easy to rouse you to a sense of your situation, it is far more difficult to prevent you from relapsing into a state of spiritual slumber.

The very air of this world, has a drowsy effect; and there is a strong and constant propensity in the human heart to lose all serious impressions, and to become careless and indifferent respecting its eternal interests. Besides, religion is always disagreeable to men, when they first make it a subject of attention. They cannot then embrace its promises; they know nothing of its divine consolations; they see nothing in the Bible, but a system of restrictions, and threatenings, and penalties; it requires them to renounce the objects which they love, and gives them nothing in return; every page seems to impose on them some duty which they are unwilling to perform, or requires of them some sacrifice which they are unwilling to make, or denounces against them some threatening which they are unwilling to believe.

Hence they are strongly tempted to withdraw from it their attention, and return to their former careless state. Hence scarcely one in five of those who are roused from their slumbers, can be prevented from again falling asleep, though to sleep is to perish. Here again, we may appeal to your own observation and experience. Many of you have, at different times, been roused from your natural state of careless security. You have been made to see that religion is important. You have felt something of the powers of the world to come, and resolved to attend to your eternal interests.

But no sooner were these impressions made, than they began to be effaced; in a few days, or at most in a few weeks, they were entirely gone, and your slumbers became more profound than before. Similar effects of this propensity to lose serious impressions you have often witnessed in others. How many in this assembly have you seen attending to religion for a while with earnestness, and then again treating it with entire neglect? Now this propensity remains in your breasts in its full force, and it will forever oppose all persevering attempts to become religious.

Here, then, is another great obstacle, which opposes your conversion. And when you consider how great it is; when you reflect on the instability of your religious views; on the proneness of your thoughts to wander from religious subjects, even while in the house of God, does it not appear highly improbable even to yourselves, that you shall ever be the subjects of permanent religious impressions; that you shall ever be induced to pursue religion with that fixedness of purpose, that intensity of feeling, and that persevering diligence, which alone can secure success?

Does it not appear exceedingly probable, that you will continue to live as you have done, making resolutions, but delaying their accomplishment, until your day of grace comes to an end, and the sentence of final condemnation is executed upon you?

Should you however be enabled to overcome these obstacles, others still greater will oppose your progress. With whatever diligence and perseverance you may attend to religious subjects, it will avail nothing, unless you obtain proper views of your own characters, or, to use the language of scripture, unless you are convinced of sin; for no man will seek to escape the condemning sentence of God's law, unless he fears it; no man will fear it, unless he sees that he deserves it, and no man will see that he deserves it, unless he sees himself to be, not only a sinner, but a great sinner; such a sinner as the Bible asserts him to be. Besides, no man can repent of his sins, until he is convinced of them; and we have already seen, that without repentance there is no pardon. A deep and thorough conviction of your own sinfulness then, is indispensably necessary to your salvation. But to produce such a conviction in your minds is one of the most difficult things imaginable. It is always exceedingly difficult to convince a man against his will, to convince him of any unwelcome or disagreeable truth; and the more disagreeable any truth is, so much the more difficult it becomes to produce a conviction of it. How difficult it is for instance, to convince a consumptive man of his danger. How difficult to make men sensible of their own faults or to make fond and injudicious parents see the faults of their children. But there is no truth more disagreeable to men, no one, therefore of which they are so unwilling to be convinced, as that which asserts their exceeding sinfulness. To see their sins is mortifying, is painful, is alarming. They will therefore shut their eyes against the sight as long as possible. Many sins they will deny themselves to be guilty of; what they cannot deny they will extenuate, and for those which they cannot extenuate, they will make a thousand excuses. If the fallacy of one excuse is shown, they will fly to another, and from that to a third, and fourth; and when all their pleas and excuses are answered, they will return and urge them all a second time with as much confidence as at first.

But this is not all. The scriptures teach, and observation proves, that one effect of men's sinfulness is to make them blind to their own sins. It prevents men from forming clear conceptions of the rule of duty, that is, the law of God. Sin consists in a transgression of this law, and so long as men have indistinct conceptions of it, they will, of course, have very imperfect views of their transgressions. Sin too renders men in a great degree insensible to the perfections, the authority and even to the existence of God; and therefore, they see little of the criminality of offending him. Besides, sin impairs, and almost destroys the sensibility of conscience, and thus prevents her from perceiving and reproving what is wrong in our temper

and conduct. These remarks we see daily verified in our intercourse with the world. We often see the most abandoned characters entirely blind to their own views. We see that the longer men persist in vicious courses, the more insensible they become to the voice of conscience. It is the same with respect to those sins of the heart, of which you are all, my careless hearers, guilty; and of which you must be convinced, or perish. It is even more difficult to see these sins in ourselves, than it is to perceive those which are open and gross. Hence the exclamation of the psalmist, Who can understand his errors! Hence too, we find multitudes of sinners mentioned by the inspired writers, who when reproved by God's messengers for their sins boldly replied, What is our iniquity, and what is our sin, that we have transgressed against the Lord? When he said, Ye have despised my name, they replied, Wherein have we despised it? When he said, Ye have robbed God, they did not fear to reply, Wherein have we robbed thee? And when he charged them with uttering impious language, they asked, What have we spoken against thee? Now since human nature is the same in every age, and since it can thus impudently repel the charges of God himself, how exceedingly difficult, or rather how impossible, must it be for us to convince you, that you are sinful in that degree which the Bible describes! Here, as before, we may appeal to your own experience. You know the scriptures assert, in the most unequivocal terms, that the hearts of men are full of evil, that they are desperately wicked, that they are enmity against God; yet these assertions do not convince you that your hearts are thus sinful. What then will ever convince you of it? God will give you no new revelation of the fact, and his ministers can say nothing more than you have already heard, hundreds of times. And yet you must be convinced of it, or your condemnation is certain. Here then is another and apparently an insuperable obstacle which opposes your escape, and which renders it exceedingly improbable, that you ever will escape final condemnation.

But suppose all these difficulties removed; suppose, though there is little ground for the supposition, that by some means or other you should be made sensible of your sins; still, new obstacles no less insurmountable remain to oppose your salvation. Every sinner, when convinced of his sinfulness and danger, invariably asks deliverance in a way in which it cannot be obtained. He relies upon his own watchfulness, strength and exertions to subdue his sinful propensities, and upon his own prayers, tears and merits, to obtain the pardon of his sins.

In the language of an apostle, he goes about to establish his own righteousness, and does not submit to the righteousness of God. Disregarding our Savior's assertion, without me ye can do nothing, he attempts to do every thing without obtaining by faith the assistance of Christ. He says, I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. Yet still the convicted, but misguided sinner will endeavor to come to God and to obtain his favor without Christ.

And though he is assured, that without the teaching of God's good Spirit he never will be able to understand the scriptures, he will not humbly pray for this teaching, but endeavor to ascertain their meaning by his own unassisted researches. These errors, if persisted in, prove fatal. The man is soon bewildered and lost, and never finds the way to heaven: for we are taught, that the scriptures make men wise to salvation, only through faith in Christ Jesus. Agreeably, the apostle, speaking of such characters, says, they followed after righteousness, but they have not attained to righteousness.

Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone. At the same stumbling stone multitudes have ever since continued to stumble and fall to rise no more. After laboring a while to establish their own righteousness, as the apostle expresses it, they begin to fancy that they have succeeded. They become pleased and satisfied with themselves, and imagine that all is safe: their alarm subsides, their religious zeal declines, and they settle down upon a

false foundation, never to be disturbed till the day, in which God shall come to sweep away their refuges of lies, and overflow, as with a flood, their hiding-place.

Others fall into a mistake of a different nature, but no less fatal. Eager to obtain relief from their guilty fears and apprehensions, and yet unwilling to obtain it by the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ, they daily seek for the application of some promise, or for some change in their own feelings, which shall encourage a hope, that their sins are forgiven. What they thus earnestly seek, they are almost sure to find. They are powerfully, but transiently, affected by some promise or encouraging portion of scripture; like the stony ground hearers, they receive it with joy; they consider this joy as a proof of their conversion, and sit down satisfied, that now they are safe.

But they are deceived, fatally deceived. They have no root in themselves; and therefore endure but for a time and in a season of temptation fall away. My careless hearers, if you would know how many are thus deceived and perish, look at this church, or at any other church of Christ. See how many there are, who, after professing to be converted, and appearing joyful and zealous for a time, lose every thing of religion, except the name, and a little of the outward form. Yet all these persons had surmounted the first two great difficulties mentioned above.

They had been roused from their slumbers, and they had been convinced of their sins; but in consequence of that strong propensity which is natural to all men, to neglect the guide provided by God, they only escaped one snare, to be entangled in another equally fatal. The same propensity exists with equal force in your breasts. Should you then be roused to think seriously of religion; nay, should you be convinced of your sins, still it is exceedingly probable, that like them you would go about to establish your own righteousness, or be fatally deceived by a false conversion.

If you think this improbable, if you say within yourselves, we would be more wise and more cautious, it only proves, that you are under the influence of a self-confident spirit, which would infallibly plunge you into these very snares.

But suppose you should be preserved from these snares, that you should be enabled to surmount all the difficulties which have been mentioned, there would still remain another obstacle, which would alone be sufficient to render your conversion altogether improbable. This is a sinful, hard, unbelieving heart, which is full of enmity against God, and of opposition to his truth; and which will never believe, or submit to God, until its enmity and opposition are taken away. This you do not at present perceive.

No sinner perceives it, until he has been convinced of his sinfulness and danger; till he sees, that his own exertions cannot save him, and till the true character of God and of his law is clearly brought to his view. Until this is done, he always fancies that he has some love to God, and that he sincerely desires to please him. But when he sees what God is, and what he requires, then this long concealed opposition never fails to burst forth, and the sinner finds his heart, instead of submitting to God, filled with dislike of his character and of his law.

It will not repent, it will not believe in Christ, for we are assured, that every sinner hates the light, and will not come to it. Finding the light then unpleasant, the convinced sinner, if left to himself, makes a desperate effort, shuts his eyes against it, returns to his former state, and probably plunges into infidelity or some other error equally fatal. Thus it was with many during our Savior's residence on earth. They followed him so long and so constantly, that they considered themselves as his disciples, and are so called by an inspired writer.

But on a certain occasion our Savior brought clearly to their view some of those truths, which are peculiarly disagreeable to a sinful heart. The consequence was that they forsook him forever. In a similar manner, I have known many go back and perish, after they seem to have almost reached the entrance of the way of life. I have seen them sensible, that they were the chief of sinners, fully convinced, that everlasting misery would be their portion, unless they repented and embraced the Savior, and assenting to the truth that he was able and willing to save them.

I have seen them in this state for several days, unutterably distressed by a sense of guilt and fear of God's wrath, while their understandings and consciences waged an ineffectual war with their obdurate hearts, and made vain attempts to subdue them. At length their hearts gained a fatal victory; their conviction of the truth was banished, the voice of conscience was silenced, and they returned to their former courses, and their last state became seven-fold worse than the first.

The same obstacle, my careless hearers, will oppose your salvation with a strength and violence, of which you can at present, form no conception. Terrible proofs of its power I have often witnessed, when attending the sinner's dying bed. I have seen them, when they knew that their disease was mortal, and that they had but a few days to live, fully convinced that hell would be their portion unless they repented--agonizing in view of their approaching fate --expressing no doubt, that the Savior was ready to receive them, if they would apply to him with sincerity, and yet refusing to apply to him, and at last dying in despair, rather than accept, on these terms, his offered grace.

While I have been holding up to their view the power, the compassion, and love of the Savior, his precious promises, and his readiness to receive all who come to him, they have replied, yes, it is all true, but my hard, wicked, unbelieving heart will not repent, will not believe, will not pray. I can repeat prayers with my lips, but my heart feels them not. My hearers, how great, how insuperable, must be the obstacle, which, in such circumstances as these, can prevent a sinner from accepting salvation on the terms of the gospel! Whether you now believe it or not, O sinner, the same obstacle opposes your salvation, and you will one day be convinced of it.

I might easily proceed to mention other obstacles, which render your escape from final condemnation improbable, for it would require a volume to enumerate them all. I have said nothing of the fascinating power of worldly objects; nothing of the contagious influence of evil example; nothing of the strong current of prevailing customs and prejudices, which must be stemmed; nothing of the chain, which long continued habits of sinning have thrown over you; nothing of the many deceivers, who will spread snares for your feet, and cry peace, when there is no peace; nothing of the sophistical arguments, which will be employed to overthrow your conviction of the truth; nothing of the temptations to neglect religion, which will daily assail you on the right hand and on the left; nothing of that great adversary, who, as inspiration informs us, keeps your hearts like a strong man armed, and is not to be cast out of them, but by a stronger than he. But the obstacles, which I have mentioned, are surely sufficient to render it exceedingly improbable, that you will escape final condemnation. And remember that all these obstacles are of such a nature as to furnish you with no excuse. They all originate in your own sinful carelessness, presumption and opposition to the truth. There are no obstacles on the part of God, or of the Savior. It is your hearts, it is yourselves, which place all these mountains in the path to heaven.

And now, my careless hearers, would it answer any purpose, I could sit down and weep in anguish over the picture I have drawn, or rather, which the pencil of inspired truth has drawn of your situation. To see immortal souls thus situated, to see their way to life thus blocked up by their own folly and sinfulness, to

see so many powerful causes combining to thrust them down to endless, remediless ruin is a sight, over which even angels might weep; nay more, it is a sight, over which the Lord of angels has wept with unavailing compassion.

Do any of you reply, It cannot be, that our situation is so terrible, so dangerous, so nearly desperate, as has now been represented. Why then do the scriptures of truth describe it as such? Why were all the inspired messengers whom God has ever sent to men so much alarmed and distressed by the situation of their hearers? Why did one cry, O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night on their account? Why did another exclaim, I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh?

Nay more, why is there joy in heaven, why do angels rejoice over every sinner who repents? They must be perfectly acquainted with his situation; and did they not see it to be dangerous, awfully dangerous, they never would think his escape from it, by repentance, an occasion of such joy. O then, believe not your own deceitful hearts; but believe the angels, believe the scriptures, believe God, believe the Savior, when he tells you, that strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and that few there be who find it.

If you will not believe all these witnesses, if you refuse to pay any attention to this warning it will furnish another proof of the greatness of those obstacles, which oppose your salvation, and of the improbability of your escape. I have no hope of ever being able to set before you truths more alarming, more adapted to rouse you from your slumbers than those, which have now been exhibited. The word of God contains nothing more alarming, and did you really believe it, the archangel's trump would not rouse you more effectually than these truths.

And shall they not rouse you? Will you still sit unconcerned on the verge of the abyss, with the wrath of God abiding on you, while you are so far from safety, while so long and difficult a journey is before you, while precipitous mountains rise, and deep gulfs sink, and powerful enemies lie in ambush, and numberless snares are spread between you and heaven? Will you sit thus, and lose the precious hours, while the night of death is approaching, while the shadows of evening are already stealing upon some of you, and while none of you is sure of a week or a day? O ye gay, thoughtless triflers!

Is this a situation for carelessness and gaiety? O ye, who are laboring to be rich! is this the place, in which you would lay up treasure? O ye immortal spirits! condemned already, and hastening to hear the confirmation of your sentence at the tribunal of God, can you find nothing more important than the trifles, which now engross your attention? If you have not cast off all regard to God's word, if you are not infidels in theory, as well as in practice, you cannot, methinks, contemplate with perfect indifference the view, which has been given of your situation.

You cannot feel perfectly at ease, while you hear it clearly proved from the scriptures, that there is very little probability of your escaping final condemnation. If you are, in any degree, roused from your slumbers, one great obstacle is removed. But remember that it may easily return. Consider how easily the present impression may be effaced, how soon it may be lost, and how much more dangerous your situation will then be. Welcome every serious thought then, as you would welcome an angel from heaven..

Cherish it as the apple of your eye, nay, as your own soul. Avoid every thing which tends to banish it. Dread more than death its departure. Repair to every place, in which your serious impressions may be

strengthened, and use, with earnest diligence and solicitude, every means which may increase them. Remember, that your soul, your eternal all, is at stake; that the question to be decided, is, whether you shall spend your eternity in heaven, or in hell, and that at present, it is exceedingly probable the latter will be your portion.

Do any reply, the difficulties to be surmounted are so great, and the probability of our surmounting them so small, that we have no courage to make the attempt. It will therefore be best to give ourselves no concern respecting it, but to enjoy life while we can. And do you thus talk of enjoyment in such a situation, and while exposed to such a fate as this? Well may we say of such enjoyment, it is madness. It is far more irrational and preposterous than the mirth of criminals confined in a dungeon, and doomed to die, who attempt to drown their fears by noise and intoxication. There is no necessity for your adopting this desperate resolution. Though your destruction is probable, it is not yet certain and nothing but your own folly can make it so. It would indeed be certain, the obstacles before you would be insurmountable, were there not an Almighty, Sovereign Helper, who can assist you to overcome them, and who is ready to afford you assistance. While, therefore, you justly despair of saving yourselves, go to him, and implore his help. Go, and tell him, that you have ruined yourselves by disobeying him; that you have raised impassable mountains between yourselves and heaven; that you do not deserve his assistance; that you are justly condemned already, and merit nothing but eternal condemnation. This, however, which is the only safe course, I fear your sinful hearts will not consent to pursue. I fear that however you may now feel, you will dismiss your serious thoughts, and banish the subject from your minds, almost as soon as you leave this house. This I cannot prevent. My arm is too weak to draw you out of that fatal current, which is rapidly sweeping you away to destruction. I can only sit on the bank and weep as I contemplate the increasing strength of the current, and breathe out in agony, cries to that God, who can alone rescue you from its power, and prevent it from hurrying you into that bottomless gulf; in which it terminates. And come, you my Christian hearers--come all, who have been rescued from this fatal current; all, who can feel compassion for perishing immortals, come, and assist in crying to him for help. That you may be excited to this, look at the scene before you. Look around, and see how many of your children, acquaintances and friends, are swept away towards perdition, while they sleep and know it not, and no voice, but that of God, can rouse them. Do you know whither they are hastening? Do you know what hell is? Do you consider how improbable it is, that they will escape its condemnation? Do you consider that unless grace prevents, they will, in a few years, be lifting up their eyes in torment and despair? Surely, if you know and consider these things, one universal cry of; God have mercy upon them! will burst from every Christian heart.

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