

The Doomed City

by John MacDuff

The sermon warns of the consequences of neglecting God's privileges and the importance of repentance, using the example of Capernaum and its ultimate fate.

Scripture: Matthew 11:23, Luke 10:13, Luke 12:48, Luke 16:19, Philippians 2:12

Topics: "Repentance", "Divine Judgment"

Description

John MacDuff preaches a powerful sermon on the consequences of neglecting God's grace and rejecting the Savior's love, using the example of Capernaum as a warning. He emphasizes the privileges, neglect, and ultimate doom of Capernaum, drawing parallels to modern times and urging listeners to repent and not squander their spiritual blessings. The sermon highlights the importance of heeding God's warnings, repenting of sins, and fully surrendering to Jesus to avoid a future of regret and judgment.

Transcript

"Ungrateful sinner! on your future rests

A sadder heritage of guilt and shame,

Who with abounding gospel mercies blest

Dare spurn the Savior's grace and scorn His Name;

Forget not, though His patience now endures,

The heathen's hell will be a heaven to yours!"

"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."--Matthew 11:23, 24.

While following, in the preceding chapters, the Savior's footsteps on Gennesaret, with no name or spot, in all the favored region, have we been more familiar than with Capernaum. His ever memorable sojourn within its walls, is now, however, speedily to terminate. Along with other Hebrew Pilgrims, He is about to proceed to the City of solemnities (Jerusalem), in order to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles.

But before He leaves its gates, He must utter in its hearing a solemn warning--a dreadful denunciation, over unrequited love and guilty impenitence. He looks down the vista of ages to that solemn day when cities and their inhabitants shall throng the area of the Great Tribunal, and when He who holds the balances in His hand will deal out, with unerring equity, to each and all, their respective sentences.

It is not often that Jesus--the meek, and gentle, and tender Savior--speaks in accents of stern wrath and upbraiding; we may well believe He never uttered one needlessly harsh word. When we behold Him, therefore, as the Minister of Justice, standing with the flaming sword in His hand, proclaiming "terrible things in righteousness"--"he that has an ear to hear, let him hear!"

We have these three points brought before us for consideration in this solemn address of our Lord--

I. Capernaum's Privileges.

II. Capernaum's Neglect.

III. Capernaum's Doom.

I. Capernaum's PRIVILEGES

"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies?" We reject the interpretation put upon this clause by some of the older writers, that it has reference to the worldly prosperity of the city as the great seaport of Gennesaret; still more, another, that the allusion is to its elevated natural site. It is, undoubtedly, in a spiritual sense Christ speaks. His reference is to Capernaum's exaltation in unprecedented and unparalleled religious privilege.

Of all the cities in Palestine, none was in this respect more exalted (nay, so exalted) as this town of Galilee. Bethlehem was "exalted" as the scene of the Manger, and of the Seraphim who sang the advent-hymn of the Prince of Peace. Nazareth was "exalted" as the home of His youth: imagination loves to watch in this little city, nestling amid its picturesque hills, the unfoldings of that wondrous Humanity--to follow Him as He climbed in mysterious boyhood these sunny slopes, or toiled in the lowly workshop of His reputed father. Jerusalem was "exalted" as the scene of more thrilling and majestic events. It witnessed the awful termination of the drama of love and suffering--the Agony; the Cross; the Grave; the Resurrection.

But if we would select the most instructive chapter in the Great Biography--that which contains the most thorough manifestation of the life of Jesus, we must seek it in Capernaum--we must linger in its streets, or frequent the mountain slopes, which looked down on its busy waters. It is spoken of emphatically, with reference to Jesus, as "His own city," the place where He dwelt. For the three most eventful years of His life He made it His home. Either within or outside its gates, miracle followed miracle in rapid succession. Bodily disease; sickness; blindness; palsy; death itself--fled frightened at the presence of the Lord of life; while the very waves which washed its port had been made a pathway for a new display of Power, and murmured their tribute to His Divinity.

Nor was it the WORKS of Jesus alone which this favored city had witnessed. Hundreds on hundreds would echo the later verdict of the soldiers and officers, "Never man SPOKE like this man." The noblest of all His recorded discourses was uttered with Capernaum in view. The rocks, and ravines, and mountain summits around, had listened to Beatitudes of love and mercy for which the world had strained its listening ear for 4000 years. That noble series of Parables, explanatory of the nature of His kingdom, was spoken

as He was moored in a fishing boat by its beach. If we cannot even now, read these truthful lessons and words of wisdom without profound emotion, what must it have been to have listened to them, in the living tones of that living voice, and to have gazed on the countenance of the Divine Speaker, "fairer than the children of men?"

And even mightier still than word or deed, sermon or miracle, was, (as we have just noted,) the holy LIFE of this adorable Philanthropist. What a matchless combination of power and gentleness--of majesty and humility! How unlike all human greatness--how unlike all human selfishness! a zeal that never flagged--a love that never faltered--a pity and compassion which sheltered the wretched, the worthless, the abandoned, and those "who had no helper." When His public work was done in the city, He was seen betaking Himself, amid falling twilight shadows, to some neighboring "mountain apart to pray;" or if bodily fatigue demanded rest, no sooner was the cry for support heard, than He was seen hurrying back from His solitude and mountain pillow to afford the needed help.

O favored Capernaum! honored for three long years as the abode of "God manifest in the flesh." How surpassing your privileges! What were the boasted glories of earth's proudest capitals, at that moment, in comparison with this town by the solitary lake of Northern Palestine? What was Rome, with her imperial eagles, looking down from her seven hills, exulting in the sovereignty of the world? What was Athens, or Alexandria, with their schools and systems--their sages and philosophers--looking down from their haughty pinnacles of intellectual triumph on the subject world of Mind? What were these in comparison with the honor enjoyed by that city, within whose honored walls dwelt the Prince of the Kings of the earth--"Christ, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God?"

In its streets, or on its hill slopes, or amid the chimes of its waves, words of mighty import were first heard, which were destined yet to be borne where the Eagles of Rome had never penetrated. There a mighty balsam was distilled for the wounds of bleeding humanity, which the doctrines of Aristotle and Plato had failed, and ever should fail, to stanch: No wonder, then, that over this His adopted home, His heart should yearn with deepest emotion. His eye wanders first to the further towns, lining these same shores, and which were not unfamiliar with His voice and presence. As He gazes on them with tearful eye, thus He weaves His plaintive lament: "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." But He has a deeper and sterner plaint reserved for another city--a more solemn and emphatic exclamation: "and you, Capernaum" (I turn now to you, the spot most favored of all, during my earthly pilgrimage), "and you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven!"

Is it a far-fetched comparison, if we see, in the privileges enjoyed by this city of Gennesaret, a reflection of our own? What the region around it proverbially once was among the Hebrews ("a region and shadow of death"), Britain was to the old world; a land of savage barbarism and debasing superstition. But to us, as to them, who once "sat in darkness," light has "sprung up." Cast your eye over the map of the habitable earth, and what the spot, what the nation in its two hemispheres so favored as ours? I speak not of our worldly prosperity--our national glory. I speak not of our enterprise--our science--our arts--our commerce--our institutions. Regarding all these in their place, we have reason for honest pride. But I speak of our spiritual privileges, which may well be prized as a Briton's noblest birthright--the security and conservator of all the rest.

Look to other countries, on which the Sun of heaven smiles more brightly and favorably than on our own, yet cursed and demoralized with horrid rites of impurity and blood--millions bowing to insensate

blocks--yearning souls, feeling the void and worthlessness of their own barren systems, longing for some nobler panacea than superstition can give--ten thousand Ethiopians stretching out their unsupported hands to some better God than their idols of silver and gold.

Look at empires nearer home. The saddest of all sad features in many of the nations of Europe is, that God's own truth is not free--that a poor perishing sinner is not permitted to read with his own eyes that precious Word which was intended to be patent as the air of heaven!

Oh, is it no blessing to turn from this sickening tale of a benighted world and a benighted Christendom, and see our own land, with every fetter struck from the limb of thought and action, shining like a spiritual lighthouse--in the midst of the darkening waves? Is it no blessing that we can tell of peaceful Sabbaths, and holy ordinances, and unbound and unforbidden Bibles?--that free as the streams that leap from our mountain ravines are these precious waters of salvation?--that while myriads of heathens are passing into a dark eternity, or pining unsolaced in the bitterness of broken hearts; we can sit by the bedside of the sick, the forlorn, the bereft, the aged, the dying, and from the leaves of this Holy Book, light up the faded countenance with the smile of a foretasted Heaven?

May not He who uttered these words of profound solemnity in the hearing of Capernaum, well look down on this our favored country, and with solemn and significant emphasis echo the exclamation: "And YOU who are exalted to heaven!"

II. Consider Capernaum's NEGLECT. He "upbraided" this city, along with the others, "because it did not repent."

Now it is worthy of note that there is no special or atrocious sin laid to the charge of this lake-city. During all the period of our Savior's residence there, we read of no personal insult its inhabitants offered Him. Nazareth, the town of His childhood and youth, has covered, in this respect, its otherwise hallowed name and memories with everlasting reproach. The furious assault its citizens made on the guiltless and innocent Savior is stated as the reason for His leaving it and coming to dwell in Capernaum. But in His new home we have the record of no such ignominious persecution--no such outburst of personal animosity. On the contrary, He seems there to have been honored and respected. His influence was great; and the most blinded and obdurate could not shut their eyes to the fact that a Great Prophet had arisen in the midst of them. Representatives from all its diverse ranks and offices did him homage; Publicans from their Custom-house; Fishermen from their nets; Leaders of the Jewish synagogue; Officers in Caesar's ranks and drawing Caesar's pay--while the common people heard him gladly.

But what of all this? While there were some (we may hope many) happy exceptions, with the vast multitude there was continued indifference, cold and cheerless neglect; with many more, daring irreligion, and the indulgence of those unblushing vices which, imported from the Roman capital, had been propagated by an abandoned Court. They heard His words, but they practiced them not. They owned him as a Heaven-sent Teacher, but they refused to regulate their lives by His lofty instructions.

In the neighboring city of Tiberias, that imperial Court of Herod was located. This unhappy sovereign was himself the type of hundreds whom the Redeemer had doubtless now in His eye. Herod vaunted no infidelity. On the contrary, he had been the personal friend of John the Baptist. He admired the great preacher's unworldly spirit--his deep and singular earnestness--the novelty and impressiveness of his themes! He invited him to his palace. He listened to his faithful, soul-stirring words--and yet all the while that palace was the scene of shameless profligacy. Herod--this sermon-lover, this Religionist, who could

hear the holiest of mere men preach the doctrine of Repentance--was reveling in guilty defiance of the laws of God and man. Patiently he heard John so long as he kept on the great general theme--so long as he allowed him to remain undisturbed in his own wickedness. But when he became a 'Nathan' to him--when the faithful, fearless Forerunner hurled the bolt of rebuke at the soul of his imperial master, and dragged to light his secret lusts, he could tolerate him no longer. Herodias is retained, and John is sent to exile.

So it was with many in Capernaum. They could follow Jesus to the heights of the Mount, and listen to His beatitudes. They could stand for hours on the white sands of the lake as He spoke to them from Simon's vessel all the words of the kingdom; but when He urged the necessity of a daily self-denial--a daily bearing of the cross--they were immediately offended. "This is a hard saying," they said, "who can bear it?" "From that hour they walked no more with Him." This was their condemnation that light (the great Light of Life) came to their city, but they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Has Capernaum in this respect no parallel and counterpart in modern times? Alas! alas! Is it not to be feared that now, as then, men are content with having "a name to live," who are spiritually dead. There are thousands who come to our churches, who hear the preacher, who assent to the message, but go back from listening to the tremendous themes of Death, Judgment, and Eternity, to plunge deep as ever into engrossing worldliness and sin. The preacher may be heard--his words may fall like lulling music on the ear, but the gates of the soul are firmly locked and barred against admission--the Baptist may thunder his rebukes, but some Herodias, some heart-sin and life-sin, will, in spite of them, be retained and caressed.

Are there none now reading these words, whom the Savior would begin (as He did with Capernaum) to "upbraid," because they have repented not? When His scrutinizing eye looks down, Sabbath after Sabbath, upon listening audiences throughout our land, all apparently solemn, sincere, outwardly devout, does He not discern, lurking underneath this fair external guise, the signs and symptoms of loathsomeness and decay; like the pure virgin snow covering the charred and blackened ruin, or the emerald sod muffling the volcano. Ah! sermons will not save us--church-going will not save us--orthodoxy in creed and party will not save us. Repent! Repent! is the sharp, shrill call of the Gospel-trumpet. There must be a change of heart--a change of life--a crucifixion of sin--and with full purpose of heart, a cleaving unto the Lord who died for us.

Like Capernaum in our privileges, let us see to it that we be not like Capernaum in our guilt. Better that we had been born among a Pagan-horde--better that we had been kneeling before shapeless idols, votaries of dumb clay, or worshipers of the Great Spirit of the fire or the mountain, than knowing a Savior, and yet rejecting Him--the freeborn citizens of a Christian land, and yet the enslaved possessors of Heathen hearts!

III. We are called to ponder Capernaum's DOOM. "And you, Capernaum, shall be brought down to hell."

That this refers to no mere temporal judgment, is plain from what is immediately added--"It shall be more tolerable," says our Lord, "for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you." Sodom was already destroyed. It was the future judgment of both, therefore, at the great day, to which the reference is made.

No doubt this future and final retribution has had its significant foreshadowing in a temporal overthrow; for nothing in all Palestine (no, not the dilapidated walls of Jerusalem itself) is more striking, than the contrast between Gennesaret as it was, so busy a scene of traffic and life, with what it is now, a spectacle of loneliness and desolation. The very site of the ruins of Capernaum, and its sister towns, is matter of

dispute. Jordan, as he rolls past, hurrying his waters to the Asphalt Lake (the Dead Sea), carries the tidings to its submerged cities, that that once "Sea of Life," has become a "Sea of Death," like itself.

But as we have said, we must seek for the full meaning of our Lord's words, not in the grey moldering heaps which strew the shores of that now silent lake, but in a more terrible scene, when from beneath these crumbling stones, buried thousands shall rise at the last summons! It is a solemn and dreadful picture here brought before us. The Angels of Judgment are commissioned to announce them with their trumpets, and to gather in before the tribunal, not solitary individuals, but congregated masses; City is brought to confront City; Capital to confront Capital!

Capernaum is seen to rise from its shroud of ruins! It is the old earthly home of Jesus that is now conducted to the bar of judgement. Let the Witnesses be summoned! Three solemn years, like three venerable forms, come forth from the ancient past. They testify how its streets had been trodden by the footsteps, its shores had echoed to the voice, its arraigned thousands had gazed on the mighty works of Him, who, once the Savior, is now the Judge!

Nor are there lacking individual witnesses to substantiate this testimony. Hear their evidence. One has to aver: 'I was stretched on a couch of sickness "ready to die." He came, and by a word healed me.'

Another--'The foulest of diseases (leprosy) had, from infancy, tortured my frame, banished me from my fellows. He gave the mandate. Returning health thrilled through my veins, and those that had before fled frightened from my presence, beheld in me also a new trophy of His divinity.'

Another has to tell--'My son was trembling on the verge of the grave--a look and a word restored him.' Another--'My only daughter was hushed in that sleep from which human power can effect no awaking. The King of Terrors had torn her from our side. But the Lord of Life entered our dwelling, rolled back the gates of death, and gave us back our loved and lost!'

Material Nature can even be summoned to add weighty testimony. The mountains whose verdant slopes so often listened to His voice--the midnight solitudes which heard His prayers for the impenitent--the grassy meadows where He fed the hungry and compassionated the fainting multitude--the white sands that bore His footsteps--the very waves that rocked themselves asleep at His omnipotent "peace, be still." There is a tongue in every one of them to attest the privileges of the ungrateful city.

And now appears a stranger and more impressive Witness. It is a witness called from the depths of a tremendous sepulcher. Calcified rocks with their riven fronts have borne for ages the significant epitaph of an unexampled overthrow; temple and tower emerge from these abysmal depths--the hum of a vast City breaks on the ear! It is SODOM, the doomed capital of the Patriarchal age--The "City of the PLAIN" confronts the City of the northern SEA! "Exceedingly wicked sinners against the Lord," what have you to plead?

'Had we enjoyed,' is the reply, 'the privileges of Capernaum, we would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. Had that voice of majesty and love sounded in our streets as it did in theirs, we "would have remained until this day"--the brimstone cloud would have dissolved--the bolts of living fire would have been undischarged--smiling plains and vineyards would have been where for ages sullen death-waters have rolled--we might have lifted up our faces unabashed in this hour of judgment. Lord! Great Judge! to us much was not given--forbid that from us much should be required!'

What does the Righteous Lord say? 'SODOM! Justice demands retribution for your crimes--your guilt was not without its aggravations--you were not left unsupported and unwarned; the voice and the prayers of the Father of the Faithful ascended for you--a Righteous man testified in your midst from day to day against your unlawful deeds--yet you would not listen; the doom of Earth must be confirmed now! City, you were filthy, be filthy still!'

But YOU, Capernaum! the same Justice demands that far different be YOUR doom! The guilt of Sodom was guilt contracted in the thick darkness of the old world--a few broken beams only struggled through the mists of early day!

But YOU, Capernaum! what city of earth so favored? Your hills were the first gilded by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness--your waters were the first to sparkle under His radiance. It was no earthly prophet or messenger that came and tarried within your walls, summoning you to repentance! Oh, mightier than all preceding Witnesses, your JUDGE Himself must now take the place of deposition, and testify against you! I warned you!--I counseled you!--I lifted up my voice in your streets! Never did I break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax!--I sought to bring forth judgment to victory. But my pleadings of love fell powerless on impenitent souls. You knew Your Lord's will, and did not do it! You were exalted to heaven with privileges--be thrust down to hell for the misimprovement of them! 'Truly I say to you, It is more tolerable for the land of Sodom in this the day of judgment than for you!'

It is the same principle which will regulate the procedure in the Final Day with reference to US. The same great law of unerring equity will be rigidly adhered to--"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."

Is there one among us who has trampled on unnumbered privileges--the lessons of early piety--followed by a manhood of daring ungodliness, or with whom solemn providential warnings have been guiltily neglected and scorned? What shall the Great Judge say on that Day of just retribution? 'Guilty one! Your doom admits of no mitigation! There is everything to aggravate and nothing to extenuate. I made for years your soul a very Capernaum. I lingered in it, with My footsteps of mercy plying you with every motive and every argument to induce you to hear My voice, and turn at My reproof. I spoke to you in prosperity--by the full cup; but you drank it unacknowledged. I spoke to you in adversity--by desolate hearts and swept chambers; but you received the chastisement in sullen fretfulness, and rushed only deeper into worldliness and sin. See that Outcast by your side! If the mighty works had been done in his case that were done in yours, it might have been far otherwise with him. If he had had your mother's prayers--your paternal counsels--your pastor's warnings--your solemn afflictions, he might have been clothed before now in the sackcloth of repentance. But no penitential tear stole down your cheek--My grace has been resisted--My spirit grieved--My love mocked and scorned. Truly I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for miserable thousands throughout eternity than for you!'

We are obviously taught by all this, that there are to be gradations in future punishment--aggravations of guilt and degrees of suffering. Of what these are to consist, we cannot tell; doubtless among them will be the gnawing rebukes and accusations of memory and conscience, over abused privileges--the bewailing of opportunities and mercies madly thrown away by us.

In that impressive parable of our blessed Lord, describing the condition and experience of the lost, one of the saddest elements in the woe of Dives is unfolded in the reply of Father Abraham--a reply whose echoes will circulate gloomily through the domains of despair--"Son, REMEMBER!" Capernaum,

remember! you were the honored home of a Savior you guiltily rejected. Sinner, remember! how that Savior stood and knocked day by day, week by week, at the gates of your soul--remember! How you grieved and scorned Him--remember! that parental prayer, that funeral, that sermon, that lifetime of privilege!

Even on earth, how often do we see how memory and conscience together can light up a hell in embryo! Not far indeed from Capernaum, there was an illustration of this in the case of the imperial tyrant, to whom we have previously alluded. Herod had guiltily connived at the murder of the most innocent of men, and most devoted of ministers. The base deed is consummated. But no sooner is it so, than conscience is roused to its work of retributive vengeance; the image of the slaughtered prophet haunts his thoughts by day, and scares him in dreams by night--Herod the king, soon heard about Jesus, because people everywhere were talking about him. Some were saying, "This must be John the Baptist come back to life again. That is why he can do such miracles." Others thought Jesus was the ancient prophet Elijah. Still others thought he was a prophet like the other great prophets of the past. When Herod heard about Jesus, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has come back from the dead!"

It is John reanimated to inflict merited retribution on his old destroyer! the stern preacher has come from Sheol! he has been sent from the spirit-world as a minister of vengeance! Conscience sees the grim spectral shadow flit ominously before him, like the fabled ghosts of the murdered--all his power cannot bribe it--all his courage cannot charm it away!

Yes; this is but a foreshadowing of what will terribly aggravate the sufferings and upbraidings of the lost; some foul deed that murdered (worse than the body) the soul of a fellow-creature, will fasten upon the transgressor like the sting of the scorpion, and give him no rest day nor night. The terrible imagery will track his footsteps, and traverse, with terrifying form, his path.

I was a traitor to my child, will be the harrowing thought of one; he might have been in glory but for me! I laid snares for the innocent, will be the self-reproach of another. I sowed the seeds of vice in virtuous hearts; they are now piteously upbraiding me as the author of all their misery! I was the Pastor of a Flock, is the torturing anguish of a third; but I deceived them with a name to live, I neglected to tell them of their danger, and urge them to accept the great remedy, and the voice of my people's blood is crying out against me! We had that Savior in our offer, will be the wild cry of thousands more, but we rejected His love and spurned His grace.

Ah, it is this last which was the crime of the Capernaum sinner, (misimproved privileges), and we fear no guilt will be more general, no reflections more harrowing, than those arising from its consciousness. Yes; be assured nothing will be half so terrible as to be confronted with the charge of abused responsibilities. If he be without sail and rudder, the castaway on the raft could not be blamed for inability to buffet the storm, reach the haven, and save his owner's cargo; but a heavy responsibility would rest on the pilot, who, with fully equipped vessel, a bright sky above, a favoring breeze, and a safe navigation, permitted her to run aground, or be dashed on the rocks.

Not only, in the case of abused privileges, is the responsibility greater, but the ruin is swifter and surer! The very possession of privileges, if these are unimproved, will only lead to a greater hardness and impenitency of heart. The sun, and dews, and rains of heaven, which warm and moisten, and fructify the living blade, or plant, or tree, accelerate the decay and rottenness of the dead one. As by familiarity with sin, its native odiousness is worn away--the first shudder of tender conscience is followed by a duller

sense of its turpitude, then the swift downward descent to perdition. So by familiarity with the gospel, the urgency and impressiveness of its messages are diminished; just as the Alpine shepherd can, through habit, sleep undisturbed at the base of the roaring cataract, or the soldier can hear without wincing the thunder of the cannon.

God keep us from the sin and danger of being preachers and hearers, and not doers--having the head enlightened and the soul unsaved--our privileges only forging the heavier fetter, and feeding and fanning the hotter flame!

Awake, my Brother, before it is too late, from your sleep of indifference. God calls on all men, everywhere, to repent. Yours may, until now, have been the guilt of Capernaum; yours its heavy responsibilities; but the Savior has not yet stood at the gates of your heart to utter the last malediction; announcing that you are, through impenitence, finally given over to judicial blindness! While Capernaum still enjoyed the Lord's presence, for the vilest sinner within its walls there was mercy! We entreat you, by the great Day of Judgment--that Day in which Sodom and Capernaum and we shall together meet--to remain no longer as you are.

Do not go down to the grave, with your souls unsaved! Jesus is still lingering on your thresholds. It was the wondrous record of three years of miraculous works and cures in the Galilean city--"He healed them ALL;" and He is still the Physician who heals ALL diseases! Soon it will be too late to rush to His feet; He will have bidden an eternal farewell to the souls that have rejected Him, or death may have put his impressive seal on their hopes of pardon. A few more faint "pulses of quivering light," and your earthly sun will have set forever! The past may be a sad one--you cannot recall it--you cannot revoke or cancel it--it has winged its flight before you to meet you at the Judgment. But the future is yours, and God helping you, the dark and cloudy day may yet have its golden sunset! Up, and with the earnestness of men resolve to flee sin and cleave to the Lord, that that dreadful hour may never arrive, in which your own knell shall thus be rung--"If you, even YOU had known in this your day, the things that belong to your peace, but now they are forever hidden from your eyes."

Can I close these solemn thoughts without a word of incentive and encouragement to God's own people? The text tells us that there are to be different degrees of punishment in a state of woe; but there are other passages in abundance, which teach us the cheering corresponding truth, that there are to be different degrees of bliss in a future heaven. One star is to differ from another star in glory. There are to be rulers over five, and rulers over ten cities--those who are to be in the outskirts of glory, and those basking in the sunlight of the Eternal Throne!--Is this no call on us to be up and doing?--not to be content with the circumference, but to seek nearness to the glorious center--not only to have crowns shining as the brightness of the firmament, but to have a tiara of stars in that crown? It is the degree of holiness now that will decide the degree of happiness then--the transactions of time will regulate the awards of eternity.

And as we have seen that memory will increase and aggravate the wretchedness of the lost, so will the same purified ennobled power intensify the bliss of the saved. Ah! with what joy will they re-traverse life, mark every successfully resisted temptation--every triumph over base passion and sordid self--every sacrifice made for the glory of God and the good of man--every affliction they have meekly borne--every cross they have submissively carried--every kindly unostentatious deed, done from motives of love and gratitude to the Savior. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. The Christian life is action; it is not theory--it is not dreamy thought--sickly sentimentalism. The formula of the great Judge's sentence on the last day to the Righteous is (not "well thought," or "well purposed," but)--"well DONE;" to the

Wicked--"Inasmuch as you DID it not."

Fellow sinners, washed by the same blood--fellow pilgrims, traveling to the same eternity--fellow prisoners, who are so soon to stand at the same Great Judgement--are we ready to meet the summons which may sooner than we think startle us in the midst of our neglected privileges?--"Go! Give an account of your stewardship!"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-macduff/the-doomed-city/>

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