

**JUDGMENTS AND NO REPENTANCE—REPENTANCE
AND NO SALVATION**
NO. 2054

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*“They repented not to give Him glory.”
Revelation 16:9.*

IN reading this chapter, dear Friends—this very terrible chapter—you must have been struck, I think, with the forces of God. How great are the armies of the Lord of Hosts! As the mighty Jehovah smote Pharaoh with overwhelming plagues, so does the Lord in this awful portion of the Apocalypse deal with the ungodly. Seven angels stood forth, each one with his vial full of the wrath of God, to be poured out upon the earth. Seven executioners were needed and seven were present—a perfect number for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

Behold, the angels of God are innumerable! “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, even in His humiliation, said, “Think you that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?” The shining ones march in great armies and God accomplishes many of His purposes by them, without our observing it. Are not their great doings all written in the book of the wars of the Lord, which as yet no man has read? If there were no other powers at His disposal, Jehovah, as the Lord of all angels, would still be fitly called the Lord of Hosts.

What power resides in these mysterious beings! With what energy does the Lord clothe them! They are made to fly swiftly on the errands of His wisdom. “He makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.” Here we find one of these angels pouring his bowl upon the earth and causing a noisome and grievous sore upon men. Another empties his vial on the sea and it becomes as the blood of a dead man. A third angel pours out his bowl upon the rivers and the fountains of waters are stained as with blood.

Here one ventures to pour his bowl upon the golden sun—that orb which is of this great world both eye and soul—and the sun, as though its flame were re-fed with the most brilliant oil, burns with greater fury than ever. And we read, “Men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues.” What power, then, has God to accomplish His purposes when a single angel can do as much as this—and the Lord has myriads of them waiting to do His bidding?

Note yet again, how all men are within the reach of the Divine judgments. They proudly fancy that they can escape from God. Many a little Pharaoh says, in the hardness of his heart, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?” Boastful worldlings dream that they, at any rate, are beyond punishment. They reason their careful forethought will secure them against the calamities which others bring upon themselves. They are ungodly but still they take good care of themselves and keep clear of vice and extravagant wastefulness.

They are far too prudent to involve themselves in the perils of the gamester or the profligate. They prefer safer sins and so they fancy that they are out of harm’s reach—though they do not acknowledge God. Poverty cannot reach them, for they have filled their houses with hidden treasure. Sickness cannot hurt them, for they have a vigorous constitution. They defy dangers which have thrown down others. They boast themselves in the glory of their strength and in the hardness of their hearts. These are the men who sit aloft, beyond the reach of the arrows of Jehovah.

What folly! No man is at any moment beyond the reach of vengeance. The Lord has but to remember the callous and secure, and immediately the joints of their loins shall be loosed and fearfulness shall take hold upon them—their proud hearts can fail them in a moment, even though no outward sorrow afflict them. In Providence the detectives of God never fail to find out the guilty. This angel, you perceive, poured his vial on the sun and by way of the sun, with his scorching heat, the proudest sons of men were visited. The noble and the great, the rich and the healthy, could not bear the increased solar heat—for the day burned as an oven.

We know not by how many doors God can come at the guilty, but come at them He will when once His arm is bared for war. When He says, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries,” who shall withstand Him? This land is exceedingly haughty and some of its inhabitants talk as if they were demigods. Our insular pride makes us fancy that we shall prosper, come what may. But it is not so—we are great debtors to Divine favor and if we cease to acknowledge the Lord’s hand in our prosperity He may teach us humility by sharp methods. God’s right hand can find out His adversaries.

And He will punish sin in Britain as surely as He punished sin in Rome, or in Nineveh. If Jerusalem did not escape, shall London last forever? No country, no city, and no man, however rich, or strong, or great, can climb beyond the reach of the Divine hand. In the height or in the depth, God is equally present in power—in this state or in the next—He is equally able to dispense justice. No ivory throne can lift a monarch above Jehovah’s rod. No pillar of fame can place a mortal beyond His sword. Oh that all of you would have the sense to see this! And as you cannot fly from God, fly *to* Him. As you cannot resist the power of His *justice*, flee to the power of His *mercy*.

When He stretches out His arms and invites you to come, turn not your backs. Come, like the prodigal, saying, “Father, I have sinned,” and He will graciously receive you. This terrible chapter takes away all hope from men as to their escaping from God when once He girds Himself with vengeance and sits down upon His Throne of Justice, to execute punishment. Then shall His right hand find out His enemies and overturn them with swift destruction.

One Truth of God, however, comes out of this passage more plainly than any other, to my mind. And that is, that judgments, even the most terrible of them, do not, in themselves, produce a satisfactory repentance in the minds of men. Let me read you two or three verses and you will see how clearly this is the case. The punishment drove men into still more furious rebellion. In none did it subdue and sanctify them. “And men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God, which has power over these plagues: and they repented not to give Him glory.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast. And his kingdom was full of darkness. And they gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores and repented not of their deeds.” The twenty-first verse is to the same effect—“And there fell upon men a great hail out of Heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.” The terrors of the Lord produced *blasphemy* but they *did not produce repentance*.

I. In considering this subject, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I would begin by saying that JUDGMENTS, APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY PRODUCE A KIND OF REPENTANCE. It is repentance after a fashion but it is not of that holy, healthy, heavenly sort which is worked in the renewed heart by the Holy Spirit.

Judgment may produce a carnal repentance—a repentance that is of the flesh and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed—he becomes another man but not a new man. The same sin rules in him but it is called by another name and wears another coat. The stone is carved into a more sightly shape but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image but it is not transformed into gold.

This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree? This is the kind of repentance which the terrors of the Lord will work in men’s minds unless they are altogether hardened and under the special dominion of the devil. Travelers in great storms will tremble and, trembling, will confess their guilt and begin to pray. But when the tempest is over, their trembling, their confession and their prayers are also, all over. They shake because of their sins but they are not shaken *out* of their sins.

Mariners far out at sea, when the laboring boat threatens to go down to the bottom, will repent. But such repentance is only a few qualms of conscience because they are in dread of death and judgment and Hell. So men that lie upon a bed of sickness—when their bones ache and their hearts melt and the grave yawns beneath their couch—will often repent. And yet, if they could be raised up, they would return to their sins as the dog returns to his vomit. This is wretched work. This repentance gives no glory to God and leads to no saving and lasting deliverance from sin.

It is fallen nature washed and brushed and rouged—but allowed to remain fallen nature, still. The heart is not renewed, the life is not regenerated, the mind is not changed. And, therefore, little is done that is worth doing. The leopard is caged but there are the spots. The Ethiopian is scrubbed but his skin is as black as ever. This repentance is the outcome

of nature under terror and not the fruit of Divine Grace. The thunders and the storms and the hail and the noisome sores can produce in men nothing more than a fleshly repentance. And flesh repenting is still flesh and tends to corruption.

And hence, again, it is but a transient repentance. They repent but for a season. While they see the immediate evil of their sin in its results they cry out as if they really hated sin. But their hatred is only a little tiff, which lasts for a while and then they make friends with their sins, as Pilate made friends with Herod. Their goodness is as the morning cloud. And as the early dew it passes away. Even Ahab once repented. But, oh, what a poor and short-lived repentance it was! We find men turning away from their sin for a time but then going back to it with a greater gusto, as men may abstain from food for some hours in order to increase their appetite for the banquet which is being prepared.

Beware of that repentance which is not better than the vomit of a dog—how can it be acceptable with God? Beware of that repentance which comes of *yourself*—for it comes of the *flesh*. And that which is born of the flesh is flesh and not better. That which is of the flesh is a mere flash—no sooner has it come than it is gone. “All flesh is grass” and the flower of it soon withers away. When the Spirit of the Lord blows upon the fairest flower of our poor nature it immediately withers up—how could it be otherwise with grass?

It is well that it should be withered up by the Spirit of God. For, left to itself, it will wither in a worse style and our destruction will be sure. “The Word of the Lord abides forever,” but all the comeliness of man passes away. Beware, then, of a repentance which springs alone from terror—comes up in a night and withers in a night—appears and promises but promises only to delude.

Such a repentance is superficial. It only affects the surface of the man. It does not go to the heart, it is hardly more than skin deep. How often have we been greatly grieved when we have seen persons in poverty, or in sickness, or in some great fright, or under some other form of excitement who have professed repentance and avowed it very loudly, too? But yet you could see that the repentance did not go deep enough to make them give up their sin! Herod was exceedingly sorry that he had made an oath which bound him to give John’s head in a platter to the daughter of Herodias—but he was not so sorry as to break loose from his wicked pledge. No. He committed the murder—though he said he was exceedingly sorry for it.

How many there are that are hand and glove with Satan yet speak against him, so as to keep up a fair show before others! They take the sweetness and the profit of an evil trade and yet condemn the trade itself. They derive rent from an ill house but, of course, they are grieved that people should use their property for such a purpose! Such repentance as that is, to a large extent, sheer hypocrisy. It gives to men a kind of rest of conscience, which rest of conscience is injurious to them, since it lulls them to sleep and enables them to wake and return to their sin as if nothing had happened.

That repentance which is worth having turns a man inside out and purges the innermost part of the soul—killing the *love* of sin so that even if sin could be made profitable and sweet to the man—he could not abide it. If sin were buttered and sugared on both sides the true penitent would not have it. For he has found that there is a deadly poison in its sweetness and therefore he loathes it and leaves it. The really repentant one hates sin as sin and turns from it with purpose of heart. Beware of a superficial repentance, for the Lord abhors it. God is not mocked. He sees the loathsomeness of the ulcer through the film which seeks to hide it.

Once again—the awful fear of God may produce a despairing repentance. This is deep enough but then it lacks the element of bringing glory to God. It has in it no trace of submission, no touch of faith, no breath of love. There is nothing evangelical about it—it is legal all through—and therefore, worthless for salvation. It is a kind of anticipation of the endless judgment and the wrath to come. But it is not a deliverance from there. Take Judas as an example. “I have sinned,” says he. He flings down the accursed silver for which he had sold his Master and his own soul but he goes out to hang himself.

What an awful thing it is when the Law of God and the terrors of God work upon the conscience and arouse all a man’s fears and yet he will not fly to Christ! The man is so overcome with horror at the prospect of the world to come that, like a fool, he rushes upon his fate, even as the moth dashes into the flame of the candle. To escape from death, he flies to death. To escape from the wrath of God he puts an end to his last hope of mercy and rushes into the presence of an angry God. This is a dreadful repentance, from which I pray God to save you. It works death even in this life and it works the second death in the world to come.

If any of you are under the power of despair at this moment, I pray you, do not rest in it. For it is no more a place to rest in than Hell itself. The satisfaction of despair, grim and dreadful thing as it is, has a sort of fascination for some minds and they begin to be at peace in the midnight of hopelessness. They say there is no hope and therefore they may as well sin up to the full and get some sort of enjoyment out of their rebellion. Under this mad impulse they go from bad to worse and sin more than ever. O my Hearer, may God save you from this and bring you to be touched with a sense of the love and of the Grace of God, wherein there is hope, lest you repent hopelessly and unbelievingly and perish in your repentance!

II. So you see, my Brethren, judgments may produce a certain likeness of repentance—but then, secondly, **THEY DO NOT AND THEY CANNOT OF THEMSELVES PRODUCE A REPENTANCE SUCH AS GIVES GOD GLORY.** “They repented not to give Him glory.”

Now, not giving God glory is a very important omission and one which corrupts the whole matter. I would dwell upon it for a minute or two, that you may see how great is the failure. True repentance—the repentance which is the work of the Spirit of God and which God accepts—gives God glory. Here are scales and balances for you wherewith you may weigh your repentance before God. Do so with great care and jealousy. True repentance gives God glory. And it glorifies God in many ways, of which I have not time to tell you in full.

But I can tell you enough to help you in self-examination. Is yours true repentance or not? That is the question. I believe that true repentance has as pure and sincere a worship in it as the anthems of the glorified above. It is a form of adoration as suitable to sinners as the eternal hallelujahs are suitable for perfect beings.

First, it reverences and adores God’s omniscience. It is a confession of the fact of God’s knowledge and the truthfulness of His statements. The man says, “O Lord, I am what Your Word says I am. I am a sinner through and through. And I know while I confess my sin that You know more about my sin than I do. I lay bare my soul but it never was possible for me to hide it from Your inspection. You have seen my thoughts and the secret intents of my heart. Before You have I sinned. In Your sight have I done evil. You know me altogether and I adore Your omniscience.”

Every true penitent is conscious of the Divine eye resting upon him. And he, in lowly manner, acknowledges the piercing and discerning power of that eye. The real penitent asks that the Lord would reveal to him more and more of his true condition—that he may not cloak his sin, nor deceive himself in any way—but may be honest and upright before God. Such repentance gives glory to the omniscience of God.

Next, the truly penitent gives glory to the righteousness of God in His Law. The man that really hates sin says, “Lord, I do not quarrel with Your Law. Your Law is holy and just and good—the fault is with me, for I am carnal, sold under sin. No Law could be more exactly right and just than Your Law is and in having transgressed against it I am deeply guilty and I acknowledge my folly and crime. Whatever becomes of me, I dare not impugn the Law which condemns me. I adore its infinite majesty and purity.” Impenitence rails at the Law as too severe, speaks of transgression as a trifle and of future punishment as cruelty. But the truly repentant soul admires the Law and champions it even against *himself!* Do you know all this in your own heart?

Next, the sincerely penitent also adores and glorifies the justice of God in His punishment of transgression. I know that when I was under a sense of sin I felt that if God did not punish me He ought to do so. I could not see how God could be the Judge of all the earth if He did not visit my transgressions with infinite wrath. I had no quarrel with the most stern Word either of the Old or of the New Testament. I was bound under my sense of guilt to bare my back to its scourges and to lay my neck upon its block. I said in so many words—“And if my soul were sent to Hell, Your righteous Law approves it well.”

This is real penitence—when the man gives glory to the justice of God—even though it condemns him. O my Hearer, do you thus repent? Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of Hell? If not, your *repentance* needs to be repented of.

And next, true repentance glorifies the sovereignty of God in His mercy. The man who is deeply conscious of his guilt, says, “Lord, I have no claim on You. I have no rights but the right to be punished. I have forfeited all claim to favor and reward. If You will freely forgive me, if You can justly do so, I will forever adore You for so doing. But I cannot say that I have any right thereto. If You will pardon me, it must be Your own act and deed, performed on grounds within

Yourself. I know that You have a sovereign right, as King of kings, to execute the sentence of the Law, or to condone my offense, if you can do it in consistency with justice. I must leave myself absolutely in Your hands.”

That man truly, deeply, sincerely, repents who perceives that there is justice in the declaration of God, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” How some people bite their lips when they hear this sentence! And yet they are the very voice of Jehovah, the God whom I adore. He claims to be absolute in the realm of Grace, doing as He pleases with His own. Let Him do as He wills, for His will is holy love. We can trust absolute authority with Him who is the infinitely good and just. In the absolute sovereignty of God there is hope for the most guilty of men. We do not fully repent of sin until we feel that it is so and confess that the Lord has a right to do as He pleases in this matter, whether He justly destroys us or graciously saves us.

Further, I believe that the man has repented to the glory of God when he spies out that there is a way by which God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly—when he sees the Lord Jesus Christ, the adorable Son of God coming in our human nature and becoming the Substitute for sinners and the Sacrifice for sin. That is true repentance which washes the Redeemer’s feet with her tears and wipes them with the hairs of her head. Those dear feet had not been pierced when the woman thus washed them—but they have been pierced now. Let us wash the nail-prints with the tears of our repentance at this hour!

Do you rejoice in Jesus crucified? Do you love Christ? Do you trust Him? Do you leap for joy at the very thought that God has set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin? This is repentance after a godly sort. This is repentance that needs not to be repented of. Repentance makes a rainbow with her tears of grief for sin and her glances of hope at the love of Christ and His great finished work. Repentance stands at the Cross and sees sin forgiven and then repents more than she ever did when she could not spy out forgiveness. She says of her sins—

*“I know they are forgiven,
But now their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on You.”*

Sin in the anguish of conviction does not so effectually break a heart as sin forgiven. A sense of blood-bought pardon soon dissolves a heart of stone. Hannibal, it is said, dissolved the rocks of the Alps with vinegar. But Christ dissolves our hearts with love. He tells us, “I have blotted out your sins. I bore on the Tree the ransom for you. I have poured out My heart’s blood that you might live.” And then it is that we hate sin with a perfect hatred and are full of mourning because we pierced the Lord. Because evil is so hateful to the heart of Jesus we loathe it intensely. This is the repentance which glorifies God. The Lord grant such repentance to every one of us!

Mark you, it glorifies God in one other way—by setting the sinner ever afterwards craving after holiness. “The burnt child dreads the fire.” And the sinner dreads sin when he has been delivered from the flame of it by the Lord Jesus. Because Jesus suffered so bitterly, he feels that he himself suffered and so feels as much dread of sin as if he had himself been made to die through it. The man who knows that his sins have been forgiven will never be satisfied with any degree of sanctification short of being made like unto Him who took his sin away. “He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him,” and to this result we press forward.

While that passage relates mainly to our justification, yet the Lord Jesus Christ has also an eye to our sanctification. He has redeemed us that we may be a people zealous for good works and may in all things serve Him who has redeemed us—not with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with His own precious blood. Perfect holiness is our aspiration. Oh that it were our attainment! But the very aspiration gives glory to the thrice holy God whom we desire to imitate.

Now, beloved Friends, the judgments of God in and of themselves can never work evangelical repentance in a single human heart—

*“Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
It is a sense of blood-bought pardon
That dissolves the heart of stone.”*

You see, then, how a gracious repentance glorifies God—do you know anything of such a repentance? Answer, I pray you, as before the Lord, whom no man can deceive.

III. But now, thirdly, I go a step further—THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD APART FROM DIVINE GRACE, MAY, THROUGH OUR HARDNESS OF HEART, INVOLVE US IN GREATER SIN.

Listen to me, any of you that have been much tried and afflicted and yet have never come to Jesus. I tell you, if God has chastened you very much until He is saying tonight, “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?” then all this chastening which you have despised involves you in deeper sin—because you now sin with a clearer knowledge of what sin really is.

A young man came to London and he fell into vice. He has had to suffer very grievously for it and if he has not heartily repented—if he goes back again to his folly—there will be sevenfold damnation about his evil way in the future. Let him remember this. He cannot sin cheaply now. He knows what he is doing and his offense will be distinctly willful and therefore rankly offensive. You scarcely knew that it was fire at first but you know now—if you go and put your finger into the fire again you deserve to be burned.

A man that has suffered Divine judgment and yet goes back to sin increases his guilt because there is the element of defiance in his obstinacy. He has come to be like Pharaoh who stoutly resisted Jehovah and His Commands. Let the Lord send His plagues—Pharaoh will brazen it out with Him. O dear Friend, I hope that you have not yet reached such a fearful state of mind. I hope you are not bent on war with the Almighty! I trust you will not dash upon the bosses of His shield. Do not say, “Sickness may follow sickness but I shall not yield. Loss may follow loss but I will not turn from my ways. I am of too tough metal to care for such things.”

If so, you have deliberately thrown down the glove of battle to the Lord of all the earth. Think of the conflict—do no more. Shall the string contend with the fire? Yet such is your ignorant pride in thus defying God. This must be the case when judgments do not bring repentance for they introduce the element of defiance into the man’s impenitent perseverance in evil and so make him doubly guilty.

Moreover, to many lives judgments also introduce the element of falsehood. The man vowed that if he recovered from sickness he would fear God. He was sick and a saint he would be. But when he got well, ah, how much of a saint was he? You know the old Proverb. I need not quote it further. Yes, many have lied unto God. Hear it. They have not lied unto men but lied unto God in this matter till now their life is a continued provoking of God by broken promises and disregarded covenants. Ah me, this blackens a life. What? Has your whole life become an elaborate lie? Are you every moment acting falsely? Are you every hour violating vows and promises made to your God? O Man, what will become of you when the God of Ananias and Sapphira comes to deal with you?

I do fear that there are some whose conduct has in it the element of deliberate hatred of God. For these have had time now to see which way evil goes and yet they follow it. They love sin as sin. They have been losers by their misconduct and yet they pursue it. We have often seen persons reduced to rags and beggary by their folly and vice and we have helped them to begin life again. But in a few days they have been in the same destitution through the same drunkenness, or vice, or idleness which brought them to the dogs before. They seem incorrigible, obstinately set on their iniquities. And all that can be done for them by the scourges of God’s hand does not affect them in the least for the better.

In this there is an aversion to goodness, a love of evil and a hatred of God. “They say unto God, Depart from us. For we desire not the knowledge of Your ways.” This introduces the element of presumption, of deliberation, of resolve. And when men sin so, there is a talent of lead in the measure of their iniquity and it weighs exceeding heavily. Sins of impetuous passion and of wild juvenile haste are bad enough. But there is not in them the element of intense wickedness which is evidently present in the deliberate pursuit of sin in the teeth of suffering, or in the continuance in evil when its results are daily felt.

On such evenings as these it is strange what sorts of people make up the congregation at the Tabernacle. I may be speaking tonight—I do not doubt I am—to some that, year after year, against a mother’s tears and the importunities of friends and the advice of those who have wished them well—have still kept on and on in a sinful course which they themselves condemn. Knowing better, they persist in wrong. Knowing what the end will be, they are madly set upon their own ruin. O Sirs, if you choose your own delusions, if you will ride steeplechase to Hell over hedge and ditch, if you will be damned—who is to stand in your way and what shall be said by way of pity for you?

O God, have mercy upon such! Many in this city are breaking a father’s heart and bringing a mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. After all they have endured they still cling to their filthy idols and go after their impure lusts. And they will do so until God shall end their days in His wrath and summon them to His bar. My heart breaks at the

thought of some of you! Will you never repent and give God glory? Will you pursue your follies even into the unquenchable fires? Now this is a dreadful thing—that the judgments of God should, through the wickedness of men—even lead them to still greater sin.

IV. Therefore, in the last place—and with this I finish—THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE TO BE VIEWED WITH GREAT DISCRETION. He who studies them must do it with solemn care.

Judgments tend to good. Do not forget that. They ought to tend to good to you who are exercised by them. How many are aroused to think of better things by sickness in their own persons, or sudden death in others! National judgments are frequently a ministry of Divine Grace. The first year in which I came to London I was greatly struck with the access that one had at all hours of day and night to people's houses, into which no ministers of Christ had never been welcomed before. I remember, at two o'clock one Monday morning, I was in a house, now pulled down, close to London Bridge, to see a man who had spent the Sunday at Brighton and had come home to die with the cholera.

Yes, they sent for me at the dead of night often, then. And rich and poor—it mattered not, if they found someone willing to come and visit them—were eager for you to read and pray with them. Death was all around us, making havoc in these streets. Thus did cholera arouse our neighbors that they flocked to hear the Word out of very fear, but they are not so eager for a visit now. Thus, much benefit may there be in the plagues which are shot from the quiver of Providence.

And judgments do impress some men. Many will come to hear a sermon just after a dear baby has died, or a brother, or father has been taken away. Death whips the careless into thought. Then there is an impression. So far so good, if God makes use of it by His Spirit. Judgments may be black horses upon which Christ rides triumphantly to the doors of men's minds. Some, no doubt, are sweetly subdued by judgments when these are qualified with Grace. The Grace of God working with their afflictions, they bow themselves beneath the chastening hand. And when they do this, it is good for them that they are afflicted. God has sent the black dog to fetch the wandering sheep into the fold and it runs to the shepherd through fear of the dog. Thus, judgments may do great good by humbling, softening and bringing down. O Lord, use them to this end among the afflicted ones around us!

But still, let it be remembered that these things will not work good of *themselves*. I want you to remember this, because I have known people say, "Well, if I were afflicted I might be converted. If I lay sick I might be saved." Oh, do not think so! Sickness and sorrow of themselves are no helps to salvation. Pain and poverty are not Evangelists. Disease and despair are not Apostles. Look at the lost in Hell. Suffering has effected no good in them. He that was filthy here is filthy there. He that was unjust in this life is unjust in the life to come. There is nothing in pain and suffering that, by their own natural operation, will tend to purification.

Place no hope in *that* direction. If there were a "purgatory" of years of pain, it would be only purgative in name, for suffering cannot cleanse from sin. Think of the many who are every day suffering as the result of their sinful conduct. And yet the more they suffer the more they sin. We know many such. You need not take your walks far abroad before you will find men plunged in poverty, whose poverty is traceable distinctly to their own fault. And in that fault they still continue and even grow worse and worse for all they suffer.

So it is with men that lie dying. You must not suppose that their pain is any help to them towards repentance. Poor souls, their anguish drives good thoughts out of their minds. Deathbed repentances are hard to estimate—we must leave them with God. But it is a sorrowful fact that those which seemed to be deathbed repentances have seldom turned out to be worth anything when the men have recovered. In fact, I do not remember a case in which the person who recovered has been at all what he said he would be when he thought that he was on the borders of the grave. So you see, suffering is no help to repentance and it may be a hindrance.

Now, what I have to say to you is this—oh, that God would lead you to repent now—before any of His judgments fall upon you! Why should we not repent at once? Surely we ought to repent of doing wrong when we perceive that we are wronging so good a God. He has not cut you down—He has not taken away your wife—is this a reason for being hard-hearted? It ought to be the other way. He has spared that fair-haired child of yours. He has not allowed your business to be ruined by your neglect. He has helped you although you have been hurting yourself. Well, then, turn to Him.

Drawn by His love, turn to Him. Say in your heart, "I cannot offend any more. I cannot sin against so good, so kind a God as this." Permit me also to say to you how much nobler and sweeter a thing it is to be drawn than to be driven.

How much better to come cheerfully and willingly, led by motives of love to God, than to be like the bullock that is forced to bear the yoke, or the “horse, or the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.” Must you be beaten to Christ? How much more honorable to turn to God in the cheerful bright days that are now yours. Oh, that I could persuade you! If there is any right principle in you, you will yield and glorify God by hearty repentance.

And then, again—remember you can repent now so much more clearly than in the hour of sickness. God helping you, this is a very good hour for repenting. I find that when I am in great pain, I cannot work out a case, I say to people, “Oh, don’t come to me with your questions. There, go and do whatever you like. I shall be sure to say the wrong thing—my judgment is not clear—I am in too much pain.” How will you acceptably repent when you can hardly keep from crying out with agony? How will you rightly repent when the head is aching, when the heart is palpitating, when you are gasping for breath, when the death-sweat beads your brow? Oh, that you would think of these things now, while your intellect is clear and your body is not racked and tortured! God help you to do so!

And do you not see how much more likely it is to be *genuine* repentance—if it is rendered freely? You are not frightened now, and are more likely to be your honest self. You are not under terror now, and therefore you are not so likely to play the hypocrite. Tonight you have come into this place in good health. Happy and cheerful—and God has made everything bright about you. What can I better commend to you than immediately to seek the Lord? Does not wisdom, herself, speak and cry aloud to you now? Forsake sin and turn with purpose of heart to Jesus Christ the Savior, whose Spirit is even now working with you while these words are being spoken.

Yield to the sacred pressure of the Spirit of God. That which now inclines you to relent is the good Spirit of love and mercy. Bow yourself before it, as the wheat ripened for the sickle bows before the wind. Give glory to God by yielding to the movements of His Spirit. Cry out, I pray, “Lord, I believe. Help You mine unbelief. I would quit my sin. Help me to quit it now for Jesus’ sake and to give You glory.” Amen.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307