

SHAME LEADING TO SALVATION NO. 2491

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O LORD!”
Psalm 83:16.*

THIS is a very terrible Psalm. It contains some prayers against the enemies of God and of His people that crash with the thunder of indignation. You know that we are bid to love our enemies, but we are never commanded to love *God's* enemies. We may not hate any men as men, but as they are opposed to God, to truth, to righteousness, to purity, we may and we must, if we are, ourselves, right-minded, feel a burning indignation against them! Did you ever read the story of “the middle passage” in the days of the African slave trade, when the Negroes died by hundreds, or were flung into the sea to lighten the ship? Did you ever read of those horrors without praying, “O God, let the thunderbolts of Your wrath fall on the men who can perpetrate such enormities”? When you heard the story of the Bulgarian atrocities, did you not feel that you must, as it were, pluck God's sleeve and say to Him, “Why does Your justice linger? Let the monsters of iniquity be dealt with by You, O Lord, as they deserve to be”?

Such is the spirit of this Psalm. But I like best this particular verse in it because while it breathes righteous indignation against the wicked, it has mixed with it the tender spirit of love. “Fill their faces with shame,” prays the Psalmist, “but overrule Your severity for their everlasting good, ‘that they may seek Your name, O Lord.’” The worst fate that I wish to any Hearer of mine who is without God and without hope in the world, is that this prayer may be prayed by honest and loving hearts for him and for others like he—“Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek Your name, O Lord.”

I. To begin with, let me remind you that UNGODLY MEN HAVE GOOD CAUSE TO BE ASHAMED.

Let us talk a little, first, of *their wrong to their Maker*. If I might take each one of you by the hand, I should say to you, “Friend, you believe in the existence of God, your Maker, do you not? Well, then, have you treated Him rightly? If you have lived in the world 20 years, or perhaps even 40 or 50 years, and yet you have never served Him, do you think that is quite just to Him? If He made you and has fed you and kept you in being all these years, has He not a right to expect some service from you? I might go further and ask, has He not a right to expect your love? Does He ask more than He should ask when He says, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might’? Yet you have lived these many years and scarcely *thought* of Him! Certainly you have not spoken to Him, you have never confessed your faults to Him, or sought His forgiveness. To all intents and purposes, you have lived as if there were no God at all! Yet, in your earthly affairs you are a very honest man, and you pay everybody else his due—why do you, then, rob your God of what is justly His? There is not a man in the world who could say truly of you that you had dealt dishonorably with him. You pride yourself upon your uprightness and integrity! But must God, alone, then, be made to suffer through your injustice? Out of all beings, must He, alone, who made all other beings, be the only one to be neglected? He is first of all—do you put Him last? He is best of all—do you treat Him worst? If so, I think that such conduct as this is a thing to be ashamed of and I pray that you may be heartily ashamed of it.”

Let me quit that line of thought and remind you, next, that there are many ungodly men, and I suppose some here present, who ought to be ashamed because they are acting *in opposition to light and knowledge, contrary to their conscience and against their better judgments*. There are many unconverted men who can never look back upon any day of their lives without having to accuse themselves of wrong. And although they are not Christians, they would scarcely attempt to justify their position. When they act wrongly, there is a voice within them which tells them that they are doing

wrong. They are not blind—they could see if they chose to see. They are not deaf, except that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear. It is a horrible thing for a man to be always holding down his conscience, like a policeman holding down a mad dog. It is a terrible thing for a man to have to be at war with himself in order to destroy himself—his better self resisting and struggling, as it were, after salvation—but his worse self thrusting back the higher part of his being, sliding his conscience and drowning the cries of any approach to bitterness that may be within him. God forbid that men should act thus and sin against light and knowledge! I venture very quietly, but very solemnly, to tell any who are doing so that they ought to be ashamed of such conduct. They ought to blush at the very thought of acting thus against such light as they have and against the convictions of their own conscience.

There are also some of my Hearers—I speak very positively upon this point—who ought to be ashamed because of *their postponements of what they know to be right*. They have, again and again, put off the observance of duties which they know and admit to be incumbent upon them. “I ought to repent of sin,” says one. And then he adds, “and I will, one of these days.” “I ought to be a believer in Christ”—he admits that—“and I shall be, I hope, before I die.” Oh, how fairly you talk, Mr. Procrastinator! You know what ought to be done at once, but you leave it all for the future. Do you not know that every time a man neglects a duty, he commits a sin? That which you admit is your duty, causes you, every moment it is delayed, to commit sin by the delay! And by delay, obedience becomes more difficult and you, yourself, become continually more likely to commit yet greater sin! I think that a man who says, “I ought to believe in Christ, I ought to repent of sin, I ought to love God,” and yet says, “Well, I will do so at a more convenient season,” ought to be ashamed of himself for talking and acting in such a wicked fashion! I pray God that he may be.

I shall come more pointedly home to some when I say that they ought to be ashamed because of *their violation of vows which they have made*. You were very ill, a little while ago, and you said, “O God, if You will but spare my life, and restore me to health and strength, I will rise from this bed to be a better man!” God did raise you up, but you are not a better man. You were seriously injured in an accident and likely to die—and in your distress you prayed, “O God, if You will prolong my unworthy life, I will turn over a new leaf. I will be a very different man in the future!” Well, you *are* a different man, for you are worse than you used to be before the accident! That is all the change that has been worked in you. God keeps a register of the vows that are so lightly broken here below, but so well remembered up in Heaven, and the day will come when they shall be brought out to the condemnation of those who made them and then failed to keep them! If you are determined to be a liar, lie not to God! If you are resolved to make promises, only to break them, at least trifle not with Him in whose hands your life is, and whose are all your ways. He who must play the fool, had better do it with some fellow fool, and not parade his folly before “Him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH.” Think, then, dear Friends, of vows violated and blush because of them!

Moreover, it seems to me—and I shall leave it to your judgment to consider and approve what I say—that every man ought to be ashamed of not loving the Lord Jesus Christ and *not trusting such a Savior as the Lord Jesus Christ is*. God in human flesh, bleeding, dying, bearing the penalty of human sin and then presenting Himself freely as our Sacrifice and saying that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life! Do you push Him away from you? Will you trample on His blood and count it an unholy thing? Will you despise His Cross? It sometimes seems to me that blasphemy and adultery and murder—tremendous evils though these are—scarcely reach the height of guilt that comes through *refusing the great love of Christ*—thrusting Him aside whom God took from His bosom and gave up to die that men might live through Him! If you must spite anybody, spite anybody but the Christ of God! If you mean to refuse a friend, refuse any friend but the bleeding Savior who spared not His very life, but poured out the floods from His heart that He might save the guilty!

So, you see, dear Friends, that he who loves not Christ, and trusts not Christ, has good cause to be ashamed.

I will not say any more upon this first point, except just one thing and that is, *a man ought to be ashamed who will not even think of these things*. There are great numbers of our fellow citizens in London and our fellow creatures all the world over who have resolved not to *think* about religion at all. There stands the House of God, but on that same street there is hardly one person who ever enters it. There is a Bible in almost every house, but many, nowadays, will not read it, or try to understand it. I should have thought that common and idle curiosity alone might have made men anxious to understand the Christian religion, the way of salvation by a crucified Savior. I should have fancied that they would have strayed in to see what our worship was like. If it had been the worship of Mumbo Jumbo, they would have wanted to see

that, but when it is the worship of the Lord God Almighty and of His Son, Jesus Christ, the multitudes seem to be utterly indifferent to it! From the Cross I hear my dying Master cry, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like My sorrow.” Even the voice of His gaping wounds and the voice of His bloody sweat, and the voice of His broken heart seem to fall upon hearts that will not listen and upon ears that are as deaf as stones!

Many who come to hear the Gospel go their way to their farms and to their merchandise, but they care nothing for Him who is worth more than all beside. O Sirs, in that day when this solid earth shall rock and reel, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, when the stars shall fall like the leaves of autumn and when there shall sail into the sky, conspicuous to the gaze of all, the Great White Throne, and on it shall sit the despised Redeemer, you will repent, then, and regret when it is too late that you gave Him none of your thoughts, but put the affairs of religion wholly on the side! Investigate this matter, I charge you! By what your Immortal souls are worth, by an eternal Heaven and an endless Hell—and there are both of these, despite what some say—I charge you, as I shall meet you at the Judgment Seat, and would be clear of your blood—give earnest attention to the things that make for your peace and consider the claims of God and of His Christ! And seek to find the way of salvation by faith in Jesus.

Thus, surely, I have said enough upon this first point—ungodly men have good cause to be ashamed.

II. Now, secondly, concerning these ungodly people, let me show you that SHAME IS A VERY DESIRABLE THING IF IT DRIVES THEM TO GOD. Hence the prayer, “Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord.”

I have known shame to drive men to God in various ways. Sometimes shame attends *the breaking up of self-righteousness*. I knew a young fellow who had been a very upright moral man all his days. He seemed to think that he should go to Heaven by his good works, but he had no notion of a Savior and no regard for the things of Christ. One day, being in the workshop, he upset an oil can and his boss, who was rather a bad-tempered man, enquired sharply who had wasted the oil. And this man, who had always, till then, been truthful, on this occasion told a lie and said that he did not upset the can. Nobody found him out, mark you—he was so highly respected that his employer fully believed that he had not done it—but he went down greatly in his own esteem. He said to me, “Sir, my righteousness went all to pieces in a moment. I knew that I had told a lie. I felt disgusted with myself and when I got out of the shop, for the first time in my life, I cried to God for mercy, for I saw myself to be a sinner.” Now I do not wish any of you to commit further sin in order that you may realize your true condition in God’s sight! You have done already enough evil, without doing any more, but I would like some one of these sins to come so sharply home to you that it would make you feel ashamed and give up all pretence of self-righteousness—and come by faith to Christ and take His righteousness to be your perfect covering before God.

I have known this shame to operate in some, when they have done wrong, and have *lost the reputation they enjoyed among their fellow creatures*. They have been found out in doing wrong and, sad as it was to them, yet when they felt that they could no longer come to the front and lead as they used to do—when they knew that they must get somewhere in the rear and that if their true character became known, people would shun them—then it was that, like the prodigal son, they said, “I will arise and go to my Father.” There is many a man who stands high in popular esteem, but who is never likely to be saved, for he is too proud and self-conceited ever to seek the Savior. But there have been some others who, for a grave fault, have had all their glory trailed in the mire and *then* they have sought the face of Christ. I do not care *how* or *why* they seek that blessed face, so long as they find it and are saved!

There are two instances, then, in which shame drives men to God. First, when a man has lost his own good opinion of himself. And next when he has lost the good opinion of others. Filled with shame, he has often fled to Christ.

So have I also seen it in the case of *failure driving a man to the Strong for strength*. There is a young man who has come lately from the country. He knew the temptations of London, but he said to his father and mother, “You will never hear of your son John doing such things.” Ah, John! They have not heard of it, yet, but you have done a great many evil things by now and you ought to be ashamed! If your father finds it out, as likely enough he will, you will be ashamed. But, seeing that you have found *yourself* out, I wish that you would be ashamed before the Lord! O that virtuous John, that silent youth, that dear young man! You were just going to join the Church, were you not? Where were you last night? Ah, not drinking of the Communion cup, I will guarantee you! Where are you now? O John, if you could have seen yourself six months ago, to be what you *now* are, you would not have held your head so high when you came away

from your native town! But your failure, that wretched broken back of yours with which you meant to stand so bolt upright should all help to drive you to God—your father's God and your mother's God!

My dear Friend, I pray you seek the face of the Most High and begin again, for, John, though you cannot stand by yourself, God can make you stand! With a new heart and a right spirit, you can do a deal better than you have done in the past in your own strength, which is utter weakness. I have known a teetotaler who has felt himself quite safe because he wore a blue ribbon, to become a drunk, notwithstanding that very desirable badge. If that is your case, my Brother, when you are ashamed of yourself on that account, as well you may be, go to the Lord for a new heart and a right spirit, and then begin again, that you may truly be what you aspire to be, an example to others! So, you see, that shame in such a case of failure as I have described, may bring a man to Christ.

I have also known men brought to Christ with shame of another sort—*shame of mental terror leading to a humble faith*. A young gentleman felt that he had heard the old-fashioned Gospel long enough and he should like to go and hear the *new* gospel. More light is said to have broken out of late—I can only tell you that it comes from some very dark places—and I do not think there is much light in it. But this gentleman thought that he must know about this new light, and he has kept going further and further. And the new light has led him, like the will-o'-the-wisp does, into all sorts of boggy places. And now he begins to feel that he can do a great many things which once he dared not do, until suddenly the thought occurs to him, "Where have I got to now?" He has become altogether an unbeliever! He who was once almost persuaded to be a Christian has run into very wild ways and nothing is sure with him! It is all rocking to and fro before him, like the waves of the sea, and there is nothing solid left. Ah, now you begin to be ashamed, do you? You are not, after all, so full of wisdom as you thought you were! Come back, then! Come back and believe the old Book, and trust the Savior who has brought so many to the Eternal Kingdom! Believe His Words, follow in His track and this very shame on account of your fancied intellectual prowess, which has turned out to be sheer folly, will bind you, in future, to the simple Cross of Christ and you will never go away from it again!

I want to suggest one thing more before I leave this part of my subject. In this congregation there must be a good many men and women who might do well to look back upon *the utter uselessness of their past lives*. As I looked along these galleries, at the immense preponderance of men in the congregation, which is so usual with us, I thought, "What a number there must be here who, if they threw the weight of their influence in with us, and sought to do good to others, would be immensely valuable to the Church of God!" But are there not many, perhaps even professing Christianity, who, in looking back upon their past lives, will be obliged to say that they have done nothing? What did *you* ever accomplish, dear Friends? There was a lady who had a large sum of money in her possession—much more than sufficient for her needs. She was a Christian woman, living a quiet, comfortable life by the seaside. One night, as she walked up and down the beach, she said to herself, "What have I ever done for Him who died for me? If I were to die now, would anybody miss me? When my life is finished, shall I have accomplished anything?" She felt that she had done nothing, so she went home and ruminated upon what she could do.

She began to live very frugally that she might save all she could and she accumulated quite a large amount, for she had an objective to live for. The Orphanage at Stockwell is the outcome of that good woman's thought at the seaside! She consecrated her substance to the starting of a home where boys and girls, whose fathers were dead, might be housed. I cannot but think of her and then say to myself, "Are there not many ladies, many gentlemen, many men, many women, who might walk up and down and say, 'Well, now, when I die, who will miss me?'" I believe that there are numbers of people who call themselves Christians who might be tied hand and foot and flung into the Atlantic—and nobody would miss them beyond the two or three members of their own families. They do nothing and they are living for nothing. "Oh, but," they say, "we are accumulating money!" Yes, yes. That is like a jackdaw hiding rubbish behind the door, putting away everything he can get. Poor jackdaw! That is what you are doing, nothing more! To get money is well enough, if you get it that you may use it well. And to learn is right enough, if you learn with the view of teaching others. If our life is not to be wasted, there must be a living to God with a noble purpose! And they who have lived in vain with multitudes of opportunities of doing good, ought to be ashamed—and such shame should bring them to the Savior's feet in humble penitence. God give such shame as that to any here who ought to have it, that they may at once seek the name of the Lord!

III. I must close by speaking only briefly upon the last head of my discourse, which is, THE LORD IS WILLING, NOW, TO RECEIVE THOSE WHO ARE ASHAMED OF THEMSELVES. Let me say that again. The Lord is waiting and willing, now, to receive to the love of His heart those who are thus ashamed of themselves.

I do not think that I need say much to enforce this great Truth of God. Is there one person here who is ashamed of himself because of his past sin? Then you are the man I invite to come to that Savior who bore your shame in His own body on the Cross! You are the sort of man for whom He died. Remember how He, Himself, said, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” And one mark of the lost is their deep sense of shame when they get to be so ashamed of themselves that they try to hide from the gaze of their fellow creatures. If you are ashamed of yourself, Christ is willing to receive you! Behold, He stands before you with open arms and bids you come and trust Him, that He may give you rest.

You are the sort of man to come to Christ, because, first, *you have the greatest need of Him*. In the time of famine, we give the meal, away, first to the most hungry family. He who has alms to distribute to the poor, if he is wise, will give the most speedy relief to those who are the most destitute. And you, my dear Hearer, are like that if you are ashamed of yourself! You are the bankrupt, you are the beggar, you are the sort of sinner whom Jesus came to save! God’s elect are known by this mark—in their own natural estate they are as poor as poverty, itself. If you are empty, there is a full Christ for you! If your last mite is gone, Heaven’s treasures are all open for you! Come and take them, take them freely, as freely as you breathe the air, as freely as you would drink of the flowing river! Come and take Christ without question and without delay! Take Him, now, and be happy! And the way to take Him is to *trust* Him, to trust yourself with Him absolutely! He is a Savior—let Him save *you*. Have no finger in the work, yourself, but leave it all to Him. Commit yourself entirely and absolutely to those mighty hands that molded the heavens and the earth—to those dear hands that were nailed to the Cross! Jesus can save you! He will save you! He must save you! He is pledged to save you! If you have believed in Him, He *has* saved you and you may go your way and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

Next, if you are ashamed of yourself, you are the man to come to Christ because *you will make no bargains with Him*. You will say, “Save me, Lord, at any price, and in any way!” And you are the man who will *give Him all the glory if you are saved*. That is the kind of sinner Jesus loves to save—not one who will run away with the credit of his salvation and say, “I was always good and I had many traces of an excellent character about me before Christ saved me.” Such a man might try to divide with the Lord the glory of his salvation, so he is not likely to be saved! But God delights to save those in whom there is no *trace* of goodness, no *hope* of goodness, no *shadow* of goodness—the men and women who not only feel that God may well be ashamed of them, but who are absolutely ashamed of themselves!

In preaching on this important theme, I have not used any grace of diction, nor have I made any display of oratory. I have plainly told you the Gospel message and I have expostulated with those of you who have not considered it. I wish that, by the Grace of God, even before this night passes away, you would come and rest yourselves on Christ. The Holy Spirit is here, blessedly working upon some hearts. If He is not yet working upon others of you, I pray that He may now begin to do so. Remember, my dear Hearers, that you are all mortal and some of you may soon be gone from the earth. During the past week I personally have lost some very choice friends who died quite suddenly. There was a young friend, who was here a Sabbath or so ago. He was taken ill last Sunday afternoon and he was gone in a few hours. His sorrowing friends are absent, today, for he was laid in Norwood Cemetery yesterday afternoon, almost to the breaking of the hearts of his parents and other relatives.

I had a dear old friend with whom I have often stayed at Mentone. On Monday last she seemed as well as ever, but on Wednesday she, too, was dead. Last Friday week I had a letter from a friend at Plymouth, saying that he was coming up to see me and asking at what hour I could meet him? I said, “Five in the afternoon.” It was our honored friend, Mr. Serpell. He did not come, but I received a note to say that he was not quite well. On Monday he addressed the Chamber of Commerce and while he was speaking, he fell back, apparently in a fainting fit, and so died. I have, therefore, lost some who have always been good helpers and kind friends to me. And I seem to feel more than ever I did that I am living in a dying world. It might have been any one of you! It might have been myself. Come, then, and let us all seek the Lord at once! Let us each one seek Him, now. “If *you* seek Him, He will be found of you.” God grant it, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:***PSALM 12; JEREMIAH 8; 9:1.***

Psalm 12:1. *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceases; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.* The Psalm speaks of a very discouraging time and records a very dreary fact, but the Psalmist is wise and turns to God with that short, sententious prayer, “Help, Lord.”

2, 3. *They speak vanity, every one, with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things.* They will not be able to continue speaking falsely and proudly forever—a shovelful of earth from the grave-digger’s spade will silence them—and a terrible display of God’s Justice will make them speechless forever.

4, 5. *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us? For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffs at him.* That is all it is, only a puff—the biggest brag of the wicked, the most tremendous threat against the Lord’s people is but a puff, after all, and God will set His people high above all those who puff at them.

6-8. *The Words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever. The wicked walk on every side when the vilest men are exalted.* Now let us read in Jeremiah’s prophecy, Chapter Eight. Remember, dear Brothers and Sisters, that Jeremiah had the very sorrowful task of warning a people who would not give heed to his warnings. He prophesied evil—evil which began to come upon the people even while he prophesied, yet they would not turn to God! I sometimes think Jeremiah was the greatest of all the Prophets because, in the teeth of perpetual opposition, with no measure of success whatever, he continued to be faithful to God and to deliver the message with which he was sent, weeping all the while over people who would not weep for themselves.

Jeremiah 8:1, 2. *At that time, says the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the Prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of their graves: and they shall spread them before the sun and the moon, and all the host of Heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.* This is an awful picture. Here is a nation that would worship the sun, and the moon, and the stars, instead of worshipping God. Here they are, and their bones lie exposed to the sun and moon and stars which they had worshipped—dead people before lifeless gods! This is all that idolatry produces for the ruined people who have turned away from their true Friend and Helper—their bones lie exposed in the presence of the things that they made to be their gods! How dreadful is the result of sin! No matter what modern preachers say, a sinful course must be a disastrous one. It is in the very nature of things that we cannot go the wrong road and yet be happy. Wrong must end in wrong, it cannot be otherwise—the universal conviction in the conscience of man teaches us this fact.

3. *And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places where I have driven them, says the LORD of Hosts.* These people would not have God. They cast Him off and now He casts *them* so far off that they feel that it would have been better for them if they had never been born, and they would rather die than live—“Death shall be chosen rather than life.”

4. *Moreover you shall say to them, Thus says the LORD; Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?* The old proverb says, “It is a long lane that has no turning.” So the Lord seems to ask, “Will these men always go on in sin? Will they always turn away from Me? They change from bad to worse; will they never change from worse to better?”

5. *Why, then, is this people of Jerusalem slid back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.* Perseverance in evil is the very venom of evil. When men not only backslide, but continue to perpetually backslide, they are doubly staining their garments in the scarlet of iniquity! When men “refuse to return” to the Lord and continue to refuse to return, surely they are digging their own graves exceedingly deep.

6. *I hearkened and heard.*—It is God who is speaking—“I hearkened and heard.”—

6. *But they spoke not aright.* “I tried to discover whether there was any good in them. I listened to hear them offer a prayer. I watched to mark anything like repentance in them.”

6. *No man repented of wickedness, saying, What have I done? Everyone turned to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle.* See how God described these people? When He might have expected that some of them would relent and, in their thoughtful moments turn to a better mind, they did not do so. But, as the horse, when he hears the war trumpet, rushes into the midst of the fray, so did these people go headlong into sin with desperate resolve. Careless of wounds and death, they rushed to their destruction! I hope that this is not the case with any of my hearers at this time. I pray God that it may not be so!

7. *Yes, the stork in the heavens knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD.* The birds take wing across the sea when the dampness of autumn comes and, by-and-by, when spring returns, they twitter about our roofs, again, punctual to the appointed time. But men come not to God in their season—they fly not from their sins, they return not to the Lord. The crane and the swallow rebuke the foolishness of men who know not the time to return to God, and know not their way back to Him.

8, 9. *How can you say, We are wise, and the Law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the Word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?* This test may serve as a motto for some, in these days, who believe themselves to be wiser than Scripture and who fancy that, in their great wisdom, they are able to correct this Inspired Book! Many set up in the trade of “Bible makers” nowadays—they profess to be the revealers of Revelation, the improvers of this blessed Book of God. Ah, but this passage still stands true, “They have rejected the Word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?”

10, 11. *Therefore will I give their wives to others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for everyone from the least even to the greatest is given to covetousness, from the Prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.* This is a very mischievous thing. For the preacher of Christ to be honest and fearless, and to speak unpalatable Truth is right in God’s sight. But to gloss over the great facts about sin and judgment, and to say to the ungodly, “Oh, do not trouble yourselves! ‘Peace, peace; when there is no peace’”—this is to murder the souls of men! And I doubt not that the blood of multitudes will be upon the skirts of those teachers who have tried to make everything pleasant to the wicked, and to suit the age in which they lived. The Lord Himself says of the Prophet and priest who have dealt falsely, “They have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

12. *Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.* What a striking expression is this! To what a condition of shameless obstinacy have men’s minds been brought when it can be said of them, “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.” The very power to be ashamed was taken from them. Surely, almost the last ray of any hope of salvation must be gone from the man who cannot blush at the thought of his own iniquity!

12-18. *Therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, says the LORD. I will surely consume them, says the LORD: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Why do we sit still? Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there: for the LORD our God has put us to silence, and given us water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble! The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices among you, which will not be charmed, and they shall bite you, says the LORD. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me.* Because the people refused this testimony, because they seemed set on mischief and resolved to die, therefore the Prophet’s heart was faint within him.

19, 20. *Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of My people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? Is not her King in her? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their engraved images, and with strange vanities? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.* I will read that 20th verse again—“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.” This may be the lament of some of my present hearers—and

if it is, may they now bow before the Lord in true penitence of heart, and may He, in pity, save them this very hour! The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but, oh, may they soon be saved!

21. *For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me.* That is the man to be God's Prophet, the man who makes the sorrows of his people to be his own sorrows, who does not perform the duties of his office as a mere matter of profession, but enters into his service with a weeping heart, longing to be made a blessing to men.

22. *Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?* No, there is none. There is balm in Christ, there is a Physician who once hung on Calvary's Cross—but there is no balm and no physician in Gilead. If there were—

22. *Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

Jeremiah 9:1. *Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!* This is how God's servants feel about the dying and perishing souls all around them. They cannot bear the thought of the sinner's awful doom—it brings continuous heartbreak and heaviness of spirit upon them. That men should eternally perish—that they should bring on their own heads the doom of their own sin is no small thing and, therefore, the Lord's servant mourns over those who mourn not for themselves! God save every one of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 544, 521, 522.

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