

YOUTH WARNED!

A sermon **by John Angell James**, preached in Carrs Lane Meeting House, on Sunday Evening, January 4th, 1824, and addressed particularly to young men.

"Likewise, exhort the younger men to be sober minded." Titus 2:6

I wish it were possible, young men, for me to disclose to you the deep solicitude and earnest desire for your welfare, with which I meet you this evening, and commence this effort of ministerial fidelity—such a knowledge of my feelings and my motives would ensure me your serious and candid attention. In selecting you as the special objects of my address, I have been influenced by a painful conviction, which I would be glad to have disproved, that there was scarcely ever a period when such admonitions as those which I shall deliver on the present occasion, were more needed by people of your gender and age. Without pretending to say that the youth of this generation are more corrupt than those of former times, I will assert that their moral interests are now exposed from various causes to very imminent peril.

The improvement and diffusion of modern education, have produced a bold and independent mode of thinking, which, though it be in itself a benefit, requires a proportionate degree of religious restraint to prevent it from degenerating into lawless licentiousness. It is probable also, that of late years parents have relaxed the salutary rigor of domestic discipline. Trade and commerce are now so widely extended, that our youth are more from beneath their parents' inspection than formerly, and consequently more exposed to the contaminating influence of evil company. The habits of society in general, are becoming more expensive and luxurious. And in addition to all this, the secret but zealous efforts of infidelity to circulate written works, which by attempting to undermine revealed religion, aim to subvert the whole fabric of morals—have most alarmingly increased irreligion and immorality.

But whatever are the causes, the fact to me is indubitable, that multitudes of the young men of the present day are exceedingly corrupt and profane. Such a state of things rouses and interests all my feelings as a father, a minister, and a citizen—I am anxious for my own children, as well as for the youth of my flock, my town, and my country. You are to be the fathers, young men, of the next generation; and most solicitous do I feel that you should transmit true religion—and not vice, to posterity. Listen then with seriousness to what I shall this evening advance, from motives of pure and faithful affection.

I shall direct your attention to that solemn portion of sacred Scripture which you will find in Ecclesiastes 11:9. **"Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sights of your eyes; but know that for all of these things God will bring you to judgment."**

The design of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes seems to be this—after detailing the good things of life to the widest extent, setting them in the strongest light, and granting to them every possible advantage which their most passionate admirers contend for—to demonstrate, that as they are attended with so many inseparable evils, are so short-lived in their continuance, so unprofitable in the hour of death, and so utterly useless in the eternal world beyond the grave, they are insufficient for the needs, and inadequate to the happiness of the soul of man. No one was more capable of forming a correct opinion on this subject than Solomon; since no man ever commanded more resources of earthly delight than he did, or ever more eagerly availed himself of the opportunities which he possessed—and yet he grew disgusted and dissatisfied with sensual pleasures, and at length give us the sum total of worldly enjoyment in those two ciphers—vanity and vexation of spirit. His testimony, therefore, is to be considered (not as the cynical declamation of an ascetic, who had never tasted sensual indulgence—but) as that of a man who had drunk the cup of earthly pleasures to its dregs—and who found those dregs to be wormwood, gall, and poison! "I have seen everything that is done under the sun. Look at it! All is vanity and

vexation of spirit!" Ecclesiastes 1:14.

I am aware that some expound the language of the text as containing an intimation of Solomon's willingness to allow young people the full gratification of their senses, and the indulgence of their appetites, coupled with an admonition to let their pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure be regulated by a reference to the judgment of God, as it is recorded in the Scripture, and will be published at the last day. Although I do not think this is the meaning of the text, because the terms employed in the passage are generally used by the sacred writers in a bad sense, as importing criminal indulgence, yet there is nothing in the sentiment to which, when properly explained, I object.

I allow youth all that pleasure which the Word of God sanctions, and which his sentence in the day of judgment will not condemn. I would say, "Young man, enjoy yourself, your senses are in full vigor, your imagination lively; it is the spring season of your existence, gratify your genius and your taste. And as long as your pleasures accord with the letter and spirit of revelation, and will secure the approbation of God in the judgment day—they are innocent and lawful. But take heed how you allow yourself any gratification until you have tested it by the Word of God, and proved it to be innocent."

I am quite willing to make the Scriptures the standard of our **pleasures**, as well as of our **duties**. Religion and melancholy are not as some think synonymous terms. Piety is as far from gloom as noontide is from midnight. "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." There is joy and peace in believing, a peace that passes understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Religion gives the substance of happiness for the shadow; the reality for the name. It allows all that enjoyment of the comforts of earth—which is not incompatible with the pursuit of eternal salvation in heaven.

I. The text properly explained, consists of an IRONIC address. Under a seeming permission, this language contains a very strong and pointed prohibition. It is as if the

writer had said, "Thoughtless and sensual young man, who has no idea of happiness but as arising from fleshly indulgence, and who is drinking continually the intoxicating cup of worldly pleasure—pursue your course if you are determined on this mode of life, gratify your appetites, indulge all your passions, deny yourself nothing, eat, drink and be merry; disregard the admonitions of conscience, trample under foot the authority of revelation—**but** do not think that you shall always prosper in the ways of sin, or carry forever that air of jollity and triumph. The day of reckoning is at hand, when for all these things, you will be called into judgment! God now witnesses, and takes account of all your ways, and will one day call you to his judgment, and repay you according to your doings!" "For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

It is implied in this address, that **young men are much addicted to sensual pleasure**. This has been the case with every generation and in every country—and it is too common not only for the young themselves—but even for their seniors and their sires to justify or palliate their wicked excesses. We frequently hear the abominable adage, "**Youth** for pleasure, **manhood** for business, and **old age** for religion." It is not possible for language to utter, or mind to conceive, a more gross or shocking insult to God than this!—which is in effect saying, "when I can no longer enjoy my lusts, or pursue my gains—then I will carry to God a body and soul worn out in the service of sin, Satan, and the world!" The monstrous wickedness and horrid impiety of this idea is enough, one would think, when put clearly to him, to shock and terrify the most confirmed and careless sinner in existence.

There are many things which tend to cherish in the youthful bosom, and to justify in the estimation of young men—the love of sensual pleasure. At their age care sits lightly on the heart, the passions are strong, the imagination is lively, the health is good, the social impulse is felt in all its energy, the attractions of friends are powerful; and this they imagine is the ideal time for them to take their fill of pleasure. They think that they shall settle down by and by, when the season of youth is past; and that sobriety, morality, and religion will

all come in the proper order of nature. **Worldly pleasure, decked in the voluptuous attire and the gaudy ornaments of a harlot, appears to their heated imagination, with all the attractive charms of a most bewitching beauty.** They yield themselves at once to her influence, and consider her as abundantly able to afford them all the happiness they desire. Their great concern is to gratify their senses. The soul and all her vast eternal concerns is neglected for the pleasures of fleshly appetites, and is condemned to the degradation of acting as a mere waiting maid to minister to the enjoyment of the body.

Young men, can you justify, either at the bar of reason or Scripture, such an appropriation of the 'morning of your existence', of the best and loveliest portion of your life? If there is indeed a God who made and preserves you, is it reasonable that the season of youth should be passed in a manner hateful in his sight? Is this the way to ensure his blessing on your future days? Is it reasonable that your youthful vigor, should be exhausted on vices forbidden by his Word? Were the noble faculties of the human soul conferred for no other purposes than to be slaves to sinful corruptions? To what part of the Word of God will you turn and not find your practices condemned? Where is it said that young people may innocently walk in all kinds of sensual indulgences? On what page of the book of God's truth do you find these allowances for the excesses of youth, which you make for yourselves, and ill-judging friends make for you? "**Woe** to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them! They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord, or see the work of his hands." (Isaiah 5:11-12) This is the testimony of the Lord, delivered as much against the sins of youth as those of riper years.

And is it not mentioned among other vices by Paul, "that men should be lovers of pleasure—more than lovers of God?" There is no exception in your favor, from the obligations of piety, in all the Word of God! On the contrary, how many are the admonitions to youthful piety—there is not one duty of true godliness binding upon you in future years, which does not rest with all its authority upon you at

the present moment. Is youth the season for sinful pleasure then! Is this best and most influential portion of your existence—to be deliberately given up to vice! That is a dreadful idea; repugnant alike to reason and Scripture!

1. If sensual pleasure be pursued as the object of youthful years—see how it will influence all your PURSUITS. Where young men live in this way, it directs their **reading**, which is not pious or improving—but light, trifling, and polluting. Inflammatory novels, stimulating romances, lewd poetry, immoral songs, satires against pious characters, and arguments against Scripture and biblical morals—are in general the works consulted by corrupt and wicked youth, and by these they become still more wicked. Never did the press send forth streams of greater pollution than at this time. Authors are to be found, of no small abilities, who pander to every corruption of the youthful bosom. Almost every vice has its high-priest—to burn incense on its altar, and to lead its victims, decked with the garlands of poetry or fiction, to their ruin.

(As for Byron, his exquisite pathos and almost peerless beauty, can make no atonement for his vices, and should have no power to reconcile us to his works. He is, indeed, as he has been styled, the master of a satanic school. Infidelity and immorality never before received such patronage from the poetic muse. Never before was genius seen in closer union with vice. His works are enough to corrupt the morals of a nation, and seem to have been written for the purpose; and he appears to have been stirred up by an evil spirit, to attempt, by his poems that mischief which the wit of Voltaire, the subtleties of Hume, and the popular ribaldry of Paine, had in vain endeavored to effect. If young men would not be cursed by the infidelity and immorality which lurk within his pages, let them beware how they touch his volumes—as they would a beautiful person infected with the plague.)

2. A love of sinful pleasure will give the tone to your CONVERSATION—which will be vain, loose and unprofitable; if not obscene, filthy and profane. Jests against religion; sneers at the piety of the godly; irreverent and shocking swearing; and a boastful parade of the

immoralities they have committed—the females they have seduced, or the revels they have shared in—make up the conversation, I fear, of some circles. Young men, is this the reason why the noble faculty of speech was given to you—that distinction of man from the brute creation; that exquisite vehicle of thought and medium of communication between mind and mind? Can you think of the strains of conversation to which you have often listened, and in which you have often joined, without horror? Could the discourse of a single evening be written down just as it occurred, in all its mindlessness, silliness, obscenity and profanity—and then read over to you; surely, surely, if every spark of shame was not extinguished in your nature, your faces would be covered with blushes, and your soul filled with confusion at the shocking recital.

There is something most disgusting and most horrible, to hear a man boast of the crimes which he has committed, and with bragging, set forth the pains which he has taken to blast the prospects of others—and ruin his own immortal soul. The Scripture makes it a sin even to be proud of good deeds; but to be proud of evil ones is a disposition truly hellish! For young men to study first to excel in deeds of riot and debauchery, and then to proclaim their feats, is to brag who shall be at once most brutalized and most diabolical, and then to be proud of the hellish attainment!

As for **swearing**, I scarcely know anything which more decidedly proves a depraved heart; since it gratifies no passion and indulges no appetite—but is unmingled wickedness against God. Probably there is nothing which has a more polluting effect on the imagination, or a more hardening influence on the heart—than filthy, obscene, and profane conversation; and the man who can ever listen to it with pleasure must already have become very vile, and is hourly becoming more so!

3. A love of sensual pleasure will, of course, direct young men in the choice of their COMPANIONS; and these will not be the moral and serious—but the thoughtless, the mirthful, and the wicked. Comradeship seems necessary to give zest to vice. There is something cowardly in sin. It does not desire 'solitude' and 'contemplation'. To the

sinner's perturbed mind, 'solitude' soon fills the mind with frowning forms; and 'contemplation' is broken by threatening voices. He rushes, therefore, into company to recruit his courage and gratify his lusts; not to persuade himself that he is doing right—but to get rid of the consciousness that he is doing wrong, and drown the clamors of his conscience in the uproar of his companions; at once to be wicked and merry.

Young men, if you determine to live in the gratification of your passions and the indulgence of your sinful appetites, you will soon have associates suited to your taste, and that will never disturb your conscience with the language of warning or reproof. And will these be wicked fools, blaspheming scoffers, apostate people, hardened sinners, degraded sots, dissolute infidels, abandoned prostitutes! Look at the mirthful party. Can you approve it? Are there not moments, when you feel the last dying remains of moral feeling stirring within you in sickening revulsion at such society as this? But even these 'dying, lingering signs of a conscience' which are not quite dead, will soon vanish—and you will yield yourself without a struggle to all the corrupting, damning influence of bad company!

4. The recreations and amusements of young men who live in sinful pursuits are of the same nature as their reading, conversation, and company—polluted and polluting!

The **THEATER** is generally frequented by them; the theater, that corrupter of public morals; that school where nothing good and everything bad is learned; that resort of the wicked and school of vice; that broad and flowery avenue to the bottomless pit! Here a young man finds no hindrances to sin, no warnings against wickedness, no mementos of judgment to come! But, on the contrary, everything to inflame his passions, to excite his immoral desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice! The language, the music, and the company, are all adapted to a sensual taste—and calculated to demoralize the mind!

Multitudes of once comparatively innocent and happy youths have to date their ruin for both worlds, from the hour when

their feet first trod within the polluted precincts of a theater. Until then they were ignorant of many of the ways of vice. That fatal night was the dreadful season of their initiation into the 'mysteries of iniquity'! Afterwards they fell from morality and respectability, and continued falling deeper and deeper in vice, until earth, tired of the sickening load of their corruption, heaved them from her lap—and hell, from beneath, moved to gather them at their coming! When, therefore, a young man acquires and gratifies a taste for theatrical representations, I consider his moral character in imminent peril.

It is by no means the author's intention to affirm that all who frequent the theater are wicked people. Far be it from him to prefer an accusation so extensive and unfounded as this. No doubt many amiable and moral people are among the admirers of dramatic representation. That they receive no contamination from the scenes they witness, or the language they hear, is no stronger proof that the stage is not immoral in its tendency and effects, than that there is no contagion in the plague, because some constitutions resist the infection. That people fenced in by every conceivable moral defense and restraint, should escape uninjured, is saying little; but even in their case, I will contend that the **mind** is not altogether uninjured. Is it possible for an imperfect moral creature (and such are the best of us,) to hear the irreverent swearing, the filthy allusions, the anti-Christian sentiments, which are uttered during the representation of even our purest plays, and hear these for amusement, without some deterioration of mental purity?

And it should be remembered that none but the pure in heart shall see God. But let us think of a young man going alone and unprotected to a theater, or in the company only of others of his own age, and after having his passions inflamed with all he has seen and heard within, then returning home through the crowds of scantily dressed prostitutes which infest the surrounding areas of every theater. Is this a school to improve his morals? Yes, the morals of the whorehouse! The advocates of the stage should be candid, and instead of talking about its improving the taste or the morals of the age, should frankly confess (as they cannot be ignorant of it), that it is indeed a very

dangerous place for young people—but that it is an amusement of which they themselves are very fond, and that they are determined to enjoy it whatever havoc it may make in the character of others.

If it were admitted that occasionally some one person had been improved by theatrical satires on vice, (though, by the way, to laugh at vice is not the best way of becoming virtuous), will they not confess that for this one case of improvement, a thousand cases of ruin could be found?

Mirthful **PARTIES**, where eating, drinking, and revelry, are carried on until midnight, or until morning, are another source of ruin! Meetings, not for the interchange of the civilities and courtesies of life, and restrained within due limits of time, sobriety, and expense; not for the feast of reason and the flow of soul; not for the cultivation and enjoyment of friendship—but for the celebration of Bacchanalian orgies! Young men, such meetings unfit you not only for the serious pursuits of godliness—but even for the duties of business. Their **expense** impoverishes your purse, their **influence** impairs your health, and their **guilt** ruins your soul!

GAMBLING is another amusement to which young men, addicted to pleasure, frequently have recourse. A passion for gambling is one of the most ruinous propensities that can infect the human heart! It is to the mind, what a love of alcohol is to the body! And to the man addicted to gambling and play—the ordinary pursuits of business will be as flat and uninteresting—just as looking forward to a day of bread and water, is to the drunkard craving and waiting for his liquor. Gambling is a system of excitement and stimulants, which prepares the passions for every excess. It is a 'parent vice', and its 'offspring' are as deformed and monstrous as itself! It produces a serpent brood of crimes—among which fraud, suicide, and murder, have all been found. Young men, as you would not have these vices generated in your heart, harbor not in your bosom the mother that bears them! Retreat from the billiard and card table! If you would not end up as a gambler—avoid all gambling!

Every friend to the morals of his country must deplore the

increasing passion for the brutal and brutalizing sport of **PRIZE FIGHTS**. This practice is more demoralizing than it is possible to describe. It is fraught with such deadly mischief to the national demeanor and conduct, that it should become a matter of most serious consideration with the legislature whether more effective measures ought not to be taken for its suppression. There is scarcely a vice which tends to disturb the order of society that is not cherished, and, to a considerable extent, encouraged, by this odious system.

Independently of the offensive spectacle exhibited by two men acting the part of wild beasts towards each other, and endeavoring, if not to tear, to beat each other to pieces; independently of the fatal manner in which these conflicts sometimes terminate—what a system of gambling of the most pernicious description is connected with this practice! What habits of idleness are contracted! What a spirit is generated among the laboring classes to excel in these feats of brutal courage and savage skill! What a lure is held out to the indolent! What what a temptation thrown in the way of the industrious! Where are all the thieves, the cheats, the murderers of a country, most likely to be assembled at any given time? Around the prize fight ring. What a revolting and shocking instance of this kind of amusement have we lately had in a neighboring county.

At the very time when the Hertfordshire murderers were arraigned for a deed which had circulated horror through the kingdom; while the sentence was being pronounced upon them, will it be believed that 30,000 people were assembled to witness this their favorite recreation, by which the murderers were trained for the crime which hurried them to the gallows? In what school were they trained to commit murder? In the ring of the prize fight! And yet thirty thousand people, at the very time when they were being doomed to death, were assembled to patronize the practice. In this town the fate of the murderers was lost sight of—in that of the fighters; and it seemed a matter of less concern whether they were condemned, than who won the prize fight!

Let any one conceive the mass of crime which was

committed within the circle that surrounded the combatants; let him think of the oaths that were sworn, the pilfering that was carried on, the diabolical rage that was felt, the gambling that was practiced; let him add the numbers who closed the evening with intoxication, the multitudes who were then first led astray from the paths of morality by acquiring a taste for evil conduct and evil company. Let anyone think of these things and say if the place on which this crowd were assembled, did not contain a greater accumulation of crime than could be found on the same space in our world. Who can wonder at the prevalence of vice, when such things are going on? But we may wonder to hear of noblemen, gentlemen, lawyers, being present. May our youth have wisdom enough to abhor the practice; may they see that one of the nearest roads to ruin is by the ring of a prize fight. To all the flimsy arguments by which the practice is attempted to be defended, may they reply—that to be **brutal** is not the way to embellish our nature, and that the ferocity of a tiger and the dexterity of a savage is no ornament to a civilized rational creature.

Still, after all that can be said of these practices, young men are to be found who will justify them on the grounds already stated. But try them by their effects. See their influence on personal godliness. Godliness, alas! such people make no pretense whatever to it. They have not the fear of God before their eyes. They are not only without piety—but against it. "God is not in all their thoughts." They are atheists in practice—if not in opinion. If a man loves such pleasures more than God, he has not even the semblance of piety. He is not even moral. It is true he may not be a murderer, robber, housebreaker—but he is still an immoral man if he be living in drunkenness, swearing, or fornication.

Try this mode of life by its influence on their **USEFULNESS**. Young men who live in the enjoyment of wicked pleasure, are defeating one end of their existence, which is in every possible way to benefit the human race—to do good by their property, example, and principles. Instead of this, their **property** is squandered upon their vices, and not devoted to relieve the misery, and promote the happiness of mankind. The **influence** of their example, instead of falling around them like the refreshing dew—sends forth a

withering blight. Their **principles**, instead of resembling precious grain, are the seeds of poison, which they scatter along their path. They have no part in benevolent and Christian institutions. I have known young men, who, while they were moral, were active as teachers of Sunday schools, and agents of other philanthropic institutions, immediately as they acquired a taste for sinful gratifications, withdraw their names, and retire from the scenes of Christian mercy. They ceased to be philanthropists when they became immoral; and now, instead of doing good, they do harm. On how many such do the curses of indignant, heart-broken parents rest, for corrupting their sons, and seducing their daughters.

Who shall depict, in proper colors, the crime of **SEDUCING**, and then abandoning an innocent female? And yet how common is it! She, poor wretched victim, the dupe of promises never intended to be fulfilled, and at length deserted as a worthless, ruined thing—seeks by the wages of iniquity to prolong a miserable existence, until, in her garret, consumed by disease, she closes a life of infamy by a death of unspeakable horror. If at the recollection of her untimely death, her betrayer feels a pang of remorse, his pity comes too late for her; it cannot restore the peace and purity, that, with felon hand, he stole from a bosom which was serene until he invaded its tranquility; it cannot repair the virtue he corrupted; it cannot build up the character he demolished; it cannot rekindle the life which he was the means of extinguishing; much less can it call back from the torments of the damned the miserable spirit which he was the instrument of hurrying to perdition!

Ah! how, one should think, must her upbraiding spirit haunt his imagination; how often must he hear her groans of despair, and see her frenzied appearance, seeming in every agonized distortion to say, "Look at me, my destroyer!" The **seducer**, I admit, is less guilty than the **murderer**—but how much less? The murderer extinguishes life at once; the seducer causes it to waste away by slow degrees amidst unutterable torture! The murderer hazards his own life in the commission of the crime; the seducer exposes himself to no personal risk! The murderer is visited with the heaviest sentence that the justice of the country can inflict—but the

seducer can revel in impunity, and can go on from conquering to conquer in his desolating career, and defy all justice—but that of heaven!

Yes, the guilty and polluted wretch will be greeted in fashionable and moral society with the same welcome as before, though he comes to it with the guilt of female ruin fresh upon his soul. Oh! when shall the time arrive that reputable females will resent this cruel indignity offered to their gender. When will they protect the virtue of their weaker sisters, by frowning from their society, the individual who has betrayed one of their number to her ruin! When shall the time come that the profligate and debauchees, by the consentaneous feeling of virtuous women, shall be banished from their presence? If any individual shall glance on these passages who is guilty of this great wickedness, let him ponder on his guilt, and never cease through life to weep for his sin, looking for pardon through the blood of Christ. If anyone should read this discourse, who meditates the crime, may I come between his 'basilisk eye' and the victim marked for ruin, and already flattering under the spell. Pause, young man, oh! pause, before you resolve to ruin two souls at once, and produce an entanglement of sin and misery which eternity itself shall never unravel!

I would not throw the blame of seduction entirely on my own gender. There are not a few to whom Solomon's description of the female tempter will apply in this age. What numbers of 'abandoned women' infest our streets before the sun is set. Is there no means of being rid of this nuisance? If not, let our youth beware, and remember the words of scripture, "Hearken unto me now therefore, O you children, and attend to the words of my mouth, let not your heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death!"

Amidst all your sinful jollity—**are you happy**, young man, in your sins? Are vice and bliss synonymous? Is immorality the road to happiness? Are you satisfied with your course? Do you approve of it as the most rational mode of life? Have you the sanction of both your judgment and your conscience? You know you are not happy! You may be

gratified—but you are not **satisfied**! You may have **pleasure**—but you have not **happiness**! When the 'honey of gratification' is all gone, is there not a *sting* left behind? Expose to us your wounded, bleeding heart; admit us to your chamber at midnight, when left alone with an angry conscience, to be lashed almost to madness. Let us hear your heartbroken reflections, when you heap your envenomed reproaches upon your own folly and wretchedness. Oh! what proofs could we recollect, even from your own lips, that the way of transgressors is hard, and the pleasures of sin are but for a season!

Have there not been times also, when, in the very midst of the riot and revelry—a mysterious hand, visible only to you—came forth and wrote your doom before your eyes; when conscience arrested you, as God did Belshazzar, at the feast? From that moment the pleasure was all gone. You tried to be merry—but your smile was as the laughter of a demon, which could but ill conceal the torture that raged within; and you retired, as Esau did, when he had eaten his pottage, reflecting that it was for this you had sold your soul! What makes you so afraid in a time of **sickness**? Because you seem to see **death** on the pale horse approaching you, and **hell** following in his aftermath!

Add up, young men, all the pains of vice—the anxiety which precedes, and the remorse which follows it, the stings of conscience and the reproaches of friends, the fear of being detected, and the shame of detection when it has taken place—and say if they do not far overbalance the pleasures of sin. I will concede to you, that sin has its gratifications—but are they not as Solomon calls them, "The crackling of thorns beneath a pot"—a noisy, but fleeting blaze?

II. I conduct your thoughts to the second part of the subject, and show you the END of these things—as it is set forth in the solemn warning contained in the text. "Know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." He who will hereafter be the **judge**—is now the **witness** of your conduct! God is everywhere present, and knows all things, "Lord, You have searched me and known

me. You know when I sit down and when I stand up; You understand my thoughts from far away. You observe my travels and my rest; You are aware of all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, You know all about it, Lord. You have encircled me; You have placed Your hand on me. This extraordinary knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty; I am unable to reach it. Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I live at the eastern horizon or settle at the western limits, even there Your hand will lead me; Your right hand will hold on to me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light around me will become night'— even the darkness is not dark to You. The night shines like the day; darkness and light are alike to You!" (Psalm 139:1-12)

Such is the solemn description which the Scriptures give us of an everywhere and ever-present God. He is not far from any one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. Yes, the Lord God is everywhere—not excepting even the haunts of vice. You may exclude your parents, your teachers, your ministers, from the scenes of your iniquity! You may shut out the sun—but you cannot shut out God! He is with you in the tavern, the brothel, the theater! Are there not times and places, in which, if the form of your father were suddenly to appear before you, you would almost sink into the earth? But lift up your eyes, and see, behold, the Great Spirit is there! What! tremble at a father's glance—and yet not be terrified at the presence of a God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence? Will you swear, and drink, and commit lewdness when the holy and all-seeing Deity is there to take account of all, and preserves the record on pages more durable than brass? The Grecian philosopher thought it would be a sufficient check to sin, to admonish his disciples to act as they would do, if they knew the eye of Plato was upon them. And shall it be no control upon your passions, to remember, that **God sees you!** And for all He sees will bring you into judgment?

1. Reflect upon the CERTAINTY of judgment. It is not a cunningly devised fable—it is not a mere terrifying picture intended to embellish Scripture. You **know** that there is a

judgment to come! The very heathen expect it, conscience foretells it, guilt forebodes it, reason proves it, Scripture declares it! "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things which he has done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad." You may unhappily forget the judgment—but you cannot disbelieve it.

2. This judgment will be PERSONAL. Know you, young man, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. The subject concerns us all, and each one in particular. To everyone who shall read these pages, the admonition is individually addressed, "Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth. And walk in the ways of your heart and in the sights of your eyes; but **know** that for all of these things, God will bring you to judgment!" (Ecclesiastes 11:9) "For God **will** bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:14) None are so high as to rise above this accountability to God; none so low as to be beneath it. John saw the dead, **small** and **great**, standing before God to be judged.

When men transgress the laws of their country, they are led on by the hope that they shall not be detected or brought to trial—they calculate the chances of escape, and indulge the expectation of impunity. But there is no room for such a hope, in reference to the judgment of the great God—this it will be impossible either to evade or resist. It is as certain that you will stand before the tribunal of Christ, and be tried for your life—as that you now exist! To that tribunal you will **certainly** be brought—whether willing or unwilling. Rocks and mountains will not hide you; no power on earth will shelter or detain you. God has declared that he will undertake this matter himself. Will you hide? Where will you go from God's presence? Go where you will—you will be surrounded still by God! Will you resist God's arrest? "Do you have an arm like God's?" The whole universe is represented as brought together to judgment, with the same ease as a shepherd collects a flock of timid sheep. No! No! Nothing can prevent your being placed at the tribunal of

heaven!

Young men, bear me witness, I give you public warning of this event. In God's name, I serve you with notice of the trial. Prepare to meet your God! He is coming! He is coming—and **you** must meet him! O think of judgment to come—in the midst of all your sinful pleasures and criminal liberties—think of it! Will you drink the drunkard's cup; will you go to the brothel, to the gambling table, to the scene of riot and wickedness—knowing that for all these things God will bring you into judgment? With the terrible solemnities of the last day before your eyes—**will** you, **can** you, **dare** you—proceed in the career of vice? Conscience—O faithful monitor! O dreadful avenger! I charge you to whisper in the sinner's ear, when going to the scene of his unholy pleasures, "But **know**, that for all of these things, God will bring you to judgment! For God **will** bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil."

3. This judgment will be EXACT and IMPARTIAL. "But know, that for **all** of these things, God will bring you to judgment! For God will bring **every** act to judgment, including **every** hidden thing, whether good or evil." All that you have done shall be brought to light and reviewed. The **standard** by which actions will then be tried, will be the Word of God. This is the book which will then be opened, according to which people's characters will be decided, and the sentence pronounced. Men will not be allowed to compare themselves with each other. Nor will those 'false standards of morality' and 'accommodating rules of custom' which they have now adopted, be then admitted. The laws which 'fashionable or customary vices' have modified to suit themselves, will be all disallowed and swept away then!

Men may **now** sneer at the puritanical precision and austerity which attempt to bring them to the Bible as the standard of morals—but what will they do and say when God shall open this now neglected book—and judge them according to what is written therein. How will they be confounded when they find all their pleas for a different test of character and conduct overruled—and the Bible alone be admitted as the sole rule of conduct. Then will **all** you have

done, young men, be brought to light! I will read a passage of Scripture that should make your ears tingle. "The Lord has sworn—Surely I will never forget **any** of their works." This is spoken in reference to the wicked. God has bound himself then by oath, not only to the salvation of the righteous—but to the condemnation of the wicked—none of all their evil works are to be forgotten.

You may **now** successfully attempt to conceal many of your evil ways from your parents, teachers, and ministers—and admire your skill in the art of deception! But remember there is ONE whom you cannot deceive, and from whom you can conceal nothing, "He will bring **every secret thing** into judgment!" The veil will be torn from every dark and unknown transaction. The curtain of secrecy will be drawn aside, and every scene of vice exposed—just as it occurred. Think of this, and think what will be your confusion and dismay, your reproach and anguish, when all those deeds which you wish to be buried in eternal oblivion shall be remembered against you! There is no such thing as 'oblivion' with God—nor shall you find the 'stream of forgetfulness' in the eternal world. You will be tried and sentenced according to the advantages which you have enjoyed for knowing and doing the will of God. Your Bible, your parents' instruction, your ministers' sermons, the advice you have received—the warnings you have heard, the stirrings of conscience you have felt, will all be taken into the account! Yes, and even this feeble though faithful effort to reclaim you, shall not be forgotten in the fearful reckoning.

4. The CONSEQUENCES of this judgment will be dreadful and eternal. The sentence which will then be pronounced upon the wicked you may even now read copied down from the lips of him who will be the Judge. Read it, and let your hearts meditate on the terrors of "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" Every word is replete with horrifying ideas! It forms as a whole, the most appalling doom of which the mind can entertain any conception; and its execution upon the wicked shall constitute that hell of which the Word of God says so much—but of which multitudes, to their ruin, think so little. The sentence by which the law of the land deprives a man of his temporal life is terrible; but what is

this to the doom which subjects the soul to the bitter pains of eternal death.

When the judge at our trials orders the convicted felon to be brought up for condemnation, puts on the black cap, and is about to pronounce the sentence, what a deadly silence pervades the court; you may almost hear the throb of palpitating hearts; terror sits on every brow; and it seems almost as if death in a visible form, had appeared to seize his victim; while the poor culprit himself sinks to the earth beneath the weight of the sentence, and departs in the silence of petrifying despair, or the outcries of frantic grief. And yet, may that poor creature, though properly denied mercy by the tribunal of human justice, obtain it from the throne of heavenly grace; and the judge, in the very act of excluding him from human mercy, prays that the Lord would have mercy on his soul.

What then must be the horror which in final the day of judgment, shall accompany the sentence of the wicked. No accent of mercy will be heard mitigating the horrors of that act of justice—that sentence dooms the soul to death—no other and higher tribunal shall be found, to which an appeal may be carried for pardon and life. The sentence of the wicked in that day will be **final, irreversible, and eternal**. There is nothing to follow it—but "the worm which never dies, and the fire which is never quenched; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." I cannot, if I would, describe the torments of lost souls in prison.

I say, I can neither disclose nor describe those scenes; but the Word of God declares that "upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Young men, think what it must be to dwell forever in a world where all the evil passions of human nature will attain the full maturity of their strength, and will not have one moment's cessation or gratification; and where all their force will be concentrated, like the venom of an enraged scorpion, for the purpose of self torment.

5. The judgment may be NEAR at hand. The coming of the Lord draws near; the Judge stands at the door; the end

of all things is at hand. The day of death is in one respect, as the day of judgment with us all, "Then the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." This year **you** may die! Many as young, as healthy, as wicked, as careless as yourselves—have died the past year. Where are they? Before another year closes, you may follow them into eternity. A fever, a fall, an accident, a midnight revel, a fatal quarrel, the violent hands of wicked men, or the hand of vengeance from a holy God—may within this year—smite you to the earth, and send you to the grave without warning, and to judgment without preparation. "They sing to the tambourine and the lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. They spend their days in prosperity, and in a moment go down to the grave. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out—and how oft comes their destruction upon them? They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carries away. One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet."

In the **CONCLUSION** of my discourse, I divide the congregation into three classes.

1. Those young men who are living in the fear of God, and walking in the ways of true godliness. Happy, thrice happy youth! Your obligations to divine grace are immense and eternal. You have made a blissful exchange of the pleasures of sin and folly—for those of wisdom and piety. Be grateful to God for the mercy with which he has visited you. Still continue "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember that you are not already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, press towards the mark of the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus—adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things. Be not high minded—but fear. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Flee youthful lusts. Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace—with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Be not ashamed of Christ. Disregard the sneers which your piety will not fail to bring down upon you, from those who think it strange that you run not to the same excess of riot—and speak evil against you. Their scorn is your honor. They envy you in their heart, while they persecute you with their lips. They

regard you with much the same feelings as Satan did our first parents, when he looked at them through the gate of Eden, before the fall. Be **holy, happy, and useful**—and let your character appear surrounded and adorned with this triple glory of true religion. You have raised our expectations; support them. You have begun our joy, fulfill it. Persevere, increase, go on to perfection.

II. Those who are moral—but not godly. Of this class, there are many. There are young men, adorned with every amiable disposition, every social virtue, every social excellence, who lack only one thing to finish their character. But that one—O! how important, how necessary—true religion. There may be morality without religion, though there cannot be religion without morality. **Morality** is the duty which we owe to ourselves and our fellow creatures—**piety** is the duty which we owe to God. Morality is a right disposition to man—piety a right disposition towards God. Although the latter involves the former, the former does not necessarily include the latter. Alas, alas! that moral men should not also be pious. This appears to have been the case with the young man mentioned in the gospel, of whom it is said that Jesus loved him—he was eminently moral—but could not endure the self-denying religion of the cross, and with all his virtues fell short of heaven!

What you need, young men, is regeneration of heart by the Holy Spirit. You must be born again of the Spirit, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. You must have—a new heart—a holy bias—a spiritual disposition—a heavenly tone of feeling. You must be brought to fear God as your habitual principle of action, and to love him supremely, as the master passion of your soul. Under a deep conviction of sin, you must have repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ.

You must be justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. You must be sanctified by the truth and Spirit of God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The grace of God which brings salvation, must teach you not only to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts—but to live soberly, righteously and godly, in the

present evil world. Morality alone will not do. Morality may save you from the miseries of open vice—but not from the bitter pains of eternal death. It will bring its own reward—but that reward ends with the present world. It will improve your temporal interests as men; it will lessen your condemnation as sinners—but it will not entitle you to the character of Christians here, nor will it be followed by glory, honor, immortality and eternal life—hereafter. It is extremely probable that if you are satisfied with being moral, to the neglect of piety, you may not long retain even your virtue. Temptations may assail you, too powerful for anything short of that religion which engages Omnipotence for our defense. In one unguarded moment, you may become the victims of those spiritual enemies which lie in wait to deceive you. It is God alone who can preserve you—but without piety, it is not likely that you will enjoy his protection. It is but just that he should leave to themselves, those who do not seek his counsel and assistance by prayer.

I am addressing many who are exposed to imminent danger; since being only sojourners in the town, as clerks or apprentices, they are removed from beneath the inspection of a father's wakeful eye, and unless they live beneath the roof of their employer, have no other restraint upon their conduct than that which is imposed by their own internal principles. Yours is a situation pregnant with peril. Hitherto you may have happily escaped the "corruptions that are in the world through lust." But beware, I beseech you, of the evils that surround you! Avoid bad company! "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Do not be deceived! Bad company corrupts good morals!" One sinful associate may drag you down from the moral elevation on which you now stand, into the vortex of ruin in which he is sinking. Rather have no companions than bad ones.

Acquire a taste for reading, and through the medium of books converse with the 'mighty dead'. Your company may be courted; but receive with cautious reserve and suspicion, every advance that is made for your friendship. Determine to be the friend of no man in whom you do not perceive the most unequivocal proofs of moral worth. Shun a wicked companion, as you would an assassin! If you have been too unguarded in this respect, and united yourselves with

associates whose conduct is in the least degree immoral, shake them off without hesitation, as you would a viper from your hand, or a scorpion from your lap. If you continue their acquaintance you will probably become as bad as they are. Wicked men have an infernal ambition to render others as corrupt as themselves. They are like the devil, as in many other respects, so particularly in this, "they go about seeking whom they may devour."

But above all things, fear God. My first and last advice to you is, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." True religion will **guard** you in danger; **guide** you in difficulty; **comfort** you in solitude. In your Bible you will always find a companion, when the hours and cares of business are over. And though you are not at home, true religion will procure you companions whose society will not corrupt, and pleasures which will neither glut nor pollute.

III. The third class of young men which I would address are those whose character I have described, and whose sins I have reprov'd. Unhappy youths! may this plain and faithful address produce the desired effect. Pause and ponder. Look at your course—and consider where it is conducting you! Sin is your enemy for both worlds; it is alike the foe of your body and your soul. It will corrupt your health. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. Though evil tastes sweet in his mouth and he conceals it under his tongue, though he cherishes it and will not let it go but keeps it in his mouth, yet the food in his stomach turns into cobras' venom inside him. He swallows wealth but must vomit it up; God will force it from his stomach. He will suck the poison of cobras; a viper's fangs will kill him."

Sin will blast all your temporal interests, by producing the habits which lead to poverty, and hindering the virtues which have a tendency to wealth. Wastefulness, intemperance, and debauchery, must have resources, and if these cannot be supplied by the ordinary proceeds of honest industry, extravagance may soon be followed with robbery. Robbery may be followed with infamy and death. Young men, let the recent events which have circulated such horror through the country, be felt as a solemn warning to you. Let

the fate of the desperately hardened murderer, who has the last week expired on the gallows, be as a flaming beacon to warn you against sin.

Say not, that amidst all your gaieties and vices, you are never likely to commit his crimes. We read in Scripture of the deceitfulness of the human heart—as well as of its desperate wickedness. And wherein lies its deceitfulness? In leading men on step by step in the vortex of vice, until it has conducted them infinite lengths beyond the spot to which it first directed their attention. When the prophet of the Lord disclosed to Hazael his future career of evil, the Syrian exclaimed, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing!" His indignation was honest at the time—but his heart was deceitful; and he lived to be worse than Elisha had foretold. There was a time when the felon lately executed would probably have shuddered at the idea of needlessly torturing a fly—but he lived to perpetrate, without pity or remorse, the crime of murdering a man!

Sin is deceitful, young men. No one becomes wicked all at once. The way of a transgressor is like that of a stone rolling down hill, which when it is once set going, moves at every revolution with accelerated speed. He begins with little sins, and these lead on to greater ones; from acts he proceeds to habits—from habits to inveterate custom; from custom to glorying in his wickedness. Vice first is **pleasing**, then it grows **easy**, then **delightful**, then **frequent**, then **habitual**, then **confirmed**; then the man is impenitent, then he is obstinate, then he resolves never to repent, and then he is damned!

Let the wicked then forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return unto God, for he will abundantly pardon. With the Lord there is mercy—that he may be feared; and plenteous redemption—that he may be sought unto. Even yet God waits to be gracious. Jesus Christ is able to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto God by him. Pause, consider, repent, believe, and be holy. Admire the patience of God which has borne with you so long. Be thankful that you have not been cut off in your sins, and sent to that world, where mercy is never dispensed by God, nor hope indulged by man.

From this time—read the Scriptures daily; attend the solemnities of public worship; pray to God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without which you can do nothing; forsake evil company; avoid all occasions and excitements to sin; consider your end; meditate constantly upon the approaching day of judgment. "But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief; on that day the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, the elements will burn and be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, it is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness as you wait for and earnestly desire the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be on fire and be dissolved, and the elements will melt with the heat." (2 Peter 3:10-12) Amen.

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