

The New Park Street Pulpit.

A BLAST OF THE TRUMPET AGAINST FALSE PEACE.

A Sermon

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AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

“Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”—Jeremiah vi. 14.

MINISTERS are fearfully guilty if they intentionally build up men in a false peace. I cannot imagine any man more greatly guilty of blood than he who plays jackal to the lion of hell, by pandering to the depraved tastes of vain, rebellious man. The physician who should pamper a man in his disease, who should feed his cancer, or inject continual poison into the system, while at the same time he promised sound health and long life—such a physician would not be one half so hideous a monster of cruelty as the professed minister of Christ who should bid his people take comfort, when, instead thereof, he ought to be crying, “Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion: be troubled, ye careless ones.” The work of the ministry is no child’s play; it is a labour which might fill an angel’s hands—did fill the Saviour’s heart. Much prayer we need that we may be kept honest, and much grace that we may not mislead the souls whom we are bound to guide. The pilot who should pretend to steer a ship toward its proper haven, but who should meanwhile occupy himself below with boring holes in her keel that she might sink, would not be a worse traitor than the man who takes the helm of a church, and professes to be steering it towards Christ, while all the while he is ruining it by diluting the truth as it is in Jesus, concealing unpalatable truths, and lulling men into security with soft and flattering words. We might sooner pardon the assassin who stretches forth his hand under the guise of friendship, and then stabs us to the heart, than we could forgive the man who comes towards us with smooth words, telling us that he is God’s ambassador, but all the while fomenting rebellion in our hearts, and pacifies us while we are living in revolt against the majesty of heaven. In the great day when Jehovah shall launch his thunderbolts, methinks he will reserve one more dread and terrible than the rest, for some arch-traitor

to the cross of Christ, who has not only destroyed himself, but led others into hell.

The motive with these false prophets is an abominable one. Jeremiah tells us it was an evil covetousness. They preached smooth things because the people would have it so; because they thus brought grist to their own mill, and glory to their own names. Their design was abominable, and without doubt, their end shall be desperate—cast away with the refuse of mankind. These who professed to be the precious sons of God, comparable to fine gold, shall be esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter.

But, my dear hearers, it is a lamentable fact, that without any hireling-shepherd to cry, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace,” men will cry that for themselves. They need not the syren song to entice them to the rocks of presumption and rash confidence. There is a tendency in their own hearts to put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—to think well of their evil estate and foster themselves in proud conceit. No man is ever too severe with himself. We hold the scales of justice with a very unsteady hand when our character is in the balance. We are too ready to say, “I am rich and increased in goods,” when at the same time we are naked, and poor, and miserable. Let men alone, let no deluder seek to deceive them, hush for ever every false and tempting voice, they will themselves, impelled by their own pride, run to an evil conceit, and make themselves at ease, though God himself is in arms against them. My solemn business this morning shall be, and O may God help me in it, to drag forth to the light some of you who have been pacifying your own consciences, and have been crying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

It is no uncommon thing with me to meet with people who say, “Well, I am happy enough. My conscience never troubles me. I believe if I were to die I should go to heaven as well as anybody else.” I know that those men are living in the commission of glaring acts of sin, and I am sure they could not prove their innocence even before the bar of man; yet will these men look you in the face and tell you that they are not at all disturbed at the prospect of dying. They laugh at death as though it were but a scene in a comedy, and joke at the grave as if they could leap in and out of it at their pleasure. Well, gentlemen, I will take you at your word, though I don’t believe you. I will suppose you have this peace, and I will endeavour to account for it on certain grounds which may render it somewhat more difficult for you to remain in it. I do pray that God the Holy Spirit may destroy these foundations, and pull up these bulwarks of yours, and make you feel uneasy in your consciences and troubled in your minds; for unease is the road to ease, and disquiet in the soul is the road to the true quiet. To be tormented on account of sin is the path to peace, and happy shall I be if I

can hurl a fire-brand into your hearts this morning; if I shall be able, like Samson, to turn at least some little foxes loose into the standing corn of your self-conceit and set your heart in a blaze.

1. The first person I shall have to deal with this morning, is the man who has peace because he spends his life in a ceaseless round of gaiety and frivolity. You have scarcely come from one place of amusement before you enter another. You are always planning some excursion, and dividing the day between one entertainment and another. You know that you are never happy except you are in what you call gay society, where the frivolous conversation will prevent you from hearing the voice of your conscience. In the morning you will be asleep while God's sun is shining, but at night you will be spending precious time in some place of foolish, if not lascivious mirth. Like Saul, the deserted king, you have an unquiet spirit and therefore you call for music, and it hath its charms, doubtless, charms not only to soothe the stubborn breast, but to still a stubborn conscience for awhile, but while its notes are carrying you upwards towards heaven, in some grand composition of a master author, I beseech you never to forget that your sins are carrying you down to hell. If the harp should fail you, then you call for Nabal's feast. There shall be a sheep shearing, and you shall be drunken with wine, until your souls become as stolid as a stone. And then you wonder that you have peace. What wonder! Surely any man would have peace when his heart has become as hard as a stone. What weathers shall it feel? What tempests shall move the stubborn bowels of a granite rock? You sear your consciences, and then marvel that they feel not. Perhaps too, when both wine and the viol fail you, you will call for the dance, and the daughter of Herodias shall please Herod, even though John the Baptist's head should pay its deadly price. Well, well, if you go from one of these scenes to another, I am at no loss to solve the riddle that there should be with you, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

And now sit for your portraits, and I will paint you to the life. A company of idolaters are gathered together around an hideous image. There sits the blood-delighting Moloch. He is heated hot. The fire blazes in his brazen centre, and a child is about to be put into his arms to be burnt to ashes. The mother and father are present when the offspring of their own loins is to be immolated. The little one shrieks with terror; its little body begins to consume in this desperate heat. Will not the parents hear the cry of their own flesh, and listen to the wailings of the fruit of their own bowels? Ah, no, the priests of Moloch will prevent the appeal of nature! Sounding their drums and blowing their trumpets with all their might they drown the cries of this poor immolated victim. It is what you are doing! Your soul is the victim to Satan! It is being destroyed now; and if you would but listen to its cries, if you would give yourself a little quiet, you might hear your poor soul

shrieking, *“Oh! do not destroy me: put not away from me the hope of mercy; damn me not; send me not down to hell.”* These are shrieks that might penetrate your spirit, and startle you into wisdom. But no, you beat your drums, and sound your trumpets, and you have your dance and your merriment, that the noise of your poor soul may be hushed. Ah, sirs! there will be a day when you will have to hear your spirit speak. When your cups are empty, and not a drop of water can be given to your burning tongue—when your music has ceased, and the doleful “Miserere” of wailing souls shall be your Black Sanctus,—when you shall be launched for ever into a place where merriment and mirth are strangers—then you will *hear* the cries of your soul, but hear too late. Then shall each voice be as a dagger sticking in your souls. When your conscience shall *hear*, “Remember, thou hadst thy day of mercy; thou hadst thy day of the proclamation of the gospel, but thou didst reject it,” then thou wilt wish, but wish in vain, for thunders to come and drown that still small voice, which shall be more terrible in thy ears than even the rumbling of the earthquake or the fury of the storm. Oh that ye would be wise and not fritter away your souls for gaiety. Poor sirs, poor sirs! There are nobler things for souls to do than to kill time—a soul immortal spending all its powers on these frivolities. Well might Young say of it, it resembles ocean into tempest tossed, to waft a feather or to drown a fly. These things are beneath you; they do no honour to you. Oh that you would begin to live! What a price you are paying for your mirth—eternal torment for an hour of jollity—separation from God for a brief day or two of sin! Be wise, men, I beseech you; open your eyes and look about you. Be not for ever madmen. Dance not for ever on this precipice, but stop and think. O Spirit of the living God! stay thou the frivolous, and dart a burning thought into his soul that will not let him rest until he has tasted the solid joy, the lasting pleasure which none but Zion’s children know.

2. Well, now I turn to another class of men. Finding that amusement at last has lost all its zest, having drained the cup of worldly pleasure till they find first satiety, and then disgust lying at the bottom, they want some stronger stimulus, and Satan who has drugged them once, has stronger opiates than mere merriment for the man who chooses to use them. If the frivolity of this world will not suffice to rock a soul to sleep, he hath a yet more hellish cradle for the soul. He will take you up to his own breast, and bid you suck therefrom his own devilish and Satanic nature, that you may then be still and calm. I mean that he will lead you to imbibe infidel notions, and when this is fully accomplished, you can have “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” When I hear a man saying, *“Well, I am peaceful enough, because I am not fool enough to believe in the existence of a God, or in a world to come; I cannot imagine that this old story book of yours—this Bible—is true,”* I feel two thoughts within my soul, first, a disgust of

the man for his dishonesty, and secondly, a pity for the sad disquietude that needs such dishonesty to cover it. Do not suspect the man of being honest. There are two sorts of infidels; one sort are such fools that they know they never could distinguish themselves by anything that was right, so they try and get a little fictitious glory by pretending to believe and defend a lie. There are another set of men who are unquiet in their consciences; they do not like the Bible because it does not like them; it will not let them be comfortable in their sins, it is such an uneasy book to them; they did put their heads upon it once, but it was like a pillow stuffed with thorns, so they have done with it, and they would be very glad if they could actually prove it to be untrue, which they know they cannot. I say then, I at once despise his falsehood, and pity the uneasiness of his conscience that could drive him to such a paltry shift as this, to cover his terrors from the eyes of others. The more the man brags, the more I feel he does not mean it; the louder he is in his blasphemies, the more he curses, the better he argues, the more sure I am that he is not sincere, except in his desire to stifle the groans of his uneasy spirit. Ah, you remind me with your fine arguments, of the Chinese soldiers. When they go out to battle, they carry on their arm a shield with hideous monsters depicted upon it, and making the loudest noise they can, they imagine their opponents will run away instantly, alarmed by these amazing manifestations. And, so you arm yourself with blasphemies, and come out to attack God's ministers, and think we will run away because of your sophistries. No, we smile upon them contemptuously. Once, we are told, the Chinese hung across their harbour, when the English were coming to attack them, a string of tigers' heads. They said: "These barbarians will never dare to pass these ferocious heads." So do these men hang a string of old, worn-out blasphemies and impieties, and then they imagine that conscience will not be able to attack them, and that God himself will let them live at peace. Ah, sir, you shall find the red-hot bullets of divine justice too many and too terrible for your sophisms. When you shall fall under the arm of the Eternal God, vain will be your logic then. Dashed to shivers, you will believe in the omnipotence, when you are made to feel it; you will know his justice when it is too late to escape from its terror. Oh, be wise, cast away these day dreams. Cease to shut thy soul out of heaven; be wise, turn thee unto God whom thou hast abused. For "All manner of sin and blasphemy, shall be forgiven unto man." He is ready to forgive you, ready to receive you, and Christ is ready to wash your blasphemy away. Now, today, if grace enable you, you may be an accepted child of that God whom you have hated, and pressed to the bosom of that Jehovah whose very existence you have dared to deny. God bless these words to you: if they have seemed hard, they were only meant to come home to your conscience; an affectionate heart has led me to utter them. Oh, do not this evil thing. Suck

not in these infidel notions; destroy not your soul, for the sake of seeming to be wise; stop not the voice of your conscience by those arguments which you know in your inmost soul are not true, which you only repeat in order to keep up a semblance of consistency.

3. I shall come now to a third class of men. These are people not particularly addicted to gaiety, nor especially given to infidel notions; but they are a sort of folk who are careless, and determined to let well alone. Their motto is, "Let tomorrow take care for the things of itself; let us live while we live; let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." If their conscience cries out at all, they bid it lie still. When the minister disturbs them, instead of listening to what he says, and so being brought into a state of real peace, they cry, "Hush! be quiet! there is time enough yet; I will not disturb myself with these childish fears: be still, sir, and lie down." Ah! and you have been doing this for years, have you? Whenever you have heard an earnest powerful sermon, you have gone home and laboured to get rid of it. A tear has stolen down your cheek now and then, and you have despised yourself for it. "Oh!" you say, "it is not manly for me to think of these things." There have been a few twitches at times which you could not help, but the moment after you have your heart like a flint, impenetrably hard and stony. Well sir, I will give you a picture of yourself. There is a foolish farmer yonder in his house. It is the dead of night: the burglars are breaking in—men who will neither spare his life nor his treasure. There is a dog down below chained in the yard; it barks and barks, and howls again. "I cannot be quiet," says the farmer, "my dog makes too much noise." Another howl, and yet another yell. He creeps out of bed, gets his loaded gun, opens the window, fires it, and kills the dog. "Ah! it is all right now," he mutters; he goes to bed, lies down, and quietly rests. "No hurt will come," he says, "now; for I have made that dog quiet." Ah! but would that he could have listened to the warning of the faithful creature. Ere long he shall feel the knife, and rue his fatal folly. So you, when God is warning you—when your faithful conscience is doing its best to save you—you try to kill your only friend, while Satan and Sin are stealing up to the bedside of your slothfulness, and are ready to destroy your soul for ever and ever. What should we think of the sailor at sea who should seek to kill all the stormy petrels, that there might be an end to all storms? Would you not say, "Poor foolish man! why those birds are sent by a kind providence to warn him of the tempest. Why needs he injure them? They cause not the tumult; it is the raging sea." So it is not your conscience that is guilty of the disturbance in your heart, it is your sin; and your conscience, acting true to its character, as God's index in your soul, tells you that all is wrong. Would that ye would arise, and take the warning, and fly to Jesus while the hour of mercy lasts.

To use another picture. A man sees his enemy before him. By the light of his candle he marks his insidious approach. His enemy looks fierce and black upon him, and is seeking his life. The man puts out the candle, and then exclaims, "I am now quite at peace." This is what you do. Conscience is the candle of the Lord; it shows you your enemy; you try to put it out by saying, "Peace, peace." Put the enemy out, sir! put the enemy out! God give you grace to thrust sin out! Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you to thrust your lusts out of doors! Then let the candle burn; and the more brightly its light shall shine, the better for your soul, now and hereafter. Oh! up ye sleepers, ye gagers of conscience, what mean you? Why are you sleeping when death is hastening on, when eternity is near, when the great white throne is even now coming on the clouds of heaven, when the trumpet of the resurrection is now being set to the mouth of the archangel—why do ye sleep? why will ye slumber? Oh that the voice of Jehovah might speak and make ye wake, that ye may escape from the wrath to come!

4. A fourth set of men have a kind of peace that is the result of resolutions which they have made, but which they will never carry into effect. "Oh," saith one, "I am quite easy enough in my mind, for when I have got a little more money I shall retire from business, and then I shall begin to think about eternal things." Ah, but I would remind you that when you were an apprentice, you said you would reform when you became a journeyman; and when you were a journeyman, you used to say you would give good heed when you became a master. But hitherto these bills have never been paid when they became due. They have every one of them been dishonoured as yet; and take my word for it, this new accommodation bill will be dishonoured too. So you

think to stifle conscience by what you will do by-and-bye. Ah, man, but will that by-and-bye ever come? And should it come, what reason is there to expect that you will then be any more ready than you are now. Hearts grow harder, sin grows stronger, vice becomes more deeply rooted by the lapse of years. You will find it certainly no easier to turn to God then than now. *Now* it is impossible to you, apart from divine grace; *then* it shall be quite as impossible, and if I might say so, there shall be more difficulties in the way *then* than even there are *now*. What think you is the value of these promises which you have made in the court of heaven? Will God take your word again, and again, and again, when you have broken it just as often as you have given it? Not long ago you were lying on your bed with fever, and if you lived you vowed you would repent. Have you repented? And yet you are fool enough to believe that you will repent by-and-bye; and on the strength of this promise, which is not worth a single straw, you are crying to yourself "peace, peace, when there is no peace." A man that waits for a more convenient season for thinking about the affairs of his soul, is like the

countryman in Æsop's fable, who sat down by a flowing river, saying, "If this stream continues to flow as it does now for a little while it will empty itself, and then I shall walk over dry-shod." Ah, but the stream was just as deep when he had waited day after day as it was before. And so shall it be with you. You remind me by your procrastination of the ludicrous position of a man who should sit upon a lofty branch of some tree with a saw in his hand, cutting away the branch on which he was sitting. This is what you are doing. Your delay is cutting away your branch of life. No doubt you intend to cover the well when the child is drowned, and to lock the stable door after the horse is stolen. These birds in the hand you are losing, because their may be some better hour, some better bird in the bush. You are thus getting a little quiet, but oh, at what a fatal cost! Paul was troublesome to you, and so you played the part of Felix, and said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." Conscience was unquiet, so you stopped his mouth with this sop for Cerberus; and you have gone to your bed with this lie under your pillow, with this falsehood in your right hand—that you will be better by-and-bye. Ah, sir, let me tell you once for all, you live to grow worse and worse. While you are procrastinating, time is not staying, nor is Satan resting. While you are saying, "Let things abide," things are not abiding, but they are hastening on. You are ripening for the dread harvest; the sickle is being sharpened that shall cut you down, and the fire is even now blazing into which your spirit shall be cast for ever.

5. Now I turn to another class of men, in order that I may miss none here who are saying, "*Peace, peace*, when there is no peace." I do not doubt but that many of the people of London enjoy peace in their hearts, because they are ignorant of the things of God. It would positively alarm many of our sober orthodox Christians, if they could once have an idea of the utter ignorance of spiritual things that reigns throughout this land. Some of us, when moving about here and there, in all classes of society, have often been led to remark, that there is less known of the truths of religion than of any science, however recondite that science may be. Take as a lamentable instance, the ordinary effusions of the secular press, and who can avoid remarking the ignorance they manifest as to true religion. Let the papers speak on politics, it is a matter they understand, and their ability is astonishing; but, once let them touch religion, and our Sabbath-school children could convict them of entire ignorance. The statements they put forth are so crude, so remote from the fact, that we are led to imagine that the presentation of a fourpenny testament to special correspondents, should be one of the first efforts of our societies for spreading the gospel among the heathen. As to theology, some of our great writers seem to be as little versed in it as a horse or a cow. Go among all ranks and classes of men, and since the day

we gave up our catechism, and old Dr. Watts' and the Assemblies ceased to be used, people have not a clear idea of what is meant by the gospel of Christ. I have frequently heard it asserted, by those who have judged the modern pulpit without severity, that if a man attended a course of thirteen lectures on geology, he would get a pretty clear idea of the system, but that you might hear not merely thirteen sermons, but thirteen hundred sermons and you would not have a clear idea of the system of divinity that was meant to be taught. I believe that to a large extent that has been true. But the great change which has passed over the pulpit within the last two years, is a cause of the greatest thankfulness to God; and we believe will be a boon to the church and to the world at large. Ministers do preach more boldly than they did. There is more evangelical doctrine I believe preached in London now, in any one Sunday, than there was in a month before. But still there is in many quarters a profound ignorance as to the things of Christ. Our old Puritans—what masters they were in divinity! *They* knew the difference between the old covenant and the new; they did not mingle works and grace together. They penetrated into the recesses of gospel truth; they were always studying the Scriptures, and meditating on them both by day and night, and they shed a light upon the villages in which they preached, until you might have found in those days as profound theologians working upon stone heaps, as you can find in colleges and universities now-a-days. How few discern the spirituality of the law, the glory of the atonement, the perfection of justification, the beauty of sanctification, and the preciousness of real union to Christ. I do not marvel that we have a multitude of men who are mere professors and mere formalists, who are nevertheless quite as comfortable in their minds as though they were possessors of vital godliness, and really walked in the true fear of God.

There was not—I speak of things that were—there was not in the pulpit a little while ago, a discernment between things that differ; there was not a separating between the precious and the vile. The grand cardinal points of the Gospel, if not denied, were ignored. We began to think that the thinkers would overwhelm the believers, that intellectuality and philosophy would overthrow the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ. It is not so now; I do, therefore, hope, that as the Gospel shall be more fully preached, that as the words of Jesus shall be better understood, that as the things of the kingdom of heaven shall be set in a clearer light, this stronghold of a false peace, namely, ignorance of Gospel doctrines, shall be battered to its foundations, and the foundation-stones themselves dug up and cast away for ever. If you have a peace that is grounded on ignorance, get rid of it; ignorance is a thing, remember, that you are accountable for. You are not accountable for the exercise of your judgment to man, but you are accountable for it to God. There is no such thing as toleration of your sentiments with Jehovah; I

have no right to judge you; I am your fellow-creature. No State has any right to dictate what religion I shall believe; but nevertheless, there is a true gospel, and there are thousands of false ones. God has given you judgment, use it. Search the Scriptures, and remember that if you neglect this Word of God, and remain ignorant, your sins of ignorance will be sins of wilful ignorance, and therefore ignorance shall be no excuse. There is the Bible, you have it in your houses; you can read it. God the Holy Spirit will instruct you in its meaning; and if you remain ignorant, charge it no more on the minister; charge it on no one but yourself, and make it no cloak for your sin.

6. I now pass to another and more dangerous form of this false peace. I may have missed some of you, probably; I shall come closer home to you now. Alas, alas, let us weep and weep again, for there is a plague *among us*. There are members of our churches who are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." It is the part of candour to admit that with all the exercise of judgment, and the most rigorous discipline, we cannot keep our churches free from hypocrisy. I have had to hear, to the very breaking of my heart, stories of men and women who have believed the doctrines of election, and other truths of the gospel, and have made them a sort of cover for the most frightful iniquity. I could, without uncharitableness, point to churches that are hot-beds of hypocrisy, because men are taught that it is the belief of a certain set of sentiments that will save them, and not warned that this is all in vain without a real living faith in Christ. The preacher does as good as say, if not in so many words: "If you are orthodox, if you believe what I tell you, you are saved; if you for a moment turn aside from that line which I have chalked out for you, I cannot be accountable for you; but if you will give me your whole heart, and believe precisely what I say, whether it is Scripture or not; then you are a saved man." And we know persons of that cast, who can have their shop open on a Sunday, and then go to enjoy what they call a savoury sermon in the evening; men who mix up with drunkards, and yet say they are God's elect; men who live as others live, and yet they come before you, and with brazen impudence, tell you that they are redeemed by the blood of Christ. It is true they have had a deep experience, as they say. God save us from such a muddy experience as that! They have had, they say, a great manifestation of the depravity of their hearts, but still they are the precious children of God. Precious, indeed! Dear at any price that any man should give for them. If they be precious to anybody, I am sure I wish they were taken to their own place, for they are not precious to any one here below, and they are not of the slightest use to either religion or morality. Oh! I do not know of a more thoroughly damnable delusion than for a man to get fit conceit into his head, that he is a child of God, and yet live in sin—to talk to you about sovereign grace, while he

is living in sovereign lust—to stand up and make himself the arbiter of what is truth, while he himself contemns the precept of God, and tramples the commandment under foot. Hard as Paul was on such men in his time—when he said their damnation is just—he spoke a most righteous sentence. Surely, the devil gloats over men of this kind. A Calvinist I am, but John Calvin never taught immoral doctrine. A more consistent expositor of Scripture than that great reformer I believe never lived, but his doctrine is not the Hyper-Calvinism of these modern times, but is as diametrically opposed to it as light to darkness. There is not a word in any one of his writings that would justify any man in going on in iniquity that grace might abound. If you do not hate sin, it is all the same what doctrine you may believe. You may go to perdition as rapidly with High-Calvinistic doctrine as with any other. You are just as surely destroyed in an orthodox as in a heterodox church unless your life manifests that you have been “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

7. I have but one other class of persons to describe, and then I shall have done when I have addressed a few solemn sentences of warning to you all. There remains yet another class of beings who surpass all these in their utter indifference to everything that might arouse them. They are men that are given up by God, justly given up. They have passed the boundary of his longsuffering. He has said, “My spirit shall no more strive with them;” “Ephraim is given unto idols, let him alone.” As a judicial punishment for their impenitence, God has given them up to pride and hardness of heart. I will not say that there is such a one here—God grant there may not be such a man—but there have been such to whom there has been given a strong delusion, that they might believe a lie, that they might be damned because they received not the gospel of Christ. Brought up by a holy mother, they perhaps learned the gospel when they were almost in the cradle. Trained by the example of a holy father, they went aside to wantonness, and brought a mother’s grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Nevertheless, conscience still pursued them. At the funeral of that mother, the young man paused and asked himself the question, “Have I killed her? have I brought her here?” He went home, was sober for a day, was tempted by a companion, and became as bad as ever. Another warning came. He was seized with sickness; he lay in the jaws of the grave; he woke up; he lived, and lived as vilely as he had lived before. Often did he hear his mother’s voice—though she was in the grave, she being dead yet spoke to him. He put the Bible on the top shelf—hid it away; still, sometimes a text he had learned in infancy used to thrust itself in on his mind. One night as he was going to some haunt of vice, something arrested him, conscience seemed to say to him, “Remember all that you have learned of *her*.” He stood still, bit his lip a moment, considered, weighed chances. At last he said, “I will go if I am

lost.” He went, and from that moment it has often been a source of wonder to him that he has never thought of his mother nor of the Bible. He hears a sermon, which he does not heed. It is all the same to him. He is never troubled. He says, “I don’t know how it is; I am glad of it; I am as easy now and as frolicsome as ever a young fellow could be.” Oh! I tremble to explain this quietude; but it may be—God grant I may not be a true prophet—it may be that God has thrown the reins on your neck, and said, “Let him go, let him go, I will warn him no more; he shall be filled with his own ways; he shall go the length of his chain; I will never stop him. “Mark! if it be so, your damnation is as sure as if you were in the pit now. O may God grant that I may not have such a hearer here. But that dread thought may well make you search yourselves, for it may be so. There is that possibility; search and look, and God grant that you may no more say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.”

Now for these last few solemn words. I will not be guilty this morning, of speaking any smooth falsehoods to you, I would be faithful with each man, as I believe I shall have to face you all at God’s great day, even though you heard me but once in your lives. Well, then, let me tell you that if you have a peace today which enables you to be at peace with your sins as well as with God, that peace is a false peace. Unless you hate sin of every sort, with all your heart, you are not a child of God, you are not reconciled to God by the death of his Son. You will not be perfect; I cannot expect you will live without sin; but if you are a Christian you will hate the very sin into which you have been betrayed, and hate yourself because you should have grieved your Saviour thus. But if you love sin, the love of the Father is not in you. Be you who you may, or what you may,—minister, deacon, elder, professor, or non-professor—the love of sin is utterly inconsistent with the love of Christ. Take that home, and remember it. Another solemn thought. If you are at peace to-day through a belief that you are righteous in yourself, you are not at peace with God. If you are wrapping yourself up in your own righteousness and saying, “I am as good as other people, I have kept God’s law, and have no need for mercy,” you are not at peace with God. You are treasuring up in your impenitent heart wrath against the day of wrath; and you will as surely be lost if you trust to your good works, as if you had trusted to your sins. There is a clean path to hell as well as a dirty one. There is as sure a road to perdition along the highway of morality, as down the slough of vice. Take heed that you build on nothing else but Christ; for if you do, your house will tumble about your ears, when most you need its protection.

And, yet again, my hearer, if thou art out of Christ, however profound may be thy peace, it is a false one; for out of Christ there is no true peace to the conscience, and no reconciliation to God. Ask thyself this question, “Do

I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart? Is he my only trust, the simple, solitary rock of my refuge?" For if not, as the Lord my God liveth, before whom I stand, thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, and dying as thou art, out of Christ, thou wilt be shut out of heaven; where God and bliss are found, thy soul can never come.

And now, finally, let me beseech you, if you are at peace in your own mind this morning, weigh your peace thus: "Will my peace stand me on a sick bed?" There are many that are peaceful enough when they are well, but when their bones begin to ache, and their flesh is sore vexed, then they find they want something more substantial than this dreamy quietness into which their souls had fallen. If a little sickness makes you shake, if the thought that your heart is affected, or that you may drop down dead in a fit on a sudden—if that startles you, then put that question of Jeremy to yourself, "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do when thou contendest with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou hadst trusted they have wearied thee, what wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? If sickness make thee shake what will destruction make thee do?" Then again, put the question in another light. If your peace is good for anything, it is one that will bear you up in a dying hour. Are you ready to go home to your bed now to lie there and never rise again? For remember, that which will not stand a dying bed will never stand the day of judgment. If my hope begins to quiver, even when the skeleton hand of Death begins to touch me, how will it shake, "When God's right arm is nerved for war, and thunders clothe his cloudy car?" If death makes me startle, what will the glory of God do? How shall I shrink into nothing, and fly away from him in despair! Then often put to thyself this question, "Will my peace last me when the heavens are in a blaze, and when the trembling universe stands to be judged?"

Oh my dear hearers, I know I have spoken feebly to you this morning; not as I could have wished, but I do entreat you if what I have said be not an idle dream, if it be not a mere myth of my imagination; if it be true, lay it to heart, and may God enable you to prepare to meet him. Do not be wrapping yourselves up, and slumbering, and sleeping. Awake, ye sleepers, awake! Oh! that I had a trumpet voice to warn you. Oh! while you are dying, while you are sinking into perdition, may I not cry to you; may not these eyes weep for you! I cannot be extravagant here; I am acquitted of being enthusiastic or fanatical on such a matter as this. Take to heart, I beseech you, the realities of eternity. Do not for ever waste your time. "Oh, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O house of Israel." Listen, now, to the word of the Gospel, which is sent to you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." For "he that believeth and is baptized shall

be saved,” while the solemn sentence remains. “He that believeth not shall be damned,”