

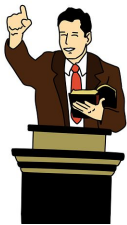
## TURN OR BURN

**TEXT: *Psalms 7:12: If he turn not, He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready.***

If the sinner turn not, God will whet His sword. So then, God has a sword, and He will punish man on account of his iniquity. This evil generation has labored to take away from God the sword of His justice. They have tried to prove to themselves that God will clear the guilty, and will by no means punish iniquity, transgressions, and/or sin.



Two hundred years ago, the predominant strain of the pulpit was one of terror. It was like Mt. Sinai — it thundered forth the dreadful wrath of God, and from the lips of preachers you heard the most terrible sermons, full to the brim with warning of God's judgment to come. Perhaps some of the Puritan father's had gone too far, and had given too great a prominence to the terror of the Lord in their ministry; but the Age in which we live has sought to forget those terrors all together.



If we dare to tell men that God will punish them for their sins, it is charged upon us that we want to bully them into religion, and if we faithfully and honestly tell our hearers that sin must bring after it certain destruction, it is said that we are attempting to frighten them into goodness. Now we care not for what men mockingly impute to us. We feel it our duty, when men sin, to tell them they shall be punished.

As long as the world will not give up its sin, we feel we must not cease our warnings. But the cry of the age is: "*God is merciful. God is love*". Who said He was not? But remember, it is equally true that God is just — severely and inflexibly just. He is not the Lord God if He is not just. He could not be merciful if He is not just, for punishment of the wicked is demanded by the highest mercy to the rest of mankind.

**But remember, it is equally true that God is just — severely and inflexibly just.**

Rest assured that He is just, and that the words I am about to read you from God's word are true:

***Psalms 9:17: The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations***

**that forget God.**

**Psalms 7:11-13:**

**11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.**

**12 If he turn not, He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.**

**13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; He ordaineth His arrows against the persecutors.**

Because this Age is wicked, it believes there is no Hell; and because it is hypocritical, it would have but feigned punishment. This doctrine is so prevalent as to make even ministers of the gospel flinch from their duty in declaring The Day of Wrath. How few there are who will solemnly tell us of the judgment to come.

They preach of God's love and mercy as they ought to do and as God commanded them; but of what avail is it to preach mercy unless they preach also the doom of the wicked? And how shall we hope to effect the purpose of preaching unless we warn men that if they turn not, He will whet His sword?



I fear that, in too many places, the doctrine of future punishment is rejected, laughed at as an idle fancy of some preachers of the day, but the day will come when it shall be known to be a reality.

In **1 Kings 22:1-38**, Ahab, the king of Israel, inquired of the prophet Micaiah whether he should go against Ramothgilead to battle. When Micaiah said he would be killed, Ahab became angry and had him put into prison, commanding that he be fed **“with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come [return] in peace” (v. 27b)**. Instead, he chose to listen to the 400 false prophets who had prophesied that the Lord would deliver Ramothgilead into his hands. Despite disguising himself in battle, Ahab was mortally wounded and died.

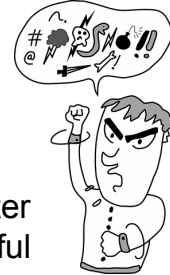
The men of Noah's generation laughed at what they thought was a foolish old man who, for 120 years, bid them to take heed because the world would be drowned; but when they were climbing to the tree tops and the floods were following them, did they then say the prophecy was untrue?



Oh, listen to me, for when I die, should I have been unfaithful to your souls, how doleful would be our meeting in the world of the spirits! It would be a

dreadful thing if you were able to say to me in the world to come, *"Sir, you flattered us; you did not tell us of the solemnities of eternity. You did not rightly dwell upon the awful wrath of God. You spoke to us feebly and faintly. You were somewhat afraid of us; you knew we could not bear to hear of eternal torment, so you kept it back and never mentioned it."*

Why, you would look me in the face and curse me to eternity if that should be my conduct. By God's help, it never shall be. Come fair or foul, when I die I shall — God helping me — be able to say that I am clear of the blood of all men. So far as I know God's truth, I will endeavor to speak it. Though on my head scandal to a tenfold greater extent than ever be poured, I'll hail it and welcome it if I may be faithful to my own Master.



Let me then endeavor — and by God's help I will do it as solemnly and as tenderly as I can — to address such of you as have not yet repented, most affectionately reminding you that if you should die impenitent, and if ye turn not, **He will whet His sword.**

In the first place, what is meant here by turning, and in the second, the necessity of man's turning? Third, what are the means whereby men can be turned from the error of their ways, and the weakness and frailty of their nature be amended by the power of Divine Grace?

Let every man repent one day before he dies, said Rabbi. And since he may die tomorrow, let him take heed to turn from his evil today. Even so we say, immediate repentance is what God demands, for He hath never promised thee that thou shall have any hour to repent in, except the one thou hast now.

Furthermore, the repentance here described as absolutely necessary is hearty repentance. It is no mock tears, it is not hanging out the ensign of grief while the heart is keeping merriment. It is not having an illumination within, and shutting up all the windows by a pretended repentance. It is the putting out of the candles of the heart. It is sorrow of the soul, which is true repentance.

True repentance is a turning of the heart, as well as the life.

A man may renounce every outward sin and yet not really repent. True repentance is a turning of the heart, as well as the life. It is the giving up of the whole soul to God, to be His forever and ever. It is a renunciation of the sins of the heart, as well as the crimes of life.

Ah, dear hearers, let none of us fancy that we have repented when we have only a false, fictitious repentance. Let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit, which is only the work of poor human nature. Let us not dream we have savings turned to God when we have only turned to ourselves. And let us not think it enough to have turned from one vice to another, or from vice to virtue. Let us remember it must be a turning to Jesus of the whole soul that we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus, born again.

This repentance must be perpetual. It is not my turning to God during today that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is forsaking my sin throughout my entire life until I sleep in the grave. You need not consider that to be upright for a week will be proof you are saved. It is a perpetual abhorrence of evil.

**This repentance must be perpetual.**

The change which God works is neither a transitory, nor a superficial change; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but the destroying of it. It is not the sweeping away of the dust of one day, but taking away of that which is the cause of the defilement.

In old times, when a rich and generous monarch came into their cities, they made the fountain to run with milk and wine. But the fountain was not therefore a fountain of milk and wine always; tomorrow it ran with water as before. So today you may go home and pretend to pray; you may be serious tomorrow and you may be honest, and the next day you may be devout. But if you turn, as scriptures has it, ***“like the dog to his vomit and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”***, your repentance shall but sink you deeper into Hell, instead of being a proof of divine grace in your hearts.



***Proverbs 26:11: As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.***

It is yet a more terrible one to dwell upon, this point, and if I considered my feelings in the work of the ministry, any more than we should if we were physicians of men's bodies, I would not mention it. We must sometimes use the knife when we feel that mortification would ensue without it. We must frequently make sharp gashes into men's consciences in hopes that the Holy Spirit will bring them to life. We assert there is a necessity that God should whet His sword and punish men if they will not turn.

Earnest Baxter used to say, "Turn or burn". The God of the Bible could suffer sin in no way to be unpunished. Some may suppose it. They may dream their intellects into a state of intoxication so as to suppose a God apart from justice, but no man whose reason is sound and whose mind is in a healthy condition can imagine a God without justice.

You cannot dream of a good government that could exist without justice, much less of God — the Judge and King of all the earth — without justice in His bosom. To suppose Him all love, and there be no justice, we're to un-deify Him and make Him no longer God. He would not be capable of ruling this world if He had not justice in His heart.

There is in man a natural perception of the fact that if there be a God, He must be just. I can scarcely imagine you can believe in a God without believing also in the punishment of sin. It were difficult to suppose Him elevated high above His creatures, beholding their disobedience and yet looking with the same serenity upon the good and upon the evil, you cannot suppose Him awarding the same praise to the wicked and to the righteous. The idea of God supposes justice. It is but to say justice when we say God.

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God supposes  
justice.

To imagine there will be no punishment for sin, and that man can be saved without repentance, is to fly in the face of all the Scripture. Adam, Noah, Sodom, and Korah are all examples. This world is not the dungeon where God punishes sin, but there are a few instances in which we cannot but believe He actually did avenge it. I am no believer that every accident is a judgment. I am far from believing that the destruction of men and women in a theater is punishment upon them for their sin, since the same thing had occurred in a divine service, to our perpetual sorrow. I believe judgment is reserved for the next world.

I am tired of this terrible work of endeavoring to show you that God must punish sin. Let me just utter a few of the declarations of His Holy Word, and then let me tell you how repentance is to be obtained.



O, Sirs, you may think that the fire of Hell is indeed a fiction, and that flames of the nethermost pit are but popish dreams. But if you believe in the Bible you must believe that it cannot be so. Did not our Master say, 3 times in the book of **Mark**:

***Mark 9:44: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.***

**Mark 9:46: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.**

**Mark 9:48: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.**

You say it is a metaphorical fire. But what is meant by this:

**Matthew 10:28: And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.**

Is it not written that there is reserved for the devil and his angels fearful torment? And do you not know that our Master said,

**Matthew 25:41: Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

Yet you say it is not philosophical to believe there is a Hell, it does not consort with a reason to believe there is. However, I should like to act as if it were, even if there is no such place; for as the poor and pious man once said, "Sir I like to have two strings for my bow. If there be no Hell I shall be as well off as you will; but if there should, it will go hard with you". But why need I say "if"; you know there is. No man has been born and educated in this land without having his conscience so far enlightened as to know that to be a truth.

All I need to do is press upon your anxious consideration this thought: Do you feel you are fit for Heaven now? Do you feel that God has changed your heart and renewed your nature? If not, I beseech you, lay hold of this thought: unless you are renewed, all that can be dreadful in the torment of the future world must inevitably be yours.



Dear hearers, apply this to thyself, not to thy fellowmen, but to thine own conscience, and my God will use it to bring thee to repentance.

Now, briefly, what are the means of repentance? Most seriously I say, I do not believe any man can repent to meet God unless it is whole hearted. Sinner, thou art so desperately set of sin that I have no hope thou wilt ever turn from it of thyself. But listen! He who died on Calvary is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin. Dost thou this night feel thou art a sinner?

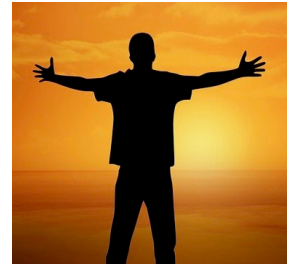
***Isaiah 45:22: Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.***

And as I thought, fixing his eyes on me, before he began to preach, he said: "Young man look, look, you are one of the ends of the earth; you feel you are; you know that you need a Saviour; you are trembling because you think He will never save you. He says this morning, "Look".

Oh, how my soul was shaken within me then! *What*, thought I, *does this man know me and everything about me?* He seemed as if he did. And he made me look. And in that moment I trusted His grace and looked to Jesus, and though despondent, downcast, and ready to despair, feeling I would rather die than live as I had lived — at that very moment it seemed as if a young heaven had had its birth within my heart core.

I went home, no more cast down. Those about me, noticing the change, asked me why I was so glad, and I told them I had believed in Jesus and that it was written:

***Romans 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***



Oh, if one such should be here tonight, where art thou, chief of sinners, thou vilest of the vile. Hear God's Word:

***Isaiah 1:18: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.***

And all this for Jesus' sake. All this for His Blood's sake.

***Acts 16:31: And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.***

His word is that:

***John 3:18: He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God.***