

# Never Read an Evil Book

by Catherine Booth

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*Catherine Booth's sermon emphasizes the dire consequences of engaging with evil and the importance of maintaining spiritual purity to avoid eternal suffering.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:23, Matthew 16:26, Romans 6:23, Galatians 6:7, 1 Peter 5:8

**Topics:** "Sin And Consequences", "Eternal Judgment"

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## Description

Catherine Booth preaches about the consequences of sowing to the flesh and the eternal impact of sin on the soul, emphasizing the spiritual penalties that even manifest in this world. She warns about the soul being the one to reap the principal harvest of woe, as illustrated by tragic real-life examples of individuals consumed by the consequences of their sinful choices. Catherine Booth highlights the unchanging nature of the soul after death and the continuation of the law of moral reproduction, stressing the importance of sowing to the Spirit to avoid eternal suffering and corruption.

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## Transcript

If you chance on one, the moment you suspect its character, put it in the fire, and thus prevent it becoming a minister of death to any other soul. Do not let your soul be soiled with evil; keep clean as far as you are clean. It is an infinite advantage not to have known the Devil's dirtiness, not to have had anything to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, of which it is a shame even to speak or to think. Keep your hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. Keep your imaginations, and don't allow polluting thoughts to gain access by any preventible mediums. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you.

Further, I want you to observe that the most terrible penalties of this law are spiritual even in this world; though the body, the character, and the circumstances as a rule, partake in the corruption, it is the SOUL that reaps the principal harvest of woe. Go ask that poor emaciated prodigal, dying of the rotteness implanted in his bones by a career of intemperance and vice ask him what constitutes his severest suffering, his direct misery? He will not tell you of the prostration, the fever, and anguish of his body, but of the remorse, the agony, and apprehension of his soul. He cries, 'Oh, never mind my body; it is my soul, my poor soul!' If anybody here has ever stood by the side of such a bed, have you not read in the more than mortal agony of such a face the words, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked?' There are some cases in which it seems, as though God lifted the curtain of mortality before the soul passed but of time, so that those around may see as far as possible the future heritage of woe consequent on a life of sin.

Alas! We in The Salvation Army get many awful illustrations of this. I will give you one or two which rise before me at the moment. One of our Officers was fetched late one night to visit a young man said to be dying. In relating the story he says: 'I shall never forget the scene; I could not get it out of my mind for many days and nights. When I entered the attic, I found the relic of a fine young fellow of about twenty-eight or thirty years of age, with beautiful black eyes almost standing out of his head, his hands clenched in agony, and he crying out in awful tones, "Curse them! curse them! WHERE ARE THEY? They have helped me to this, and now they have left me to die alone!" He referred to his evil companions. Our Officer drew near, and tried to calm and comfort him by inspiring hope of mercy and pardon, but he could produce no effect; the young man's rage and vengeance at the realization of his desperate state, and of the villany of those who had lured him on to it, could not be restrained, but continued to vent itself in wild denunciations and curses, until the one friend he had with him was obliged to retire and leave him to die with our Officer only in the room. He died in a perfect frenzy of rage and despair! Surely on his coffin-lid there should have been inscribed, 'He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.' That young man was a minister's son, and had been trained at college! Alas!

I fear this fact might have something to do with his downfall, if it be true, which I fear it is, that our colleges are much more prolific of infidelity and debauchery than of godliness and self-discipline!

Another case, which I had also from the lips of a devoted Officer, was that of a young woman who had allowed herself to be drawn from the paths of virtue into the vortex of impurity and corruption. Our visitor was sent for by a neighbour who had been alarmed by the shrieks of the dying girl. When he got to her bedside, he found her fingers so fast locked in the tresses of her hair that it was vain to try to disentangle them, and she was screaming, 'My soul is murdered, MURDERED! It's too late, too late! I'm lost, lost, LOST!' And thus she died. I might go on to multiply illustrations, but these are surely sufficient, sinner, to show you what the harvest must be of a life of sowing to the flesh.

Truly God has made sin to be its own punishment!

If the soul be immortal, there is only one thing necessary to its everlasting misery, and that is that it remain sinful.

I want you to note, further, that we have no reason to suppose that death in any way changes or annuls the action of this law. Both sound philosophy and Scripture assert that death is powerless to destroy or alter the nature of the soul, except, indeed, it be to quicken and intensify its faculties by removing the fleshly coil: none of its faculties will be destroyed or suspended; it will simply change worlds, enter on a new sphere of existence, and it will be amenable to the same law and the same God as in this life.

Reason as well as Scripture pronounces at the death of every sinner, 'Let him that is filthy be filthy still.' If this be true, it follows that, so far from death repealing this law of moral reproduction, it will greatly facilitate its operation, by removing those barriers which exist in this life. Here the worst of men reap only partially as they sow: this is a state of probation, not of retribution. And therefore God has ordained many alleviating circumstances and ministries of mercy to palliate, or, if men would let Him, to turn away the bitter fruits of their evil sowing, and induce them to begin to sow to the Spirit. But, after death, the sowing time will be ended, and there will be no further hindrance to the full harvest of woe and corruption springing from the evil seed sown in this life. Oh, sinner, what will you do then? All the enchantments of sinful sowing will have passed away for ever, and there will be nothing left but the DOLEFUL REAPING for ever and ever. Be not deceived. Do not let Satan lull you to sleep again. For as surely as you reap today

according as you sowed yesterday, notwithstanding the night's sleep which has intervened, so surely must you reap in eternity as you have sown in time.

Further, the text and many other passages seem to indicate an analogy in kind as well as in degree between the character of the seed sown and the harvest to be reaped. This may be as literally true as that like begets like the world over; and therefore each soul may find its particular sins to have in them, the germ of their principal punishment. The 'worm that dieth not' has often been supposed to be the gnawings of conscience finally awakened on account of the sins of time. Alas! We know that this terrible imagery of our Saviour cannot be worse than the thing signified. We know also that it may be fitly applied to the cravings of sinful passion and the pangs of remorse even in this life; how much more when all the sources of gratification are eternally dry, all the alleviations withdrawn, all hope of relief dead. Ask the wretched slave of any sinful appetite what is his highest misery, and he will tell you the suffering consequent upon the cravings of his passion when he has no means to gratify it. 'Oh,' cried a poor dying drunkard awhile ago, with frantic and maniacal shouts, 'give me brandy: I will have brandy; I can't die without brandy; give me brandy.' Now, suppose the soul given up to the complete mastership of any sinful passion for ever, without one solitary source of gratification, and you have a being who may fitly appropriate the language which Milton puts into the mouth of Satan, 'Oh, could I flee myself, myself am Hell!'

Sinner, do you see that you are sowing a seed of corruption, whose hellish brood will sting your naked soul through all eternity? You are sowing to the flesh; but do you see what the harvest must be? for God has so made you, that if there were no material hell, while you exist and remain guilty, you must be a hell to yourself. Do you see you have no choice? you must go on eating the bitter fruit of your own doings for ever.

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