

# The Wicked Heart Set to Do Evil

by Charles Finney

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*The human heart is fully set to do evil, and men abuse God's mercy by making excuses and opposing the government.*

**Scripture:** Luke 24:4

**Topics:** "Faith And Doubt", "Persevering Through Trials"

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## Description

The preacher delves into the concept of being perplexed, highlighting the feeling of being without a way or path, uncertain, and at a loss, as seen in various biblical examples like Herod's moral struggle, the disciples' confusion, and Festus' inability to understand. The sermon emphasizes how even prominent figures like Apostle Paul faced perplexities, yet remained hopeful and steadfast in their faith, never giving in to despair. Through biblical insights and illustrations, the preacher encourages the audience to emulate Paul's attitude of never despairing, even in the midst of perplexing situations.

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## Transcript

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." -- Eccl. viii. 11.

THIS text manifestly assumes that the present is not a state of rewards and punishments, in which men are treated according to their character and conduct. This fact is not indeed affirmed, but it is assumed, as it is also everywhere throughout the Bible. Everybody knows that ours is not a state of present rewards and punishments; the experience and observation of every man testifies to this fact with convincing power. Hence it is entirely proper that the Bible should assume it as a known truth. Every man who reads his Bible must see that many things in it are assumed to be true, and that these are precisely those things which every man knows to be true, and which none could know more certainly if God had affirmed them on every page of the Bible. In the case of this truth, every man knows that he is not himself punished as he has deserved to be in the present. Every man sees the same thing in the case of his neighbors. The Psalmist was so astounded by the manifest injustice of things in this world, as between the various lots of the righteous and of the wicked, that he was greatly stumbled, "until," says he, "I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end."

It is also assumed in this passage that all men have by nature a common heart. One general fact is asserted of them all, and in this way they are assumed to have a common character. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." So elsewhere. "God saw that every imagination of the thoughts

of his heart was only evil continually." This is the common method in which God speaks of sinners in His Word. He always assumes that by nature they have the same disposition.

The text also shows what the moral type of the sinner's heart is: "fully set to do evil." But we must here pause a moment to inquire what is meant in our passage by the term "heart."

It is obvious that this term is used in the Bible in various shades of meaning; sometimes for the conscience, as in the passage which affirms, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart," and may be expected the more to condemn us; sometimes the term is used for the intelligence; but here most evidently for the will, because this is the only faculty of the mind which can be said to be set -- fixed -- bent, determined upon a given course of voluntary action. The will is the faculty which fixes itself upon a chosen course; hence in our text, the will must be meant by the term heart; for otherwise no intelligible sense can be put upon the passage.

But in what direction and to what object is the will of wicked men fully set? Answer, to do evil. So God's Word solemnly affirms.

But, let it be said in way of explanation, this does not imply that men do evil for the sake of the evil itself; it does not imply that sinning, considered as disobedience to God, is their direct object -- no; the drunkard does not drink because it is wicked to drink, but he drinks notwithstanding it is wicked. He drinks for the present good it promises -- not for the sake of sinning. So of the man who tells lies. His object is not to break God's law, but to get some good to himself by lying; yet he tells the lie notwithstanding God's prohibition.

His heart may become fully set upon the practice of lying whenever it suits his convenience, and for the good he hopes thus to gain; and it is in vain that God labors by fearful prohibitions and penalties to dissuade him from his course. So of stealing, adultery, and other sins. We are not to suppose that men set their heart upon these sins out of love to pure wickedness; but they do wickedly for the sake of the good they hope to gain thereby. The licentious man would perhaps be glad if it were not wicked to gratify his passion; but wicked though it is, he sets his heart to do it. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit; why? Because they saw it was beautiful, and they were told it would make them wise; hence, for the good they hoped to gain, and despite of God's prohibition, they took and ate. I know it is sometimes said that sinners love sin for its own sake, out of a pure love of sin as sin, simply because it is disobedience to God, with a natural relish, as wolves love flesh; but this is not true -- certainly not in many cases; but the simple truth is, men do not set their hearts upon the sin for its own sake, but upon sinning for the sake of the good they hope to get from it.

Notice particularly now the language, "heart fully set to do evil." One man is avaricious; he sets his heart upon getting rich, honestly, if he can, but rich any way; to get money by fair means if possible, but be sure and get it. Another is ambitious. The love of reputation fills and fires his soul, and therefore, perhaps, he becomes very polite and very amiable in his manners -- sometimes, very religious -- if religion is popular, but altogether selfish, and none the less so for being so very religious.

Selfishness takes on a thousand forms and types; but each and all are sinful, for the whole mind should give itself up to serve God and to perform every duty as revealed to the reason. What did Eve do? Give herself up to gratify her propensity for knowledge, and for the good of self-indulgence. She consented to believe the lying spirit who told her it was "a tree to be desired to make one wise." This she thought must be very important. It was also, apparently, good for food, and her appetite became greatly excited; the

more she looked the more excited she became, and now what should she do? God had forbidden her to touch it: shall she obey God, or obey her own excited appetite? Despite of God's command, she ate it. Was that a sin? Many would think it a very small sin; but it was real rebellion against God, and He could not do otherwise than visit it with His terrific frown!

So everywhere, to yield to the demands of appetite and passion against God's claims, is grievous sin. All men are bound to fear and obey God, however much self-denial and sacrifice it may cost.

I said that selfishness often assumes a religious type. In the outset the mind may be powerfully affected by some of the great and stirring truths of the Gospel; but it presently comes to take an entirely selfish view, caring only to escape punishment, and make religion a matter of gain. It is wonderful to see how in such cases the mind utterly misapprehends the design of the Gospel, quite losing sight of the great fact that it seeks to eradicate man's selfishness, and draw out his heart into pure benevolence. Making this radical mistake, it conceives of the whole Gospel system as a scheme for indulgences. You may see this exemplified in the view which some take of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which they suppose to be reckoned to them while they are living in sin. That is, they suppose that they secure entire exemption from the penalty of violating law, and even have the honors and rewards of full obedience while yet they have all the self-indulgences of a life of sin. Horrible! Were ever Romish indulgences worse than this?

Examine such a case thoroughly and you will see that selfishness is at the bottom of all the religion there is in it. The man was worldly before and is devout now; but devout for the same reason that he was worldly. The selfish heart forms alike the basis of each system. The same ends are sought in the same spirit; the moral character remains unchanged. He prays, perhaps; but if so, he asks God to do some great things for him, to promote his own selfish purposes. He has not the remotest idea of making such a committal of himself to God's interests that he shall henceforth be in perfect sympathy with God, desiring and seeking only God's interests, and having no interests other than God's to serve at all.

To illustrate this point, let us suppose that a parent should say to his children, "I will give you my property if you will work with me, and truly identify your interests with mine; and if you are not willing to do this, I shall disinherit you." Now some of the children may take a perfectly selfish view of this offer, and may say within themselves -- Now I will do just enough for father to get his money; I will make him think that I am very zealous for his interests, and I will do just enough to secure the offered rewards; but why should I do any more?

Or suppose the case of a human government which offers rewards to offenders on condition of their returning to obedience. The real spirit of the offer goes the length of asking the sincere devotion of their hearts to the best good of the government. But they may take a wholly selfish view of the case, and determine to accept the proposal only just far enough to secure the rewards, and only for the sake of the rewards. The Ruler wants and expects the actual sympathy of their hearts -- their real good-will; and this being given, would love to reward them most abundantly; but how can He be satisfied with them if they are altogether selfish?

Now a man may be as selfish in praying as in stealing, and even far more wicked: for he may more grievously mock God, and more impiously attempt to bribe the Almighty to subserve his own selfish purposes. As if he supposed he could make the Searcher of hearts his own tool; he may insolently try to induce Him to play into his own hands, and thus may most grievously tempt Him to His face.

But the text affirms that "the heart of men is fully set in them to do evil." Perhaps some of you think otherwise; you don't believe in such depravity. "O," says that fond mother, "I think my daughter is friendly to religion. Do you think she is converted?" O no, not converted, but I think she is friendly; she feels favorably toward religion. Does she meet the claims of God like a friend to His government and to His reputation? I can not say about that. Ask her to repent and what does she say? She will tell you she can not.

How striking the fact that you may go through the ranks of society and you will meet almost everywhere with this position; the sinner says, "I can not, repent -- I can not believe." What is the matter? Where is the trouble? Go to that daughter, thought to be so friendly to religion; she is so amiable and gentle that she can not bear to see any pain inflicted; but mark; present to her the claims of God and what does she say? I can not; no, I can not obey God, in one of His demands. I can not repent of my sin, she says. But what is it to repent, that this amiable lady, so friendly to religion withal, should be incapable of repenting? What is the matter? Is God so unreasonable in His demands that He imposes upon you things quite impossible for you to do? Or is it the case that you are so regardless of His feelings and so reckless of the truth that for the sake of self-justification, you will arraign Him on the charge of the most flagrant injustice, and falsely imply that the wrong is all on His side and none on yours? Is this a very amiable trait of character in you? Is this one of your proofs that the human heart is not fully set to do evil?

You can not repent and love God! You find it quite impossible to make up your mind to serve and please God!

What is the matter? Are there no sufficient reasons apparent to your mind why you should give up your heart to God? No reasons? Heaven, earth, and hell may all combine to pour upon you their reasons for fearing and loving God, and yet you can not! Why? Because your heart is fully set within you to do evil rather than good. You are altogether committed to the pleasing of self. Jesus may plead with you -- your friends may plead; heaven and hell may lift up their united voices to plead, and every motive that can press on the heart from reason, conscience, hope and fear, angels and devils, God and man, may pass in long and flashing array before your mind -- but alas! your heart is so fully set to do evil that no motive to change can move you. What is this can not? Nothing less or more than a mighty will not!

That amiable lady insists that she is not much depraved. O no, not she. She will not steal! True, her selfishness takes on a most tender and delicate type. She has most gushing sensibilities; she can not bear to see a kitten in distress; but what does she care for God's rights? What for the rights of Jesus Christ? What does she care for God's feelings? What does she care for the feelings and sympathies of the crucified Son of God? just nothing at all. What, then, are all her tender sensibilities worth? Doves and kittens have even more of this than she. Many tender ties has she, no doubt, but they are all under the control of a perfectly selfish heart.

Mother Eve, too, was most amiable. Indeed, she was a truly pious woman before she sinned -- and Adam no doubt thought she could be trusted everywhere; but mark how terribly she fell! So her daughters. Giving up their hearts to a refined selfishness, they repel God's most righteous claims, and they are fallen!

So go through all the ranks of society and you see the same thing. Go to the pirate ship, the captain armed to the teeth and the fire of hell in his eye; ask him to receive an offered Saviour and repent of his sins, and he gives the very same answer as that amiable daughter does -- he can not repent. His heart, too, is so fully set within him to do evil that he can not get his own consent to turn from his sins to God.

O this horrible committal of the heart to do evil! It is the only reason why the Holy Ghost is needed to change the sinner's heart. But for this you would no more need the Holy Ghost than an angel of light does. O how fearfully strong is the sinner's heart against God! just where the claims of God come in he seems to have almost an omnipotence of strength to oppose and resist! The motives of truth may roll mountain high and beat upon his iron heart, yet see how he braces up his nerves to withstand God. What can he not resist sooner than submit his will to God? Another thing lies in this text, incidentally brought out -- assumed, but not affirmed -- viz., that sinners are already under sentence. The text says, "Because sentence is not executed speedily," implying that sentence is already passed and only waits its appointed time for execution. You who have attended courts of justice know that after trial and conviction next comes sentence. The culprit takes his seat on the criminal's bench. The judge arises -- all is still as death; he reviews the case, and comes shortly to the solemn conclusion: you are convicted by this court of the crime alleged, and now you are to receive your sentence. Sentence is then pronounced.

After this solemn transaction, execution is commonly deferred for a period longer or shorter according to circumstances. The object may be either to give the criminal opportunity to secure a pardon, or if there be no hope of this, at least to give him some days or weeks for serious reflection in which he may secure the peace of his soul with God. For such reasons, execution is usually delayed. But after sentence, the case is fully decided. No further doubt of guilt can interpose to affect the case; the possibility of pardon is the only remaining hope. The awful sentence seals his doom -- unless it be possible that pardon may be had. That sentence -- how it sinks into the heart of the guilty culprit! "You are now," says the judge, "remanded to the place from whence you came; there to be kept in irons, under close confinement, until the day appointed; then to be taken forth from your prison between the hours of ten and twelve, as the case maybe, and hung by the neck until you are dead. And may God have mercy on your soul!" The sentence has passed now -- the court have done their work; it only remains for the sheriff to do his as the executioner of justice and the fearful scene closes.

So the Bible represents the case of the sinner. He is under sentence, but his sentence is not executed speedily. Some respite is given. The arrangements of the divine government require no court, no jury; the law itself says "The soul that sinneth, it shall die;" "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them;" so that the mandate of the law involves the sentence of law on every sinner -- a sentence from which there can be no escape and no reprieve except by a pardon. What a position is this for the sinner!

But next consider another strange fact. Because sentence is not executed speedily; because there is some delay of execution; because Mercy prevails to secure for the condemned culprit a few days' respite, so that punishment shall not tread close on the heels of crime, therefore "the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." How astounding! What a perversion and abuse of the gracious design of the King in granting a little respite from instant execution!

Let us see how it would look in the case of our friend or neighbor. He has committed a fearful crime, is arrested, put on trial, convicted, sentenced, handed over to the sheriff to await the day and hour of his execution. The judge says I defer the execution that you may have opportunity to secure a pardon from the governor. I assure you the governor is a most compassionate man -- he loves to grant pardons; he has already pardoned thousands; if you will give up your spirit of rebellion he will most freely forgive you all; I beg of you, therefore, that you will do no such thing as attempt a justification; don't think of escaping death otherwise than by casting yourself upon his mercy; don't flatter yourself that there can be any other refuge.

Now suppose this man begins, "I have done nothing -- just nothing at all. I am simply a martyr to truth and justice, I. At all events, I have done nothing very bad -- nothing that any government ought to notice. I don't believe I shall be sentenced -- (the man is condemned already!) I shall live as long as the best of you." So he sets himself to making excuses. He goes to work as if he was preparing for a trial, and as if he expected to prove his innocence before the court. Nay, perhaps he even sets himself to oppose and curse the government, railing at its laws and at its officers, deeming nothing too bad to say of them, indulging himself in the most outrageous opposition, abusing the very men whose mercy has spared his forfeited life! How would all men be shocked to see such a case -- to see a man who should so outrage all propriety as to give himself up to abuse the government whose righteous laws he had just broken and then whose clemency he had most flagrantly abused! Yet this text affirms just this to be the case of the sinner, and all observation sustains it. You have seen it acted over ten thousand times; you can look back and see it in your own case. You know it is all true -- fearfully, terribly true.

If it were in some striking, awful manner revealed to you this night that your soul is damned, you would be thunder-struck. You do not believe the simple declaration of Jehovah as it stands recorded on the pages of the Bible. You are continually saying to yourself -- I shall not be condemned at last -- I will venture along. I will dare to tempt His forbearance yet. I do not at all believe He will send me to hell. At least, I will venture on a season longer and turn about by and by if I find it quite advisable; but at present why should I fear to set my heart fully in the way God has forbidden?

Where will you find a parallel to such wickedness? Only think of a state of moral hardihood that can abuse God's richest mercies -- that can coolly say -- God is so good that I will abuse Him all I can; God loves me so much that I shall venture on without fear to insult Him and pervert His long-suffering to the utmost hardening of my soul in sin and rebellion.

Let each sinner observe -- the day of execution is really set. God will not pass over it. When it arrives, there can be no more delay. God waits not because He is in doubt about the justice of the sentence -- not because His heart misgives Him in view of its terrible execution; but only that He may use means with you and see if He cannot persuade you to embrace mercy. This is all; this the only reason why judgment for a long time has lingered and the sword of justice has not long since smitten you down.

Here is another curious fact. God has not only deferred execution, but at immense cost has provided means for the safe exercise of mercy. You know it is naturally a dangerous thing to bestow mercy -- there is so much danger lest it should weaken the energy of law and encourage men to trample it down in hope of impunity. But God has provided a glorious testimony in favor of law, going to show that it is in His heart to sustain it at every sacrifice. He could not forgive sin until His injured and insulted law is honored, before the universe. Having done all this in the sacrifice of His own Son on Calvary, He can forgive without fear of consequences, provided only that each candidate for pardon shall first be penitent.

Now, therefore, God's heart of mercy is opened wide and no fear of evil consequences from gratuitous pardons disturbs the exercise of mercy. Before atonement, justice stood with brandished sword, demanding vengeance on the guilty; but by and through atoning blood, God rescued His law from peril -- He lifted it up from beneath the impious foot of the transgressor, and set it on high in safety and glory; and now opens wide the blessed door of mercy. Now He comes in the person of His Spirit and invites you in. He comes to your very heart and room, sinner, to offer you the freest possible pardon for all your sin. Do you hear that gentle rap at your door? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me." Look at those hands. Have

they not been pierced? Do you know those hands? Do you know where they have been to be nailed through and through? Mark those locks wet with the dew. Ah, how long have they been kept without in waiting for the door to open! Who is it that comes? Is it the sheriff of justice? Has he come with his armed men to drag you away to execution? Oh, no, no; but One comes with the cup of mercy in His hands; He approaches your prison-gate, His eye wet with the tear of compassion, and through the diamond of your grate He extends that cup of mercy to your parched lips. Do you see that visage, so marred more than any man's -- and you are only the more fully set to do evil? Ah, young man! alas, young woman! is such your heart toward the God of mercy? Where can we find a parallel to such guilt? Can it be found anywhere else in the universe but in this crazy world?

The scenes and transactions of earth must excite a wonderful interest in heaven. Angels desire to look into these things. O how the whole universe look on with inquisitive wonder to see what Christ has done, and how the sinners for whom He has suffered and done all, requite His amazing love! When they see you set your heart only the more fully to do evil, they stand back aghast at such unparalleled wickedness! What can be done for such sinners but leave them to the madness and doom of their choice?

God has no other alternative. If you will abuse Him, He must execute His law, and its fearful sentence of eternal death. Suppose it were a human government and a similar state of facts should occur; who does not see that government might as well abdicate at once as forbear to punish? So of God. Although He has no pleasure in the sinner's death, and although He will never slay you because He delights in it, yet how can He do otherwise than execute His law if He would sustain it? And how can He excuse Himself for any failure in sustaining it? Will you stand out against Him, and flatter yourself that He will fail of executing His awful sentence upon you? Oh, sinner, there is no possibility that you can pass the appointed time without execution. Human laws may possibly fail of execution: God's laws can fail never! And who is it that says, "Their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not?"

#### REMARKS.

1. Let me ask professors of religion -- Do you think you believe these truths? Let me suppose that here is a father and also a mother in this house, and you have a child whom you know and admit to be under sentence of death. You don't know but this is the very day and hour set for his execution. How much do you feel? Does the knowledge and belief of such facts disturb your repose? Now your theory is that the case of your child is infinitely worse than this.

A death eternal in hell you know must be far more awful than any public execution on earth. If your own son were under sentence for execution on earth, how would you feel? Professing to believe him under the far more awful sentence to hell, how do you in fact feel?

But let us spread out this case a little. Place before you that aged father and mother. Their son went years ago to sea. Of a long time they have not seen him nor even heard a word from him. How often have their troubled minds dwelt on his case! They do not know how it fares with him, but they fear the worst. They had reason to know that his principles were none too well fixed when he left home and they are afraid he has fallen into worse and still worse society until it may be that he has become a bold transgressor. As they are talking over these things and searching from time to time all the newspapers they can find, to get, if they can, some clew to their son's history, all at once the door-bell rings; a messenger comes in and hands a letter; the old father takes it, breaks the seal -- reads a word and suddenly falls back in his seat, the letter drops from his hand; oh, he can't read it! The mother wonders and inquires; she rushes forward

and seizes the fallen letter; she reads a word and her heart breaks with agony. What's the matter? Their son is sentenced to die, and he sends to see if his father and mother can come and see him before he dies. In early morning they are off. The sympathizing neighbors gather round; all are sorrowful, for it is a sad thing and they feel it keenly. The parents hasten away to the prison, and learn the details of the painful case. They see at a glance that there can be no hope of release but in a pardon. The governor lives near, they rush to his house; but sad for them, they find him stern and inexorable. With palpitating hearts and a load on their aching bosoms, they plead and plead, but all seems to be in vain. He says -- Your son has been so wicked and has committed such crimes, he must be hung. The good of the nation demands it, and I can not allow my sympathies to overrule my sense of justice and my convictions of the public good. But the agonized parents must hold on. O what a conflict in their minds! How the case burns upon their hearts! At last the mother breaks out: Sir, are you a father? Have you a son? Yes, one son. Where is he? Gone to California. How long since you heard from him? Suppose he too should fall! Suppose you were to feel such griefs as ours, and have to mourn over a fallen son! The governor finds himself to be a father. All the latent sensibilities of the father's heart are aroused within him. Calling to his private secretary, he says, Make out a pardon for their son! O what a flood of emotions they pour out!

All this is very natural. No man deems this strange at all.

But right over against this, see the case of the sinner, condemned to an eternal hell. If your spiritual ears were opened, you would hear the chariot wheels rolling -- the great judge coming in His car of thunder; you would see the sword of Death gleaming in the air and ready to smite down the hardened sinner. But hear that professedly Christian father pray for his ungodly son. He thinks he ought to pray for him once or twice a day, so he begins; but ah, he has almost forgot his subject. He hardly knows or thinks what he is praying about. God says, pray for your dying son! Lift up your cries for him while yet Mercy lingers and pardon can be found. But alas! where are the Christian parents that pray as for a sentenced and soon-to-be-executed son! They say they believe the Bible, but do they? Do they act as if they believed the half of its awful truths about sentenced sinners ready to go down to an eternal hell? Yet mark -- as soon as they are spiritually awake, then how they feel! And how they act!

What ails that professor who has no spirit of prayer and no power with God? He is an infidel! What, when God says he is sentenced to die and his angel of death may come in one hour and cut him down in his guilt and sin, and send his spirit quick to hell, and yet the father or the mother have no feeling in the case -- they are infidels; they do not believe what God has said.

2. Yet make another supposition. These afflicted parents have gone to the governor; they have poured out their griefs before him and have at last wrenched a pardon from his stern hands. They rush from his house toward the prison, so delighted that they scarcely touch the ground; coming near they hear songs of merriment, and they say, How our son must be agonized with company and scenes so unsuited and so uncongenial! They meet the sheriff. Who, they ask, is that who can sing so merrily in a prison? It is your own son. He has no idea of being executed; he swears he will burn down the governor's house; indeed, he manifests a most determined spirit, as if his heart were fully set on evil. Ah, say they, that is distressing; but we can subdue his wicked and proud heart. We will show him the pardon and tell him how the governor feels. We are sure this will subdue him. He can not withstand such kindness and compassion.

They come to the door; they gain admittance and show him the pardon. They tell him how much it has cost them and how tenderly the governor feels in the case. He seizes it, tears it to pieces, and tramples it under his feet! O, say they, he must be deranged! But suppose it is only depravity of the heart, and they come to

see it, and know that such must be the case. Alas, they cry, this is worst of all! What! not willing to be pardoned -- not willing to be saved! This is worse than all the rest. Well, we must go to our desolate home. We have done with our son! We got a pardon for him with our tears, but he will not have it. There is nothing more that we can do.

They turn sadly away, not caring even to bid him farewell. They go home doubly saddened -- that he should both deserve to die for his original crimes, and also for his yet greater crime of refusing the offered pardon.

The day of execution comes; the sheriff is on hand to do his duty; from the prison he takes his culprit to the place of execution; the multitude throng around and follow sadly along -- suddenly a messenger rushes up to say to the criminal, "You have torn to pieces one pardon, but here is yet one more; will you have this?" With proud disdain he spurns even this last offer of pardon! And now where are the sympathies of all the land? Do they say, How cruel to hang a young man, and for only such a crime? Ah, no; no such thing at all. They see the need of law and justice; they know that law so outraged must be allowed to vindicate itself in the culprit's execution. And now the sheriff proclaims, "Just fifteen minutes to live;" and even these minutes he spends in abusing the governor, and insulting the majesty of law.

The dreadful hour arrives, and its last moment -- the drop falls; he trembles a minute under the grasp of Death, and all is still forever! He is gone and Law has been sustained in the fearful execution of its sentence. All the people feel that this is righteous. They can not possibly think otherwise. Even those aged parents have not a word of complaint to utter. They approve the governor's course; they endorse the sentence. They say, We did think he would accept the pardon! but since he would not, let him be accursed! We love good government, we love the blessings of law and order in society more than we love iniquity and crime. He was indeed our son, but he was also the son of the devil!

But let us attend the execution of some of these sinners from our own congregation. You are sent for to come out for execution. We see the messenger; we hear the sentence read -- we see that your fatal hour has come. Shall we turn and curse God? NO, NO! We shall do no such thing. When your drop falls, and you gasp, gasp, and die, your guilty, terror-stricken soul goes wailing down the sides of the pit, shall we go away to complain of God and of His justice? No, Why not? Because you might have had mercy, but you would not. Because God waited on you long, but you only became in heart more fully set to do evil. The universe look on and see the facts in the case; and with one voice that rings through the vast arch of heaven, they cry, "Just and righteous art thou in all thy ways, thou most Holy Lord God!"

Who says this is cruel? What! shall the universe take up arms against Jehovah? No. When the universe gather together around the great white throne, and the dread sentence goes forth, "Depart, accursed;" and away they move in dense and vast masses as if old ocean had begun to flow off -- down, down, they sink to the depths of their dark home; but the saints with firm step, yet solemn heart, proclaim God's law is vindicated; the insulted majesty of both Law and Mercy is now upheld in honor, and all is right.

Heaven is solemn, but joyful; saints are solemn, yet they cannot but rejoice in their own glorious Father. See the crowds and masses as they move up to heaven. They look back over the plains of Sodom and see the smoke of her burning ascend up like the smoke of a great furnace. But they pronounce it just, and have not one word of complaint to utter.

To the yet living sinner, I have it to say today that the hour of your execution has not yet arrived. Once more the bleeding hand offers Mercy's cup to your lips. Think a moment; your Saviour now offers you

mercy. Come, O come now and accept it.

What will you say? I'll go on still in my sins? Again, all we can say is that the bowels of divine love are deeply moved for you -- that God has done all to save you that He wisely can do. God's people have felt a deep and agonizing interest in you and are ready now to cry, How can we give them up? But what more can we do -- what more can even God do? With bleeding heart and quivering lip has Mercy followed you. Jesus Himself said, "How often would I have gathered you -- O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often I would have saved you, but ye would not!" Shall Jesus behold and weep over you, and say, "O that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day -- but now it is hidden from thine eyes?" What, O dying sinner, will you say? Shall not your response be, "It is enough -- I have dashed away salvation's cup long and wickedly enough; you need not say another word, O that bleeding hand! those weeping eyes! Is it possible that I have withstood a Saviour's love so long? I am ready to beg for mercy now; and I rejoice to hear that our God has a father's heart."

He knows you have sinned greatly and grievously, but O, He says -- My compassions have been bleeding and gushing forth toward you these many days. Will you close in at once with terms of mercy and come to Jesus? What do you say?

Suppose an angel comes down, in robes so pure and so white; unrolls his papers, and produces a pardon in your name, sealed with Jesus' own blood. He opens the sacred book and reads the very passage which reveals the love of God, and asks you if you will believe and embrace it?

What will you do?

And what shall I say to my Lord and Master? When I come to report the matter, must I bear my testimony that you would not hear? When Christ comes so near to you, and would fain draw you close to His warm heart, what will you do? Will you still repeat the fatal choice, to spurn His love and dare His injured justice?

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-finney/the-wicked-heart-set-to-do-evil/>

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