

A Postscript Unto the Reader

by Michael Wigglesworth

The sermon calls for urgent repentance and faith in Christ to escape the eternal consequences of sin.

Scripture: John 3:16, Acts 3:19, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 9:27, 2 Peter 3:9

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Eternal Judgment"

Description

Michael Wigglesworth delivers a powerful sermon urging readers to consider the eternal destiny of their souls, emphasizing the fallen nature of humanity and the need for repentance and faith in Christ. He vividly describes the consequences of rejecting God's mercy and the terrifying judgment that awaits those who die in a state of unbelief. Wigglesworth passionately pleads with listeners to awaken from spiritual slumber, repent of their sins, and seek God's forgiveness before it's too late, highlighting the urgency of turning to Christ for salvation.

Transcript

And now good Reader, I return again To talk with thee, who hast been at the pain To read throughout, and heed what went before; And unto thee I'll speak a little more. Give ear, I pray thee, unto what I say, That God may hear thy voice another day. Thou hast a Soul, my friend, and so have I, To save or lose; a Soul that cannot die, A soul of greater price than God and Gems; A Soul more worth than Crowns and Diadems; A Soul at first created like its Maker, And of Gods Image made to be partaker: Upon the wings of Noblest faculties, Taught for to soar above the Starry Skies, And not to rest, until it understood It self possessed of the chiefest good.

And since the Fall, thy Soul retaineth still Those Faculties of Reason and of Will, But Oh, how much depriv'd, and out of frame, As if they were some others, not the same. Thine Understanding dimly benighted, And Reason'd eye in Sp'ritual things dim-sighted, Or else stark blind: Thy Will inclin'd to evil, And nothing else, a Slave unto the Devil; That loves to live, and liveth to transgress, But shuns the way of God and Holiness. All thin Affections are disordered; And thou by head-strong Passions are misled.

What need I tell thee of thy crooked way, And many wicked wand'rings every day? Or that thine own transgressions are more In number, than the sands upon the Shore: Thou art a lump of wickedness become, And may'st with horror think upon thy Doom, Until thy Soul be washed in the flood Of Christ's most dear, soul-cleansing precious blood. That, that alone can do away thy sin Which thou wert born, and hast long lived in. That, only that, can pacifie Gods wrath, If apprehended by a lively Faith, Now whilst the day and means of Grace do last, Before the opportunity be past.

But if O man, thou liv'st a Christless creature, And Death surprize thee in a state of nature, (As who can tell but that may be thy case) How wilt thou stand before the Judge's face? When he shall be reveal'd in faming fire, And come to pay ungodly men their hire: To execute due vengeance upon those That knew him not, or that have been his foes? What wilt thou answer unto his demands, When he requires a reason at thy hands Of all the things that thou hast said, or done, Or left undone, or set thine heart upon?

When he shall thus with thee expostulate, What cause hadst thou thy Maker for to hate, To take up Arms against thy Sovereign, And Enmity against him to maintain? What injury hath God Almighty done thee? What good hath he with-held that might have won thee? What evil, or injustice, hast thou found In him, that might unto thine hurt redound? If neither felt, nor feared injury Hath moved thee to such hostility; What made thee then the Fountain to forsake, And unto broken Pits thy self betake?

What reason hadst thou to dishonour God, Who thee with Mercies never cease to load? Because the Lord was good, hast thou been evil, And taken part against him with the Devil? For all his cost to pay him with despite, And all his love with hatred to requite? Is this the fruit of Gods great patience, To wax more bold in disobedience? To kick against the bowels of his Love, Is this aright his Bounty to improve? Stand still, ye Heav'ns and be astonished, That God by man should thus be injured!

Give ear, O Earth, and tremble at the sin Of those that thine Inhabitants have bin. But thou, vile Wretch, hast added unto all Thine other faults, and facts so criminal, The damning sin of wilful unbelief, Of all Transgressors hadst thou been the chief; Yet when time was, thou might'st have been set free From Sin, and Wrath, and punishment by mee. But thou wouldst not accept of Gospel Grace, Nor on my terms Eternal Life embrace. As if that all thy breaches of Gods Law Were not enough upon thy head to draw Eternal Wrath: Thou hast despis'd a Saviour, Rejected me, and trampled on my favour.

How oft have I stood Knocking at thy door, And been denied entrance evermore? How often hath my Spirit been withstood, When as I sent him to have done thee good? Thou hast no need of any one to plead Thy Cause, or for thy Soul to intercede: Plead for thy self, it thou hast ought to say, And pay thy forfeiture without delay. Behold thou dost ten thousand Talents owe, Or pay thy Debt, or else to Prison go. Think, think, O Man, when Christ shall thus unfold Thy secret guilt, and make thee to behold The ugly face of all thy sinful errors, And fill thy Soul with his amazing terrours, And let thee see the flaming Pit of Hell (Where all that have no part in him shall dwell) When he shall thus expostulate the case, How canst thou bear to look him in the face?

What wilt thou do without an Advocate? Or plead, when as thy state is desparate? Dost think to put him off with fair pretences? Or wilt thou hide and cover thine offences? Can any thing from him concealed be, Who doth the hidden things of darkness see? Art thou of force his Power to withstand? Canst thou by might escape out of his hand? Dost thou intend to run out of his sight, And save thy self from punishment by flight? Or wilt thou be eternally accurst, And bide his Vengeance, let him do his worst?

Oh, who can bear his indignation heat? Or bide the pains of Hell, which are so great? If then thou neither canst his Wrath endure, Nor any Ransom after death procure: If neither Cryes nor Tears can move his heart To pardon thee, or mitigate thy smart, But unto Hell thou must perforce be sent With dismal horrour and astonishment: Consider, O my Friends, what cause thou hast With fear and trembling (while as yet thou may'st) To lay to heart thy sin and misery, And to make out after the Remedy.

Consider well the greatness of thy danger, O Child of wrath, and object of Gods anger, Thou hangest over the Infernal Pit By one small thread, and car'st thou not a whit? There's but a step between thy Soul and

Death, Nothing remains but stopping of thy breath, (Which may be done to morrow, or before) And then thou art undone for evermore. Let this awaken thy Security, And make thee look about thee speedily, How canst thou rest an hour or sleep a night, Or in thy Creature-comforts take delight; Or with vain Toyes thy self forgetfull make How near thou art unto the burning Lake?

How canst thou live without tormenting fears? How canst thou hold from weeping floods of tears, Yea, tears of blood, I might almost have sed, If such like tears could from thine eyes be shed? To gain the world what will it profit thee, And loose thy Soul and self eternallie? Eternity on one small point dependeth: The man is lost that this short life mispendeth, For as the Tree doth fall, right so it lies; And man continues in what state he dies. Who happy die, shall happy rise again; Who cursed die, shall cursed still remain, If under Sin, and Wrath, Death leaves thee bound, At Judgment under Wrath thou shalt be found: And then wo, wo that ever thou wert born, O wretched man, of Heav'n and Earth forlorn!

Consider this, all ye that God forget, Who all his threatenings at nought do set, Lest into pieces he begin to tear Your Souls, and there be no deliverer. O you that now sing care and fear away, Think often of the formidable Day, Wherein the Heavens with a mighty noise, And with a hideous, heart-confounding voice, Shall pass away together, being roll'd As men are wont their garments for to fold; When th' Elements with fervent heat shall melt, And living Creatures in the same shall swelt, And altogether in those Flames expire, Which set the Earths Foundations on fire.

Oh, what amazement will your hearts be in, And how will you to curse your selves begin For all your damned sloth, and negligence, And unbelief, and gross Impenitence, When you shall hear that dreadful Sentence past, That all the wicked into Hell be cast? What horrour will your Consciences surprise, When you shall hear the fruitless doleful cries Of such as are compelled to depart Unto the place of everlasting smart? What, when you see the sparks fly out of Hell, And view the Dungeon where you are to dwell, Wherein you must eternally remain In anguish, and intolerable pain?

What, when your hands and feet are bound together, And you are cast into the Lake for ever? Then shall you feel the truth of what you hear, That hellish pains are more than you can bear, And that those Torments are an hundred fold More terrible than ever you were told. Nor speak I this, good Reader, to torment thee Before the time, but rather to prevent thee From running head-long to thine own decay, In such a perillous and deadly way. We, who have known and felt Jehovah's terrours, Perswade men to repent them of their errours, And turn to God in time, e're his Decree Bring forth, and then there be no Remedee!

If in the night, when thou art fast asleep, Some friend of thine, that better watch doth keep, Should see thy house all on a burning flame, And thee almost inclosed with the same: If such a friend should break thy door and wake thee, Or else by force out of the peril take thee: What? wouldst thou take his kindness in ill part? Or frown upon him for his good desert? Such, O my friend, such is thy present state, And danger, being unregenerate. Awake, awake, and then thou shalt perceive Thy peril greater than thou wilt believe.

Lift up thine eyes, and see Gods wrathful ire, Preparing unextinguishable fire For all that live and die impenitent. Awake, awake, O Sinner, and repent, And quarrel not, because I thus alarm Thy Soul, to save it from eternal harm. Perhaps thou harbourest such thoughts as these: I hope I may enjoy my carnal ease A little longer, and my self refresh With those delights that gratifie the flesh, And yet repent before it be too late, And get into the comfortable state; I hope I have yet many years to spend, And time enough those matters to attend.

Presumptuous heart! Is God engag'd to give A longer time to such as love to live Like Rebels still, who think to stain his Glory By wickedness, and after to be sorry? Unto thy lust shall he be made a drudge, Who thee, and all ungodly men, shall judge? Canst thou account sin sweet, and yet confess, That first, or last, it ends in bitterness? Is sin a thing that must procure thee sorrow? And woulst thou dally with't another morrow? O foolish man, who lovest to enjoy That which will thee distress, or else destroy!

What gained Sampson by his Delilah? What gained David by his Bathsheba? The one became a Slave, lost both his eyes, And made them sport that were his Enemies; The other penneth, as a certain token Of Gods displeasure, that his bones were broken, Besides the woes he after met withal, To chasten him for that his grievous Fall: His own Son Ammon using crafty wiles, His Daughter Thamar wickedly defiles; His second Son more beautiful than good, His hands embreweth in his Brothers Bolld: And by and by aspiring to the Crown, He strives to pull his gentle Father down: With hellish rage, him fiercely persecuting, And brutishly his Concubines polluting.

Read whoso list, and ponder what he reads, And he shall find small joy in evil deeds. Moreover this consider, that the longer Thou liv'st in sin, thy sin will grow the stronger, And then it will an harder matter prove, To leave those wicked haunts that thou dost love. The Black-moor may as eas'ly change his skin, As old transgressors leave their wonted sin. And who can tell what may become of thee, Or where thy Soul in one days time may be? We see that Death ner old nor young men spares, But one and other takes at unawares.

For in a moment, whil'st men Peace do cry, Destruction seizeth on them suddenly. Thou who this morning art a lively wight, May'st be a Corps and damned Ghost ere night. Oh, dream not then, that it will serve the turn, Upon thy death bed for thy sins to mourn, But think how many have been snatcht away, And had no time for mercy once to pray. It's just with God Repentance to deny To such as put it off until they dy, And late Repentance seldom proveth true, Which if it fail, thou know'st what must ensue; For after this short life is at an end, What is amiss thou never canst amend.

Believe, O man, that to procrastinate, And put it off until it be too late, As 'tis thy sin, so is it Satans wile, Whereby he doth great multitudes beguile. How many thousands hath this strong delusion Already brought to ruine and confusion, Whose Souls are now reserv'd in Iron Chains, Under thick darkness to eternal pains? They thought of many years, as thou dost now, But were deceived quite, and so may'st thou. Oh, then my friend, while not away thy time, Nor by rebellion aggravate thy Crime.

Oh put not off Repentance till to morrow, Adventure not without Gods leave to borrow Another day to spend upon thy lust, Lest God (that is most holy, wise, and just) Denounce in wrath, and to thy terrour say: This night shall Devils fetch thy Soul away. Now seek the face of God with all thy heart; Acknowledge unto him how vile thou art; Tell him thy sins deserve eternal wrath, And that it is a wonder that he hath Permitted thee so long to draw thy breath, Who might have cut thee off by sudden death, And sent thy Soul into the lowest Pit, From whence no price should ever ransom it, And that he may most justly do it still (Because thou hast deserv'd it) if he will.

Yet also tell him that, if he shall please, He can forgive thy Sins, and thee release, And that in Christ his Son he may be just, And justifie all those what on him trust: That though thy sins are of a crimson dy, Yet Christ his Blood can cleanse thee thorowly. Tell him, that he may make his glorious Name More wonderful by covering thy shame; That Mercy may be greatly magnify'd, And Justice also fully satisfy'd, If he shall please to own thee in his Son, Who hath paid dear for Men's Redemption.

Tell him thou hast an unbelieving heart, Which hindereth thee from coming for a part In Christ: and that although his terrours aw thee, Thou canst not come till he be pleas'd to draw thee. Tell him thou know'st thine heart to be so bad, And thy condition so exceeding sad, That though Salvation may be had for nought Thou canst not come and take, till thou be brought. Oh beg of him to bow thy stubborn Will To come to Christ, that he thy lusts may kill. Look up to Christ for his attractive pow'r, Which he exerteth in a needful hour; Who saith, whenas I lifted up shall be, Then will I draw all sorts of men to me.

O wait upon him with true diligence, And trembling fear in every Ordinance; Unto his call earnest attention give, Whose voice makes deaf men hear, and dead men live. Thus weep, and mourn, thus hearken, pray and wait, Till he behold, and pittie thine estate, Who is more ready to bestow his Grace, Then thou the same art willing to imbrace; Yea, he hath Might enough to bring thee home, Though thou hast neither strength nor will to come. If he delay to answer thy request, Know that oft-times he doth it for the best: Not with intent to drive us from his door, But for to make us importune him more; Or else to bring us duly to confess, And be convinc'd of our unworthiness.

Oh, be not weary then, but persevere To beg his Grace till he thy suit shall hear: And leave him not, nor from his foot-stool go, Till over thee Compassions skirt he throw. Eternal Life will recompence thy pains, If found at last, with everlasting gains. For if the Lord be pleas'd to hear thy cries, And to forgive thy great iniquities, Thou wilt have cause for ever to admire, And laud his Grace, that granted thy desire. Then shalt thou find thy labour is not lost: But that the good obtain'd surmounts the cost.

Nor shalt thou grieve for loss of sinful pleasures, Exchang'd for heavenly joyes and lasting treasures. The yoke of Christ, which once thou didst esteem A tedious yoke, shall then most easie seem. For why? The love of Christ shall thee constrain To take delight in that which was thy pain; The wayes of Wisdom shall be pleasant wayes, And thou shalt chuse therein to spend thy dayes. If once thy Soul be brought to such a pass, O'bless the Lord, and magnifie his Grace. Thou, that of late hadst reason to be sad, May'st now rejoyce, and be exceeding glad, For thy condition is as happy now, As erst it was disconsolate and low; Thou art become as rich as whilome poor, As blessed now, as cursed heretofore; For being cleansed with Christs precious Blood, Thou hast an int'rest in the chiefest good: Gods anger is towards thy Soul appeased, And in his Christ he is with thee well pleased.

Yea, he doth look upon thee with a mild And gracious aspect as upon his child; He is become thy Father and thy Friend, And will defend thee from the cursed Fiend. Thou need'st not fear the roaring Lyon's rage, Since God Almighty doth himself engage To bear thy Soul in Everlasting Armes, Above the reach of all destructive harms. What ever here thy sufferings may be, Yet from them all the Lord shall rescue thee. He will preserve thee by his wond'rous might Unto that rich Inheritance in light.

Oh, sing for you, all ye regenerate, Whom Christ hath brought into this blessed state! O love the Lord, all ye his Saints, who hath Redeemed you from everlasting wrath: Who hath by dying made your Souls to live, And what he dearly bought doth freely give: Give up you selves to walk in all his wayes, And study how to live unto his praise. The time is short you have to serve him here: The day of your deliv'rance draweth near. Lift up your heads, ye upright ones in heart, Who in Christ's purchase have obtain'd a part.

Behold, he rides upon a shining Cloud, With Angels voice, and Trumpet sounding loud; He comes to save his folk from all their foes, And plague the men that Holiness oppose. So come, Lord Jesus, quickly come we pray: Yea come, and hasten our Redemption day.

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