

Rejection of Christ--a Common, and Most Unreasonable Iniquity

by Samuel Davies

The sermon emphasizes the sin of rejecting Christ, the reasonableness of expecting a favorable reception, and the reality of a neglectful reception, highlighting the importance of giving Christ a reception agreeable to his character.

Scripture: Isaiah 49:7, Jeremiah 28:16, Mark 12:6, John 1:12, John 3:18, John 15:14, 2 Corinthians 4:3, Hebrews 2:3, Hebrews 10:29

Topics: "Christ Rejection", "Spiritual Repentance"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the common sin of rejecting Jesus Christ, emphasizing the unsuitable reception of Christ and the gospel, which often hides under a cloak of religion. He highlights the deadly nature of neglecting Christ and the perishing condition of souls that reject Him. Through the parable of the vineyard and the rejection of the Son, Davies illustrates the consequences of rejecting the Savior. He challenges the audience to reflect on their reception of Christ, urging them to give Him the proper reception He deserves as Savior, High Priest, King, and Prophet. Davies warns of the aggravated guilt and severe punishment for neglecting the Son of God, calling for repentance and a change of heart to receive the mercy and salvation offered by Jesus.

Transcript

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and Most Unreasonable Iniquity

by Samuel Davies, January 16, 1758

"He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'" Mark 12:6

There is no sin more common or more pernicious in the professing Christian world, than an unsuitable reception of Jesus Christ and the gospel. It is not only the sin of professed unbelievers and profane scoffers--but it often hides itself under the cloak of religion, and a profession of faith. It is of so subtle a nature--that it is often unsuspected, even by those who are destroyed by it; and it is of so deadly a nature--that nothing can save a soul which is under the power of it! A soul that has the offer of Christ and

the gospel--and yet neglects him, is certainly in a perishing condition, whatever good works, whatever amiable qualities or appearances of virtue it may be adorned with. "If our gospel be hid--it is hid to those who are lost. He who believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." 2 Corinthians 4:3; John 3:18.

This was the sin of the Jews in Christ's time, and this brought both temporal and eternal ruin upon them. To represent this sin in a convictive light, is the primary design of this parable.

The blessed God had chosen the Jews, out of the world, to be his peculiar people, and distinguished them with the gracious privileges of his church. Hence they are represented as his vineyard, enclosed from the wilderness of the world, and furnished with everything necessary to render it fruitful.

And hence God is represented as expecting fruit from them, as a man expects it from his vineyard; which intimates the reasonableness of their obedience; it is what any one would expect, who would judge by what is due and reasonable. But it does not intimate that God does properly look for or expect what will never come to pass; for the certainty and universality of his fore-knowledge excludes all possibility of a disappointment. It is speaking to us in our own human language, which we are most likely to understand; but it must be explained agreeably to the perfection of the nature of God, and not according to the imperfection of ours.

The Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers of the Jews, who were entrusted with the management of their church and state, are represented by the farmers, to whom this vineyard was leased or rented, and they were obliged to make annual payments of a part of the fruit. The succession of servants sent to demand the income of fruit in its season, signifies the prophets and other messengers of God sent to the Jews to call them to bring forth the fruits of holiness. But, instead of obeying the call--they treated them abusively, persecuted, and killed them, and refused that return of duty which God demanded, and which his distinguishing mercies towards them rendered so due upon the footing of gratitude! After repeated trials, to no purpose, by these servants--the great God resolves to make one trial more, and that by his own Son, his only Son, his beloved Son. Him he will send to these rebellious farmers. And he presumes that, as bad as they are, they would at least respect his Son, and count themselves highly honored in having such a messenger sent to them. He might justly have sent his army to destroy them, who had murdered his former servants; but instead of this, he sends his Son with proposals of peace once more. He presumes such clemency will melt down the rebels, and make them ashamed of their former conduct. They will respect my Son; as if he should say, "Though they have wickedly abused and slain my servants--but surely they will not dare to treat my Son in the same manner. Surely the very sight of him, must command awe and respect. This will also make them ashamed of their base ingratitude and cruelty to my former messengers."

When the omniscient God represents himself as presuming or expecting that they would receive his Son in a friendly manner, it does not intimate, as I just observed in a similar case, that he is defective in knowledge as to things future, or liable to disappointment; but it only expresses, in the strongest manner, the reasonableness of the thing expected. It is so reasonable, that anyone who judges only according to the reasonableness of the thing, and has no view of futurity, would certainly look for it. It is so reasonable, that God himself would expect it, were he not omniscient, and incapable of being deceived by the most plausible appearances.

In this view God expected, (that is, he looked upon it as infinitely reasonable) that the Jewish rulers should reverence his Son. But, alas! when they saw him, they were raised to a still higher pitch of rebellion and cruelty. They seized the Son himself, cast him out of his own vineyard, and with wicked hands crucified and slew him! On this account the vineyard was taken from them, and let out to others, who would pay the great Proprietor his fruit in its season; that is, the Jews were cast out of the church, and the Gentiles received in their stead, who would make a better use of their privileges.

This is the primary sense of the parable, as referring to the Jews of that age. But it will admit of a more extensive application. It reaches us in these ends of the earth, and all the nations of the world, to whom the gospel has been proposed: and in this latitude I would consider the text.

The world had gone on for four thousand years in wickedness, in spite of all the means used for its reformation by lawgivers, educators, social workers, and by the providence of God. Persuasions, warnings, chastisements, mercies, and whatever had a tendency to bring them to repentance, had been used with them. Philosophers had often reasoned. Legislators had prescribed. Prophets had carefully instructed, allured with promises, and deterred with threatenings, and carried their heavenly credentials in their hands. Angels had appeared and conversed with men upon extraordinary occasions. Jesus, the great angel of the covenant, had given frequent preludes of his incarnation; nay, Jehovah himself had ascended, and published his law with Godlike pomp in the ears of his subjects on Mount Sinai. But all this would not do; the world sinned on still, impenitent and incorrigible!

And what shall be done in such a desperate case? What expedient remains to be tried? After so many messengers abused, persecuted, and killed--who will go upon so dangerous a mission again? There is indeed the Son of God, the great co-equal of the Supreme Divinity; if he would undertake it, perhaps something might be done! But oh! who can dare to hope for such condescension from one so high! Who can expect such a favor for rebels ripe for vengeance! Who can hope the Father will give him up! My text seems to hint sundry objections against this possibility. He is God's Son, his Well-beloved Son, and he has but one Son; but one of his rank, though he has produced so many worlds. And will he part with his Son, his well beloved, his only Son--and send him upon such a mission; a mission so difficult, so dangerous, in which so many of his servants have lost their lives? Who could believe that even divine love and mercy could go so far--had we not the testimony of God in the gospel for it? Having one Son, his well-beloved, he sent him also! He sent even him--as dear as he was, as well as his servants of an inferior order. So much had he at heart the salvation of his rebellious creatures!

But observe the TIME when he sent him: he sent him last. He did not send him until every other method was tried in vain, and the case was found to be desperate without him. He did not send him until it appeared, from many experiments, that there was absolute need of him. Lawgivers, prophets, philosophers, and other real or pretended reformers, had a clear stage; they had the world to themselves for four thousand years; but in all this time they did nothing to the purpose. Hence we are led to make this remark, which is of great importance to the right understanding of the gospel.

That the Son of God was sent into the world as a Savior in a desperate case. It appeared, after a long course of trial, that when he undertook the case, there was no relief from any other quarter. And hence, by the way, it follows, that we can never receive him in that view in which he was sent, until we are deeply sensible that our case is desperate; that is, that we can obtain relief from no other!

But probably his being sent last, has a farther meaning. It seems to intimate, that he is the final messenger that God will ever send; that the dispensation of the gospel is the last trial that ever he will make with rebellious men--the final effort of divine grace for their salvation; and that such as are not recovered by it--will be forever given up as desperate, and no farther means used with them. What an alarming thought is this to such of you (and no doubt there are such among you) who have enjoyed the gospel, the dispensation of the Son of God, all your days, without receiving any special benefit from it! If these means will not do, you are not to expect better--but must perish as incurables!

If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, as his Father's only and well-beloved Son--we could have little reason to expect that he would come into our world as a Savior!

But suppose he should come! suppose he should leave all the glories of his native heaven, and assume the humble nature of man, converse with mortals, instead of the heavenly courtiers, and conflict with the calamities of life, instead of enjoying the pleasures of paradise! Suppose he should come himself, as a messenger of his Father's grace, and with his own blessed lips assure our guilty race that God is reconcilable! Suppose he should die upon a cross for us, that he might at once purchase redemption, and confirm the tidings of it! Suppose, I say, such wonders as these should happen!

What then is to be expected from sinful man? Oh! may it not reasonably be expected that this divine Messenger will be received with universal welcome? That every heart will glow with his love and every mouth be filled with his praise? May it not be reasonably expected that his appearance among guilty men would cast them all upon the knee as humble penitents, and that now, overcome with his love--they would become his willing subjects for the future, and bitterly lament the baseness and ingratitude of their past disobedience? Is not this the most reasonable expectation that ever was formed?

God speaks after the manner of men in my text: and, therefore, when he says, "They will respect my Son," it intimates, that this would be the universal expectation of mankind, and of all reasonable creatures who consider the reasonableness of the thing. "They will respect my Son--surely they will. As wicked and ungrateful as they are, the very sight of him must melt them into gratitude and obedience! Though they have rejected, persecuted, and murdered prophets and lawgivers, and all my other servants--yet surely they will reverence my Son."

Oh! is not this a most reasonable expectation? Who would apprehend the contrary, in so plain a case? Who would fear that such a divine Savior, a Savior in so desperate a case--would be received with neglect? Who would fear that sinners, on the brink of everlasting destruction--would be careless about such a Deliverer? We cannot think they would act thus, without supposing them madmen, as well as sinners, and that they have lost their reason and self-love, as well as moral goodness!

But, alas! these are only the presumptions of reason from the reasonableness of the thing--and not matters of fact gathered from observation of the actual conduct of mankind. However likely it be from appearances that the Son of God will universally meet with an affectionate reception from creatures who stand in such absolute need of him; and however improbable it is, in an abstract view, that such creatures should neglect him--yet it is an astonishing, melancholy, notorious fact--that Jesus Christ has but little of the reverence and love of mankind!

The prophetic character given of him long ago by Isaiah still holds true, "He whom man despises; he whom the nations abhor!" Isaiah 49:7. He is despised and rejected by men. The riches, honors, and

pleasures of the world--are preferred to him. His creatures are loved more than himself. Nay, sin itself, the most hateful thing upon earth, or even in hell--is more beloved! The salvation which he purchased with his blood--is looked upon as hardly worth seeking! His favor is not earnestly sought, nor his displeasure carefully shunned.

In short, he has but a small place, and is but of little importance in the thoughts, the affections, and conversation of mankind! This is a most melancholy and astonishing thing; it may spread amazement and horror through the whole universe! But, alas! it is a fact; a plain fact, though but few are convinced of it! And it is a melancholy fact, though few lament it. My chief design at present is to fasten conviction upon the guilty; a very unacceptable design--but not therefore the less necessary or useful.

In prosecuting it, I intend,

I. To show what kind of reception it may justly be expected we should give to the Son of God.

II. To consider the reasonableness of that expectation, And,

III. And lastly, To show how different a reception he generally meets with from what might be reasonably expected.

Hearken, my brethren, hearken attentively, to what you are so greatly concerned in. And to engage your attention the more, let this consideration have weight with you, that your making light of this matter is a strong presumption that you make light of Christ, and do not give him that reception which he demands. Your being unconcerned in the trial of this case--is sufficient to prove you guilty! I am,

I. To show you what kind of reception we may reasonably be expected to give to the Son of God. In general, we should give him a reception agreeable to the character which he sustains, and agreeable to the designs upon which he was sent into our world, or to those views in which he appears in it.

We should treat everyone according to his character: reason expects that we should do so, and God requires it. Therefore we should treat this divine Messenger according to his character.

More particularly Jesus Christ appears in our world--under the character of a Savior in a desperate case, a relief for the remediless, a helper for the helpless! Then it may reasonably be expected that his appearing in our world under this character, would immediately flash universal conviction upon mankind, that they are altogether undone and helpless in themselves, and can obtain relief from no other quarter!

It may reasonably be expected--that they should give up all their proud, self-righteous conceit of themselves, and abandon all trust in their own righteousness and good works; for until they do this, they can never receive him in his character as a Savior in a desperate case. It may reasonably be expected, they should welcome Christ as the great, the only Deliverer, and give up themselves entirely to him, to be saved by him, who alone is mighty to save. And it may reasonably be expected, that every heart should be transported with admiration, joy and gratitude, at his appearance: and a contrary temper towards him can proceed from nothing but stupid ignorance of our sin and danger, and an ungrateful, base disaffection to him!

Does Jesus appear among men as a great High Priest, making atonement for sin? Then it may justly be expected that we should place all our trust upon the virtue of his atonement, and that all hands should be eagerly stretched out to receive those pardons which he offers, in consequence of his sin-atonement

sacrifice.

Does he appear to destroy the works of the devil, and to save men from sin by making them holy; and are the influences of the Holy Spirit, entrusted to his disposal to renew their nature and implant every grace and virtue in their hearts? Then, who would not expect that we would all fall in with his design, all form a noble conspiracy against sin, seek for the sanctification of our hearts, and earnestly apply to him for the influences of divine grace to make us holy!

Again, does Christ appear in the character of a mediatorial King, invested with all power in heaven and earth, and demanding universal homage? Then it may be reasonably expected that we should all bow the knee in humble submission, all make his will the rule of our conduct, and labor after universal obedience.

Further, does he appear both as the publisher, and the brightest demonstration of the Father's love? and has he revealed his own love by the many labors of his life, and by the agonies and tortures of his cross? Oh! may it not be expected we should return him our love--for his love? The love of worms--for the love of a God! An obediential love--for his bleeding, dying love! May it not be expected that the sight of a crucified Savior, dying in agonies of love and pain, should melt every heart, and draw the whole world to his arms!

He himself had this reasonable expectation: I, says he, if I be lifted from the earth (that is, suspended on the cross) I will draw all men unto me. If such love will not draw--then what can?

May it not be expected that this strong assurance that their offended Sovereign is reconcilable, and so much in earnest to pardon obnoxious rebels--would at length make them sensible of their base ingratitude, would melt them down into sincere generous sorrows for their unnatural rebellion against so good a God, and determine them to cheerful obedience in future?

Again, does Christ exhibit himself as able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God through him; and that he is as willing--as able, as gracious--as powerful? Then may it not reasonably be expected that all the unbelieving fears and tremblings of desponding penitents should vanish forever; that they should all fly to his arms with cheerful hope and humble confidence, and do him the honor, and themselves the kindness to believe themselves safe, upon their compliance with his invitation?

Further, does Christ appear in the character of a great Prophet sent to publish his Father's will, to reveal the deep things of God, and to show the way in which guilty sinners may be reconciled to God? a way which all the philosophers and sages of antiquity, after all their perplexing searches, could never discover! May it not then be reasonably expected that we should be all attention to his instructions; that we should resign our understandings to him as our Teacher, and readily believe what he has revealed, and particularly that we should cheerfully comply with the only method of salvation contained in the gospel?

Once more, Does Christ assume the awesome character of supreme Judge of the living and the dead, and must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ? Then it may be expected we should all humbly revere and adore him, fear to offend him and make him our enemy, and prepare for our appearance before him.

In short, considering him as the supreme Excellency, it is infinitely reasonable we should love and esteem him as the Physician of sick souls; that we should put ourselves under his all-healing hands, and submit to his prescriptions!

If we consider him as our Advocate--we should present all our petitions in his name, and depend upon his intercession for acceptance. And as he is all in all in the mediatorial dispensation of religion under which we live, the only religion for sinners, that he should be all in all to us.

This is a brief view of the reception which we OUGHT to give to the Son of God, upon his appearance in our world. Unless we receive him thus, we can receive no benefit from him; but must incur the aggravated guilt of rejecting him. But to as many as thus receive him, to them he gives power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on his name. John 1:12.

Do not imagine that none are concerned to give him a proper reception, but those with whom he conversed in the days of his flesh. We who are at the distance of 1700 years, and six or seven thousand miles from the time and place of his appearance in human form--are as much concerned with him as they. He is an ever-present Savior, and he left his gospel on earth in his stead, when he went to heaven.

It is with the motion of the mind and heart, and not of the body--that sinners must come to him; and in this sense we may come to him, as properly as those who conversed with him when he was on earth. He demands the reverence, love, and trust of mankind now--as well as seventeen hundred years ago! And we need his righteousness, his influence, and his salvation now--as well as the sinners of Judea, among whom he once appeared in person.

Nay, as his glory has now pierced through the cloud that obscured it in the days of his flesh, and as he is exalted to the height of honor and dignity--it may be expected with still more reason that we should reverence him, and submit to him in his high character. He is not now the object of our bodily senses, we cannot see and handle him; but he is now an object for the acts of the mind with peculiar advantage. That must be a mere lump of flesh, or a beast, and not a man--who can love nothing--but what he can see and feel. Spiritual and intellectual things are the most proper objects for all reasonable creatures. Therefore, though Jesus is not now within reach of our senses--yet reason and faith may reach him, and perceive his glories: and it is reasonably expected we should admire, love, trust, and serve him. This, I say, is reasonable to expect of us. I now proceed:

II. To show the reasonableness of the expectation, that we should give the Son of God a welcome reception.

Here full evidence must strike every mind at first sight. Is there not infinite reason that infinite beauty and excellence--should be esteemed and loved? Is it not most reasonable, that supreme authority--should be obeyed, and the highest character respected and revered? Is it not most reasonable that the most amazing display of love and mercy--should meet with the most affectionate returns of gratitude from the party obliged?

Shall the Creator die for his creatures, the Sovereign die for his rebellious subjects, the great Lawgiver transfer the penalty of his own law upon himself, in order to remove it from obnoxious criminals? Shall he die in extremities of torture, and write his love in characters of blood? Oh shall he do all this--and is it not infinitely reasonable that his creatures, that his rebellious subjects, that obnoxious criminals should be transported with wonder, joy, and gratitude; and that such miracles of love should engross their thoughts, their affections, and conversation?

If we form our expectations from what we find in fact among mankind in other cases--then surely we may expect that the Son of God would meet with such a reception in our world! The thousandth part of this

kindness--would excite gratitude between man and man; and he would be counted a monster, who would not be moved with it. And shall kindness from worm to worm, from sinner to sinner, excite love and gratitude? And shall not the infinite mercy of God towards rebellious creatures inflame their love and gratitude? Is this the only species of kindness that must pass unnoticed? Is Jesus the only Benefactor who must be forgotten?

Is it not reasonable, and would not everyone expect--that the perishing sinners--would willingly accept of so mighty and gracious a Savior? that the guilty would stretch out an eager hand to receive a pardon? that the diseased would apply to the physician? that inexcusable offenders should repent of their causeless offences against the best of beings? and that needy, dependent creatures should embrace the offer of happiness?

Can anything be more reasonably expected than this? Is it not as reasonable as to expect that creatures who love themselves, will seek their own happiness; or that the miserable would accept of deliverance?

In short, no man can deny the reasonableness of this expectation! No man can deny its reasonableness, without asserting that the highest excellency should be despised, the highest authority rejected, the richest goodness despised; and that rebellion and ingratitude are virtues; and self-destruction a duty!

That is, no man can deny this--without being a monster, abjuring his reason--and embracing the most extravagant and impious absurdities in its stead!

I am afraid I shall not be able to gain the temper and practice of all of you to my side in this affair--but I am sure if you are men, and believe the gospel, that I have already brought over your judgment and conscience. Your judgment and conscience declare: that if it is reasonable for a child to reverence a tender, affectionate parent; if it is reasonable that you should love your life, or your own happiness; then certainly it is infinitely reasonable that you should give such a reception as has been mentioned to the blessed Jesus. Happy for us, happy for the world, if we could as easily prove that the expectation is as much founded upon actual facts--as upon reason. But, alas! here the evidence turns against us. In such a wicked disordered world as this, it would be a very deceitful method of reasoning, to infer that things are--because they should be. This introduces what comes next under consideration, namely,

III. And lastly, To show how different a reception the Son of God generally meets with in our world--from what might reasonably be expected.

Here a most melancholy scene opens! And oh! that it may please our blessed Spirit to affect our hearts deeply with the survey of it! Forgive me if I make my address as pungent and particular as I can, and speak directly to the conscience of each of you. The severity of case really requires plain dealing, because without it you are not likely to be convinced, and, without conviction, you can never return, nor be saved.

Let me put you all upon a serious search--as to what kind of reception you have given to Jesus Christ. You have lived all your days under his gospel; you profess his religion; you own him as the Author of your hopes; what kind of treatment have you given him in these circumstances? It is high time for you to inquire into your behavior!

Are not some of you sensible that you have never received him as a Savior in a desperate case? No, you have never even seen your case to be indeed desperate. Your proud hearts have not been brought so low. You have not had such an affecting view of your guilt and depravity, and the imperfections of your

best works, and of the holiness and justice of God and his law--as to make you sensible that you were undone and helpless in yourselves, that your own righteousness could by no means recommend you to God, and that you must perish forever--unless Jesus Christ, out of mere mercy, would undertake to save you! And unless you have had an affecting sense of your undone and hopeless condition--you have certainly never received him as a Savior!

Again, Is it not evident that Jesus Christ has had but little share in your thoughts and affections? Do not the things of this perishing world gain the pre-eminence? Have you not a thousand thoughts of a thousand trifles--for every one affectionate thought of Jesus, the darling of his Father? Have you not been generally thoughtless of him all your lives? Take the time that is nearest to you as a specimen, which surely you have not yet forgot. Recollect now how many affectionate thoughts you have had of him the week past, or even upon this sacred morning, when you had this solemn worship immediately in view. May not even this short review convince you that you are guilty of the most absurd and unreasonable thing in the world! A thing which appears so improbable in an abstract view, that one would hardly believe you would venture upon it; I mean neglecting the Son of God, who has visited our world upon such designs of love?

Again, Is Jesus Christ the favorite subject of your conversation? Is his dear name the sweetest sound your lips can pronounce? And do you love to sit with his few friends in our guilty world, and talk over the wonder of his love--until your hearts burn within you, like the disciples on the way to Emmaus? Out of the abundance of the heart--the mouth speaks; and were he uppermost in your hearts--he would have a proper share in your conversation.

Or if you should mingle in a company (and such company is everywhere to be found) where prudence would not allow you to dwell upon this darling subject, would the restraint be painful to you, and would his love, like a smothered fire in your hearts, struggle to break out and vent itself--vent itself at least in some retired corner in his presence, if you could not enjoy the pleasure of letting it flame out in the society of his creatures?

But, alas! is not this the reverse of your true character? Are you not disgusted, or struck silent as soon as the conversation takes this pious turn? With horror I think of it--to converse concerning Jesus Christ is generally deemed needless, impertinent, or ostentatious, by creatures who profess themselves disciples, redeemed by his blood! And does not this horrid guilt fasten upon some of you?

Farther, Are not your hearts destitute of his love? If you deny the charge, and profess that you love him--then where are the inseparable fruits and effects of his love? Where are your eager desires and pantings after him? Where is your delight to converse with him in his ordinances? Where your concern, your zeal, your earnest endeavors to secure his favor? Where is your conscientious observance of his commandments? For he himself has made this the test of your love to him, "You my friends--IF you do whatever I command you." John 15:14. And again, "If a man loves me--he will keep my Words." John 14:23.

Does not the evidence, from this inquiry, turn against you? Are you not convicted in your consciences, that if these are the inseparable fruits of love--then you are entirely destitute of it? Is it not evident to yourselves, that your own pleasure, your own worldly interest, your honor or ease--is the general rule of your conduct, without any regard to his will?

Inquire farther, Have you learned to entrust your souls in his hands, to be saved by him--entirely in his own way? Or do you not depend, in part at least, upon your own imaginary goodness? Do you not wonder and

startle at the doctrine of salvation by grace alone? Does it not appear strange to you, to be told, that after all your good works--that God will deal with you entirely as guilty sinners, void of all goodness, and have no regard at all to your supposed merit, in the distribution of his mercy--but entirely to the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Are you not utter strangers to that exploit of faith--which casts a poor, guilty, depraved soul, void of all goodness, upon the mere mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, who justifies the ungodly? For this purpose the Son of God came into the world; and you do not give him a proper reception--but wickedly reject him as well as the Jews, unless you thus entrust yourselves to him--to be saved by him--in his way.

The evidence grows upon me as I proceed; and I cannot but wonder that you do not perceive it yourselves. Can anything be more plain--than that you make light of Christ! that you choose to have as little to do with him as possible! that you have no delight in his service! Do not your own consciences now tell you--that there are this and that, and a thousand things, that you have more pleasure in? Do not your hearts fly away from him, whenever they are urged to approach him? When you are a little awakened with a sense of your guilt and danger, and ready with eager eyes to look about for a Savior, alas! how naturally do you relapse into carelessness and carnal security! How soon do you drop your purpose of seeking after him with unwearied endeavors, until you find him! how ready are you to take up with anything in his stead! A little sorrow and reformation are substituted in his place. You would rather get ease to your consciences from any quarter--than from him. Like Judas, you sell him for a few pieces of silver; that is, you would rather part with him than give up your over-eager pursuit of earthly things!

A thousand such facts might be easily produced--which sadly prove that the blessed Jesus does not meet with that reception from multitudes among us which his character demands. Indeed their not being easily convicted of sin--is an evidence they are guilty; for if they had a real regard for him--they would be concerned to inquire how the case stands, or how their hearts are disposed towards him. And a little honest inquiry would soon lead them into the truth.

And now I have a few questions to propose to such of you as are guilty of neglecting the Son of God, or have never given him that reception that might justly be expected of you; questions of the utmost importance, which I beg you would put home to your own hearts!

The first question is--Do you not think that by thus neglecting the Lord Jesus--that you contract the most aggravated guilt? It is the Son of God, his only Son, his well-beloved Son, whom you neglect! And must not the Father resent it? Do you not touch his honor in a very tender point? and will he not muster up all the forces of omnipotence to avenge the affront! Since you neglect him, whom the Father loves; him, whom all the heavenly multitudes adore; him, whom all godly men upon earth treat with the highest honor; since you neglect a person of infinite glory and dignity, your rightful Sovereign and only Savior--then how deep is your guilt! What a horrid exploit of wickedness this! neither heathen nor devils can sin up to such a pitch! Devils cannot, because no Savior was ever provided for them, or offered to them! And heathen cannot, because a Savior was never revealed to them. You stand without a rival by your horrid pre-eminence in guilt!

To you may be applied the Words of Jesus; as well as to the unbelieving Jews: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin;" that is, they would not have had sin of so aggravated a nature; but now they have no cloak for their sin, John 15:22; they are utterly inexcusable! For they have both seen and hated both me and my Father! John 15:24.

The second question I would ask you is--Must not your punishment be peculiarly aggravated, since it will be proportioned to your guilt? To be punished not only for sins against the law of nature--but against revelation; against the gospel of grace, against the love of a crucified Savior--how dreadful must this be! He who despised Moses' law died without mercy, says Paul: of how much sorer punishment (sorer than dying without mercy! Oh terrible!) Do you suppose, shall he be thought worthy--who has trodden under foot the Son of God! Hebrews 10:29. You may make light of this now--but oh! it will not prove light in the outcome!

Here let me mention a most alarming consideration: The love that God bears to his Son--is the great source of all our hopes: it is because he loves him--that he accepts of his atonement for our sins; it is because he loves him--that he forgives and loves believing sinners for his sake; it is because he loves the head--that he shows such favor to the members. But as to such as reject or neglect the Son, even the love which the Father has for him, becomes a source of peculiar terror, and prompts him to signal vengeance.

"If he infinitely loves his Son--then he must infinitely resent it to see him neglected and slighted by others. If he loves him--he will avenge the affront offered him; and the more he loves him, the more severely he must resent and avenge it."

How wretched, then, is their condition, upon whom even the love of God for his Son--calls aloud for vengeance! and how signal will the punishment be, that the Father's love for his Son will inflict upon the despisers of him!

The third question I would propose to you is--How do you expect to escape this signal vengeance, if you still continue to neglect the Lord Jesus? Answer the apostle's question--if you can. "How shall we escape--if we neglect so great salvation?" Hebrews 2:3. You cannot expect that Jesus will be your Savior--while you treat him thus: and if he refuses to save you--then to whom will you turn? What angel or saint can save--those whom he is determined to destroy? If he is against you--who can be for you? Remember the text: the Father sent his Son last into the world. He comes last, and therefore if you reject him--there is no other Savior. You must take him--or none! Take him--or perish forever!

I would lastly ask you--If your guilt and danger be so great, and if in your present condition you are ready every moment to be engulfed in everlasting destruction; does it befit you to be so easy and careless, so mirthful and merry? If your bodies were sick--you would be pensive and sad, and use means for their recovery; if your estates were in danger--you would be anxious until they were secured; if you were condemned to die for a crime against civil government-- you would be solicitous for a pardon. In short, it is natural for man to be pensive, anxious, and sad--in circumstances of danger. And it is shocking to the common sense of mankind, to see one thoughtless and mirthful in such circumstances!

Can you be easy--under such a load of guilt? Can you be careless--under a sentence of condemnation? Can you be negligent--when the possibility of deliverance is set before you? I would not willingly see you sorrowful and dejected: but when your case calls for it; when your temporal sorrow may be medicinal, and save you from everlasting pain; when it is necessary in your dreadful circumstances, then I cannot form a kinder wish for you, than that your hearts may be pierced and broken with penitential sorrows!

You have, in your manner, commemorated the birth of a Savior this Christmas; that is, you have danced and caroused, and sinned--to his honor! But now I come after, and demand in his name another kind of reception for him! I call you to the sorrowful work of repentance, for your ill treatment of him. Instead of such mirth and extravagance, would it not have been more proper for you to have listened to James'

advice? "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness!" "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God;" that mighty hand which can crush ten thousand worlds, and which is lifted up against you to revenge the quarrel of his beloved Son!

Can you return home this evening as thoughtless and merry as usual? Well, your mad career will soon be at an end: your vanity and trifling will soon be over. Perhaps, as Jeremiah denounced to the false prophet, "This year you shall die!" Jer. 28:16. And oh! Death will engulf you in everlasting sorrows!

Therefore what would you now think of making one honest trial, before it be too late, to obtain a saving interest in that Savior whom you have hitherto neglected? Oh! will you not make trial, whether the disaffection of your hearts towards him, inveterate as it is--may yet be subdued by divine grace? Oh! will you not make trial, whether he, who prayed with his dying breath, even for his murderers--will not have mercy upon you? Oh! will you not make trial, whether the virtue of his blood is not still sufficient to cleanse you from all sin? Oh! will you give up the matter as desperate, before you make a thorough trial?

Your case is indeed very discouraging--but it is not yet hopeless; if I thought it was, I would not say one word to you about it--to torment you before the time. But I can assure you upon the best authority, of Jesus Christ himself--that if you now give him that reception which his character requires--that he will receive you into favor as though you had never offended him, and make you forever happy! Therefore, come, you poor, guilty, perishing sinners--fly to the arms of his mercy, which are opened wide to embrace you! Cry for the attractive influence of his grace, which alone can enable you to come to him, and let there be joy in heaven this day--over repenting sinners upon earth!

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