

THE SINNER'S SELF-CONDEMNATION

A sermon preached on Sunday evening, December 8, 1850 by the
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"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." Luke xix. 22

These words are part of a parable, which is as follows:--" A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself kingly authority, and to return. And he called ten of his servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, "Trade with those till I return." But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And when he was returned, having received regal authority, he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." And he said unto him, "Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." And he said likewise to him, "Be thou also over five cities." And another came, saying, "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou are an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." And he saith unto him, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with interest!" And he said unto those who stood by, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him who hath ten pounds. ("And they said unto him, "Lord, he hath already ten pounds.") For I say unto you, That unto everyone who hath much, shall be given more; and from him who hath little, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

The purport of this parable is clearly this:--"First, it is presumed that that which God requires of man is the right use of the talents committed to him. This is assumed throughout the parable. God expects this, and they make themselves entirely responsible, and without excuse, for not immediately obeying God. The very admission pre-supposes a knowledge of the duty devolving upon them. The fact is, they know themselves to be sinners, that they ought to repent, that they need a Saviour; and who would allow that he ought to repent if he had not sufficient conviction to see that he ought? Once more. In admitting that they ought to repent, men assume thus their *ability* to do so. They may deny it, but they believe it still, or they never would admit that they ought to repent any more than they would admit that they ought to fly.

Again: this admission shows that they themselves have no confidence in the excuses they make, that they do not suffice to justify themselves; and that they well know that not one of them will be had in respect, when things come to be seen in their true light; if this were not so they would honestly and confidently bring them forward in justification of their

conduct. This is natural, and you will find it everywhere, from the smallest children upwards; wherever they really suppose themselves to have a good excuse, they will readily make it--they will deny their obligation whenever they honestly feel that they have a valid excuse. This shows conclusively, that when sinners admit their obligation to become Christians, they assume, in this very admission, that their excuses are good for nothing. If they had but one really good excuse among the whole, they would rest calmly upon it, and at once deny their obligation.

Let me say again. These things also show that these people are in reality hypocrites, making excuses; for if they were not, they would deny their obligation; for if there were in reality any valid excuse for their conduct, they must plead it in justification. But they do not deny it; they cannot do so without belieing their very nature; they can no more deny their obligation than they can deny their own existence. They virtually admit their own hypocrisy, in not doing what God tells them they ought to do, what they know and feel they are bound to do, and excuse themselves in a way that does not even satisfy their own consciences.

But I remark again. These admissions on the part of sinners, also show that they know very well that *God must condemn them*, for if not, *they must condemn him!* They condemn themselves, and they therefore assume that God *must* condemn them; for if he does not do so, they feel that he cannot be just. Sinners themselves acknowledge their wrong-doing. They violate even their own standard of moral obligation. They sin against their own consciences, however stupid those consciences may be. They feel that, as God is a good being, he must condemn them; and if he does not, then their own consciences will condemn him.

Their admission shows again that in the deepest assumptions of their minds, they do justify God. The law of their own minds are God's witnesses, and stand up for ever to testify for him. So truthful are these laws of the human intellect that they will speak, and speak the truth. To be sure, there is no virtue in admitting what you cannot honestly deny. There is no virtue in a man's conscience saying, what by a necessary and natural law, it must say and cannot deny. True, the heart would bribe the conscience if it could, but the testimony of their nature for ever leaves them without excuse before God. These admissions show that they themselves know their pleas of inability, and every other plea is only a refuge of lies with which even they themselves, as I have said, are unsatisfied.

From these things we see why it is that sinners everywhere have such a fear of death--why they are afraid to die! Is it because they are afraid God is unjust? No. Is it because they are afraid that they shall fall into the hands of a cruel and relentless tyrant who will trample them down in their weakness, regardless of their merit? No! They are not afraid to meet God because they think him wicked, but because they know by the irresistible assumption of their own minds, that God has an awful account with them, and that they have no apology for their sins. They do not say, "Oh! I have a good excuse, I know I have; but God will not hear it. I know that I was born with such a sinful nature that I have a good excuse for my conduct, if God would only hear it; but he will bear me down with his power."

Is that the reason why sinners are afraid to die? No! that is not the reason; it is because they know they have done wickedly, and that they are without excuse. They are not afraid to meet God because they deem him unreasonable and partial, but because they are wicked, and he is good. That is the difficulty. They feel that goodness ought to be armed against them, because they have no possible excuse for their sins. It is often deeply affecting to sit down by the death-bed of a sinner who has gone on in sin for a long series of years without a serious thought in his mind; if you examine into the workings of his mind, it is striking to see how many things after all, he has assumed. It is remarkable how many points of self-accusation present themselves in how many points his conscience is disarmed.

But again, it is absurd for any individual to acknowledge obligation, and still plead inability. If it be naturally impossible for a man to do a certain thing, consistency would lead him of course to deny his obligation to do it. It is not only an absurdity to acknowledge obligation and still deny ability, but it is an absurdity that no mortal, is, in reality, ever guilty of. Men may theorize about it, and think the contrary; but the principle is true and universal; there is no excuse to which it is not applicable. For if we have an excuse that is really a reasonable one, it is a justification--it sets aside the obligation, and the only proper way is instantly to plead the excuse and deny the obligation. The mind is true to itself, and always does do this; for if a man has a reasonable something that, in his own assumption, ought to justify him for doing, or neglecting to do certain things, it is a direct contradiction to say that he can possibly, at the same time, admit his obligation to do those things. The mind never does or can do this; and therefore, when men admit their obligation, they assume that God is reasonable in requiring it, and that it is not naturally impossible for them to do it.

But let me say again. The excuses with which men deceive themselves, when viewed in the light of their own admissions, is a glaring proof of the madness of their wickedness. How strange! Here is an individual admitting that he ought to obey God, and with the same breath excusing himself for not doing so! Does not everyone see the absurdity of admitting obligation and excusing yourself at the same moment!

Again. I know very well that sinners do not really consider what is actually implied in those admissions. Multitudes of persons here have followed these admissions saying--"Oh! yes, I admit that--I admit that there is a God, a right, a wrong, that God is good, and that I ought to obey and love him--that I have sinned and ought to repent and become a Christian and that I ought to *do it now*." But have you really considered what is implied in these admissions? you are naked, speechless, and without excuse in the presence of God!

I remark again. Though sinners deny, as they often do in theory, their ability to obey God, they know it, and while they admit they are sinners and have done wrong, their consciences convict them of wrong, and assure them that they might have done right. Now take any case whatever where a sinner has done that for which he condemns himself--he sees it is wrong--that he ought not to have done it. Now in that very case he assumes that it was possible for him not to have done it; he would never admit having

done wrong in a certain case if he knew that he had no power to do otherwise than he did too. In any and every case where a moral agent believes he could not have done differently, he will justify the course he took. It is of no use for a man to pretend to believe that by outward circumstances he is irresistibly propelled along a certain track; God has so constructed his mind that he cannot believe it. He may wind himself up in sophistries; still, however, his own nature will speak, out and tell him that it is a downright lie from beginning to end. Let him go and commit a crime and then try to justify himself if he can. He cannot do it. Let him go and commit murder, or any other crime; he cannot, for his life, conceal from himself his wickedness. He may bring up this doctrine of fatality, but it is of no use; he cannot satisfy his conscience with it. There is something within him tells him, "You are to blame. You ought to have done otherwise and might have done otherwise." This pursues him wherever he goes; there is always a sentinel from God, a witness which will speak out, and tell him that he lies just as often as he attempts to justify himself. See him go along in the dark! What is the matter with him? His hair stands up on end, what ails the man? Why does not a horse feel such terrors as this? Because he is not a moral agent, and has not got written in his mind those great facts which are written in the mind of man. See that individual try to persuade himself into the belief that there is no hell, judgment, or final retribution! There is, after all, within him that which causes an awful sound in his ear, and his soul, when he is in darkness and in secret places quakes within him.

Further, if sinners really and truly believed in their excuses, they would not admit the obligation and necessity of repentance. Take a man, for instance, who honestly believed he could not do better than he does, would he not at once tell you that he has nothing to repent about? He cannot honestly tell you anything else. He meets you at once with a full and flat denial of his moral obligation. He would say, "God cannot send me to hell for I do not deserve it. God cannot, with justice, shut me out of heaven." Again, he would not be afraid to die. He would say, "Why do you think I am afraid to meet a God of justice? Not I. God has nothing against me. He has no right to have, and I am therefore not afraid to die." Tell him to repent and be converted. "I have no need," says he, "I am right already." If they sincerely believed in the excuses, they would no more condemn themselves than a windmill. If they really believed they were machines, their consciences would never be disturbed. But the fact is, men assume and know that they are not machines in any such sense as not to be free and accountable. They can never, for their lives, escape the conviction that they are both free and accountable.

Again. If they believed that men were machines, they would not blame the conduct of others. If you are sincere in professing this, if a man knock you, or take away your wife, your child, or any of your property, you cannot blame him; for how can he help it? He is a mere machine. How could he help it? Why, if you really believe you are machines, you could no more blame a man for knocking you down in the streets than you could blame the arm of a windmill for knocking you down. If you are knocked down by the arm of a windmill, why not blame it? Because you cannot assume that it was to blame; it is a mere machine, and you pick yourself up as well as you can and go away. But why blame a man, when according to this idea of yours, he is not the least more culpable? But can this infidel in his heart believe this? No! I say he cannot. He cannot show to mankind, or even

to himself, that man is not a moral agent. It is a remarkable fact that this law is always true to itself; you could not for an instant think of blaming the windmill, but notwithstanding your theory, in your heart you blame the man, because after all, you actually believe that he is a moral agent. When infidels can carry out this absurdity practically--really admitting and feeling that a man is no more responsible for his actions than a windmill--then we have a right to believe that they think so, but not till then.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that all men should question themselves as to their own deep convictions. I love to sound, as it were, the deepest recesses of my own mind, to see what will come up--to trace back the logical connection of my own thoughts, admissions, in order to see what must lie as an eternal, necessarily known principle in my own mind, by which I must be eternally judged. Oh! are men going to the judgment seat, the great white throne, when the Judge is to appear and take his seat, and all the universe shall tremble before him? What are the books to be opened! First, mark me, the Book of the Laws of your own nature, wherein by the pencil of inspiration, was written at creation itself the immutable law which enforced on you the knowledge of your moral agency, and responsibility to God. God will question first your own conscience, your deepest nature, for he knows its laws--and it will rise up and testify against you. You will carry this self-condemner with you into hell if you go, and it will never perish! Thus will Christ say--"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

Now, dying sinner, what is your remedy! What will you do when he says, "As for these men who try to excuse themselves, bring them out here, and slay them before me!" Now, do you say to yourselves, "well, if this is true, my case is hopeless?" Now you know better. The fact you are saying this is a mere shuffle of your wicked heart. Here is Christ that uttered this parable, who has committed to you this talent, and now he says, "Consecrate it to me. From this hour unroll the napkin!" Ah! but perhaps you have *spent* some of it! Have you? Indeed! then you are worse than the individual in the text, for he did keep all that was entrusted to him! Ah! how much of it have you spent? How old are you? Oh! see those grey hairs on you! Have you burned out life's lamp, and left nothing but a smoking wick? You have served the devil, then, all your days! Indeed! Then, when God comes, you cannot even unfold the napkin and say, "here is the pound that thou gavest me." No! You have carried over all this money--all these powers all this time, and all this influence with which God did so kindly endow you, and gone over and squandered it in the service of his greatest enemy the devil! Have you, indeed?

Well, your case is a bad one! But mark me, dying sinner,--can you believe it? notwithstanding this is even so, that bleeding hand is held out, and Christ is saying, "Come! Come! Come! All things are ready, and always have been." But now will you come to Christ and consecrate the little remnant that is left? How much is then left? Some of you are young, and have still much time before you, in which you may do something to promote God's glory. But do you wish to serve the devil a little longer? Now does not this look to you ineffably mean in you to speculate on the chance of sinning a little longer, and yet being saved? Ah! does not God's keen eye see that thought? Why not at once come right to God and say, "Lord, here I am--I cannot undo what I have done--I cannot go back to the beginning of my moral existence--but I will come now, and O Lord

Jesus, I will devote my all to thee--body, soul, influence, health--all I have and am, and by thy assistance, shall henceforth be consecrated to thy service, in helping forward that great work of love which I have been hitherto hindering by my sin."