

BAD LODGERS AND HOW TO TREAT THEM

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness that you may be saved.
How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?”
Jeremiah 4:14.*

ONE notices, in reading such a chapter as this fourth of Jeremiah, that the change which God required in the Jewish people was a very deep and thorough one. It was not only the washing of their hands, nor the cleansing of their outward lives, but the washing of their *hearts* from wickedness—and the Lord did not only require of them that they should cease from wicked actions, but even from vain *thoughts*. The like demand He makes of us, for He says by the mouth of His servant James, “Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double minded.” This makes our holy religion a weighty and solemn business!

If it were wholly a matter of *outward* ordinances, we might take the child and sprinkle it, or might bring the adult and plunge him. Or we might admit all to a table where they should eat and drink such consecrated materials as should save them. This would all be easy enough and, therefore, men cling to a religion of ceremonies, for *heart religion* is troublesome and the ungodly cannot endure it! Ritualism is the most popular religion in the world because it is all, “Ho! Presto!” Done in a minute—nothing to think of, nothing to care about, nothing to sorrow over! It is all a mere matter of form which men leave to their priests—as they leave their deeds to be drawn up by their lawyers and their medicine to be prescribed by their doctors! The little that is needed of them can be done without thought and they can go on in their sins as pleasantly as ever.

Next to that in popularity is the religion of mere morality. “Yes, we know we do amiss. We will amend. Gross vices shall be lopped off as stray branches that run over a wall. We will at once purge ourselves from everything for which our fellow men would blame us. Is not that enough?” Many hope it is and live as if they felt sure it was! But the religion of the Word of God is not so. It is, “Rend your hearts and not your garments”—therefore ceremonies are not enough! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength”—therefore outward actions are not enough! This is too hard a demand and as for repentance and faith, the ungodly cannot enter upon such spiritual duties for they have no mind to them.

The carnal mind hates the mention of *spiritual* things. This, I take it, while it makes the Christian religion so solemn, throws us back upon one of its great first principles—that salvation must be of Grace because if it is necessary that my heart must be changed, can *I* change it? I am bid to do so! I am told in such a text as this to wash my heart from wickedness! But how can I do it? Shall a fountain purge itself? It has sent forth bitter waters, bitter as Marah—can it, of itself, do the reverse? “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” That would be a very simple business, for skin and spots are *outside* things—but how shall a man change his heart—his very *nature*?

Do you expect the crab tree to change itself into a sweet apple-bearing tree? Will you go and talk—to come back to the former metaphor—to the waters of Marah and expect them to change themselves into the sweet wells of Elim? No, this requires the finger of God! If ever this is done, God must do it. It is a rule that Nature can only rise as high as Nature. Put water where you please, it will rise up to where it started from and, unless under pressure, it will rise no higher. And you shall not find man rising above his fallen and depraved nature. “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can it be.”

Out of the grave there comes not life. Out of an unclean thing there comes not a clean thing. We must be born from above if we are ever born aright. We must be newly created by the Creator, Himself, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus or else we can never come up to the mark which God’s Law requires. “Wash your heart.” Oh, God, how can I wash my *heart*? Though I take to myself snow water and make myself seem outwardly ever so clean, yet what have I done with my *heart*? You bid me drive out my thoughts, but, O my God, my thoughts often come against my will and sometimes

with my will and I am tossed about by them as a poor sea shell by the restless waves of the sea! They compass me about like bees! Yes, they compass me about, these vain thoughts of mine, like bees which sting my good desires to death.

Like flies of summer, they buzz about my ears and fill my mind with corruption and they will not be driven away. I can no more resist them than Jannes and Jambres could withstand the Egyptian plague! Oh, how can I purge out vain thoughts? Where shall I turn for strength to perform this necessary duty? “By Grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” And what you cannot do, in that you are weak through the flesh, God can do for you and His Divine Spirit will sweetly enable you to perform all duties which He requires of you! If you are willing and obedient and yield yourselves up to the blessed Gospel of the Grace of God, He will make you clean—and your thoughts, too, shall be purged as with fire till they shall rise like a sweet incense unto Him! Let this word at the outset encourage any person who may be inclined to say before I have done, “It is a hard saying: who can bear it?”

Now to our text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” Bad lodgers! Some people have admitted bad lodgers into their chambers. I have known a good many people troubled with them and there is no use in keeping them—they must be sent adrift. So the text says, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” It means that we must not be slow to give them notice to leave, for they ought not to be tolerated in the human breast. First, let me name some of these lodgers. Secondly, let me show what bad lodgers they are. And, thirdly, let me give you some advice as to how to get rid of them.

May the Holy Spirit come and bless this word to their immediate ejection and may a stronger than they come and dwell forever in you, not as a lodger, but as Lord and Owner of your whole being!

I. First, then, HERE ARE CERTAIN BAD LODGERS and I should not wonder if some people here have found and furnished chambers in their hearts and heads for these mischievous tenants whose name is “vain thoughts.” Many thoughts may be called vain because they are proud, conceited thoughts. Thus, whenever a man thinks himself good by nature, we may say of his thoughts, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity!” If you are unrenewed and dream that you are better than others because your parents were godly, it is a vain thought!

If you have never been born again by the Spirit of God and are trusting in your infant baptism, it is a vain thought! If you have never come to believe in Jesus but think yourself very good because you are a respectable person and regularly attend a place of worship, it is a vain thought! If you have got it in your head that when we talk about sinners we do not mean *you* and that when God’s Word condemns men for their sins it leaves a loophole of escape for *you*, it is a vain thought! If you have an idea that you do not need to come to Christ as a poor, helpless sinner—that you do not need the same kind of change as others—that, indeed, there is a private way to Heaven for *you* and you have found the silver key for it, you have made a mistake! It is a vain thought!

You will have to be born again or else if you are *not* born twice you will die twice! You will have to be washed in the blood of Jesus Christ or you will die in your sins! You will have to come crying to Him for mercy and to find everything in Him or you will remain under condemnation and perish in your iniquity! If you think it is not so, it is a vain thought! Every thought of self-righteousness is a vain thought! Every idea, moreover, of self-power—that you can do this and do that towards your own salvation and at any time, when it pleases you, you can turn and become a Christian and so there is no need to be in a hurry, or to seek the help of the Holy Spirit—that, also, is a vain thought! To reckon yourself to be anything more than a mass of sin and helplessness is a vain thought! You have misconceived your own true value and your condition before God.

Now, perhaps I speak to some here who really are a very nice sort of people. At least *they* feel they are, for they go to a place of worship where they are not often spoken to very personally. And if the minister does speak pointedly, they say, “I do not think he has any right to talk in that way. People should be charitable.” Is it supposed to be charitable to allow people to go down to Hell without warning them? My charity leads me to try, as best as I can, to break up all shams and I am sure that self-righteousness is a sham, a deadly delusion, a destructive error! It is ruining tens of thousands of people—good, quiet, harmless, inoffensive people—people, too, that are generous in their business and kind and all that and who, therefore, conclude that they are safe for time and eternity.

They say, “Well, now, I don’t know that I have done anything so very wrong. I do not see that I need repentance and faith, or that I need come as that poor thief did on the Cross and just look to Christ and say, ‘Lord, remember me.’” Dear Friend, I must address you in the language of the text, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” For they

are all vain, every one of them! “By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” in the sight of God. The way to Heaven is not by our fancied works of righteousness—salvation is by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ! Another sort of vain thoughts may be ranged under the head of carnal security. The poet says, “All men think all men mortal but themselves” and, as often as the saying is quoted, never was a proverb more generally true.

We are surprised to hear that So-and-So, who was well and hearty three days ago, is dead. We are quite taken aback for the moment but we never dream that it will happen to us! We are alarmed when we hear that a person who was sitting near to us in the pew on Sunday is now in his coffin, but we indulge the hope that *we* shall see old age! A person, the other day, who was consumptive died suddenly of hemorrhage of the lungs and yet another consumptive person says, “This sad thing does happen to invalids whose lungs are diseased, but I do not suppose it will ever befall *me*.” Men go out to their daily business and they say, “Many that wake this morning will never see the sun go down,” but they, themselves, talk of what they will do in the evening as if they were sure of surviving! There is no hint of, “If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that.”

We know, all of us, that life is very uncertain, yet multitudes are hazarding their souls upon the uncertainty of that life under an inward belief which they would not dare to express—that somehow or other they are sure not to die just yet. What is such security but a vain thought? Does it not strike you, dear Friends, when a man is 80, 88, 90, that surely he cannot expect to get through another year? As a reasonable man, he must reckon that he is soon to die. Not at all! He is often the man who thinks *least* about death and if you introduce the topic, he does not like the conversation and starts you on another tack. Many who are younger than they do not like you to mention anything about advanced age or growing old. You must talk of these old sheep as if they were still lambs or they will not like it—speak plain truth about their years and they are offended.

If you want an old man to move quickly out of the road when you are driving, always cry, “Move on, my lad,” and he feels complimented and moves immediately because there is in him a joy in being thought young and an aversion to the idea of his being old. This is ridiculous! You smile and you may well smile, for it is a folly, but yet how common a folly. Why, when a man is of ripe age, or a woman, why should they not know it and let it be known? Why should they not number their days and keep the reckoning before their own minds? If all things are right with you and me, the older we are, the better!

Someone said to a Christian man, “What is your age?” and he replied, “I am on the right side of seventy.” They found out that he was 75 and they said, “You told us you were on the right side of seventy.” “So I am,” he answered, “that is the right side, for it is the side which is nearest Heaven, my blessed Home.” Why should not all Christians think so? They *do* think so when they judge rightly, for they joyfully sing—

*“Here in the body tent,
Absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day’s march nearer Home.”*

If a day’s march is worth singing about, is not a year’s journey nearer Home a theme for still greater delight? Should we try to make out that we have so much longer to stay in exile—so much longer before we shall see the face of the Well-Beloved—so much longer before, like heirs that have come of age, we shall enter on our Divine inheritance?

My Hearers, drive out these vain thoughts about not dying! I will lead the way for you. I am as likely to die tonight as any other man upon the face of this earth. You, too, my Friend, may as likely never see another Sunday as anyone else. You tell me you do not know that you have any special disease and, indeed, I hope you have not—but we all carry something about us in which Death can fix his arrow. Depend upon it that the seeds of mortality are in every constitution. I have met with one man—no, with two men—who do not believe that they shall die. But as they are getting very much older and one of them stoops very much, I am under the impression that they *will* die—and I pray anybody here who thinks that such an idea is a folly, to remember that it is a minor form of the same folly to say—“I shall not die just yet.”

You may as well say, “I shall not die at all,” for it leads to the same practical conclusion—death at a distance influences us very little more than no death at all! You may die at any moment! And what, my dear Hearer, if at this moment, while seated in that pew, your naked spirit were suddenly to find itself at the bar of God? What would become of you? I charge you, by the living God and by your care about your own soul, do not let that thought escape your mind! It is a vain thought for me to suppose that I shall have 10 minutes longer to live! It is a vain thought to grant myself a lease for

another week, for I am a tenant-at-will and I may be ejected in a moment! So let me get rid of the folly and vanity of carnal security.

At this moment the Holy Spirit says to any of you who may be presuming upon long life—“How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” I know another set of thoughts—they are better looking, but they are equally vain—for they promise much and come to nothing. They are vain because they are fruitless. These vain thoughts are like the better order of people in Jerusalem—good people after a sort—that is to say they really thought that as God threatened them with judgments they would turn to Him. Certainly they would! They had no intention of being hard-hearted! Far from it! They acknowledged the power of the Prophet’s appeal. They felt a degree of awe in the Presence of the just God as He threatened them and, of course, they meant—they meant to wash their hearts and they meant to put away all their forbidden practices—but not just yet!

They would not wait very long, of course. A long delay would be very dangerous, but they might safely tarry a little longer. They had an engagement which would take them into worldly company and so they must wait till that was over. They had formed close connections which they could not very well break and so religion must be regretfully postponed for a more convenient season. They were engrossed in a certain business which they could not easily get out of for a term of years—but they would! Oh, they would! Certainly! Certainly they would attend to God and their souls! Though they did not say so in words, yet their faces appealed to the preacher pleadingly—“Do not press us too much just now. We are honest people. We acknowledge the bill. Let it run a little longer. We do not mean to break away from the demands of God by any means. We quite intend to comply with them at a near date, but not today. Oh, no, we do not deny the Scriptures! Do not think that we are *infidels*! We do not doubt the love of Christ to men or the power of His Gospel—we hope to feel it in a little while.”

They mean to enjoy the love of God one of these days and they hope to wind up their lives in a saintly manner. They feel rather pleased with themselves because they are so good as to resolve—if it is not virtue, itself, which they possess—yet the resolve to possess it flatters them into great notions of themselves! It is a great deal to be able to get so far as good resolutions, so they think. Well, now, my Friend, has not that been the style of *your* thoughts for a great many years? Did you not think like that when you were a child—when you were yet fresh to the ways of religion and had not yet learned so much of other ways as you have now? Do you not remember those early impressions—those tears at night, those child-like cries to Jesus, your mother’s Savior? Yes, you do remember them and there were times not so very long ago when all came back to you and you sat in the House of God trembling and wishing you could get to your chamber and bow your knees in prayer!

You were on the borders of Immanuel’s land and there was only a step between you and Life. You wished that the step was taken, but still—well, there was a reason why it should not be taken just yet—and so you dared to bid the Lord to wait your leisure as if He were a beggar at your door to whom you were under no obligation. Alas for this constant delaying! Where will it land you? I see upon your head the signs of age, but you are not yet born of God. Your eyes are failing. You need spectacles, but you have not yet looked to Jesus! Years have followed years and the record of your sin is a long roll written on both sides and you are still resolving and still making up your mind to something very good—still hoping that the right time is coming, only you must wait a little longer.

Now, the Lord says, “How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?” for they are all vain, these delays, these false promises, these self-deceptions. How long shall it be that they shall throng the avenues of your soul and curse your spirit? In some, who I hope are saved, their vain thoughts lie in a similar direction—they trust that they have believed, but they are slow to obey their Lord in publicly avowing their discipleship. They know that the Gospel has two precepts—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” or, in other words, “He that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.”

They resolve that they will, one of these days, make a confession of their faith—such is their fixed intention—but the time is not yet come, for at present they are filled with questions as to their condition. They once felt sure that they had faith. Had they confessed it, then, that certainty might have continued. They have so long kept their obedience to their Lord in abeyance that they begin, now, to question and, perhaps rightly, whether they have really believed. The Lord Jesus has said, “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in Heaven.” But,

then, somebody would laugh at them—they would have a cross to carry and this hinders them and so they postpone *obedience* to an indefinite period.

Jesus Christ says, “He that takes not up his cross and follows not after Me is not worthy of Me.” But they mean, if they can, to find a by-path, so as not to go along the king’s highway and pay toll at the gates, or be met by the king’s officers, or be seen by the king’s enemies. They will, if they can, creep under a hedge when the battle begins and so escape the perils of the fight. Their religion gives them the courage of a rat behind the wainscot and no more. They do not come out except at night when nobody sees them. But this cowardice is not intended to last *forever*—they are going to be very brave one of these days—you shall see them performing great exploits! They intend, before very long, to openly say, “I am on the Lord’s side.”

They will come forward and display their colors. They will be the bravest of the brave—only not just yet. Another time for seeing the Church officers with reference to union with the Church will pass away and another and another and yet they will be no nearer the point of decision. Their resolutions are vain thoughts and so I put the question, “How long?” Do fix some time or other! Do not forever remain a trifler with God and His Church and His command! “How long shall your vain thoughts”—your ineffectual promises of obedience to Christ—“lodge within you?”

Now I shall come closely home to some here whom I love in the Lord if I say that resolutions to be very useful, prayerful and holy are often little better than vain thoughts because they are encumbered with procrastination. There are many who love the Lord who have never done much for Him because the time of figs is not yet. Leaves and leaves, only, have they produced. They are live branches of the vine, although they have not brought forth many grapes—but they cheer themselves with the conviction that *one of these days*—they do not quite know when—they will bring forth clusters as famous as those of Eshcol, though, up to now, they have been poor specimens of Christian professors! Their mind is made up to rise to a higher life! They will grow in Grace! They will give more time to Bible-reading and prayer! They will live nearer to God! They will grow to be strong Christians—and when that happens they are going to do some great thing—I do not know what form their resolution is to take, but they will do something extraordinary!

They will enter the Sunday school and bring scores of little children to the Savior’s feet. They will commence a class for young men—the class is sure to grow and out of it many will come to build up the Church of God. They will become fathers or mothers in Israel and their children will be many. Or they are going to preach at the village stations, draw large congregations and lead hundreds to the Savior! They are going to serve the Lord by personal exertion, or to give to the cause of God very much of their substance. It has been on their hearts a long time to be bountiful benefactors to the poor, to the Church at home and to missionaries abroad. They have not given much, yet, but before long they intend to overflow like gushing fountains which send forth rivers of water! They are resolving—when will they come to *acting*?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, if we had, any of us, done about half what we *thought* we would do, we would have been tolerably fruitful branches of the vine! But we spend so much of our time in this proposing and then proposing again, that we have little left for the actual performance of anything! We dream with our eyes open, not at night when we are asleep and are being really refreshed, but in the day when our dreaming does no good, but merely flatters us into a good opinion of ourselves. These are vain thoughts, for the Lord *deserves* to be really served—not with imaginary blood were you redeemed—nor with *imaginary* fruit can you reward your Savior’s love!

Not with imaginary woes, nor with a painted death upon a painted Cross did Christ ransom us from Hell and do we think to reward Him with *proposals* and *plans* and *schemes* and *fancies* and *hopes* and *resolves*? Is this your kindness to your Friend? Some men brood so long over their future intentions that they, all of them, become addled eggs and nothing whatever is hatched! O Man, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it!” Do it! Do it “with all your might!” Do not leave it for somebody else to do when you are dead! Many make up their minds that a great thing shall be done—when they die. When they cannot hold their money any longer, *then* they will give it up—a wonderful sacrifice to God! But he that would serve God acceptably determines, “I will give Him of my substance while it is mine and not when it is my heir’s.”

My dear Friend, I would have you regret your idleness! It is infinitely better to get to work and perform the little which you are able to do—to give the Lord your service while you can serve Him—than that you should have to lie upstairs trying to amuse yourself or quiet the upbraiding of a guilty conscience by proposing to do great things which you could not accomplish if you were to set about them and which, indeed, you will never even so much as attempt!

I have thus mentioned to you several groups of bad lodgers, of whom the text says, “How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” “How long,” says God to every Christian here that has loitered, lingered, hesitated—“How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?” Perform at once the doing of that which you have resolved, if, indeed, the resolve is such as you ought to have made. God help you, by His sacred Spirit, to lead a practical life and not a dreamy one!

II. Now, secondly, let me show WHAT BAD LODGERS THEY ARE. Vain thoughts get admittance into our heads and hearts and there they make themselves at home and do mischief without end. They run upstairs and downstairs and all over the house and they multiply every day. They are dreadful pests—the worst lodgers the soul can harbor. For, first, they are deceitful. The man that says, “When I have a more convenient season I will send for you,” does not ever send for Paul—He never intended to do so. A man says, “Tomorrow,” but tomorrow never comes. When that comes which would have been, “tomorrow,” it is, “today”—and then He cries, “Tomorrow”—and so multiplies lies before God!

What deceptiveness it is on the part of any man who knows to do good and does it not, that he should think to put off God with empty promises! Now, listen to this—“To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” “Sin.” That is God’s word, not mine. But you ask me, “To him that knows to do good and truly intends to do it, does not the *intention* remove the sin?” I answer decidedly, No! “To him that knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” So long as he refuses to do what he knows to be right, he is sinning and every minute that he delays heaps up another sin and so the sin multiplies like money that is borrowed at compound interest! The amount of guilt runs up and you never know what it comes to.

Delay in performing duty is the most mischievous evil, doing infinite damage to the heart in which it lodges because it defiles it with falsehood upon falsehood and thus provokes the Most High. Oh, I would turn such a lodger as that out! David said, “He that tells lies shall not tarry in my house.” Do not suffer these vain thoughts to lodge a day longer, for they disgrace you and place you in jeopardy. Vain thoughts are bad lodgers, for they pay no rent—they bring in nothing good to those who entertain them. There is the lodger of self-righteousness, for instance. What good does self-righteousness ever do to the man who entertains it? It pretends to pay in brass farthings—it *pretends* to pay—but the money is counterfeit!

What good does it do any man to harbor in his mind the empty promise of future repentance? It often *prevents* repentance! I would rather hear a man say straight out, “Now, look here. I never mean to repent or believe! My mind is made up as to that matter.” This, at least, is truthful. That man will, perhaps, change his mind, or *God* will change it. But that other man—the soft, putty-like being, the India rubber man—squeeze him; pull him out; force him together again. Do what you will with him, he gets back into his old shape! There is no solid stuff in him. You cannot make anything of him. These irresolute men, “unstable as water,” cannot excel. They are neither good for use nor for ornament and we have plenty of this class! Are you one of them, my Friend? If so, God help you to get rid of these bad lodgers of instability, self-sufficiency and constantly promising, because they pay no rent. And as for you Christian people who are always on the verge of being splendid—you members of churches who are always going to be generous, who are quite certain that you shall be useful, only you never are—what profit has ever come to God or yourself from this continued hesitation? Let such a lodger as that depart at once, for the longer he lingers the more will you lose by him.

The next reason for the ejection of these lodgers is this—they are wasting your goods and destroying your property. For instance, every unacted resolution wastes time and that is more precious than gold. It also wastes thought, for to think of a thing and to leave it undone is a waste of reflection. It is a waste of energy to be energetic about merely promising to be energetic! It is a great waste of strength to be forever resolving to be strong and yet to remain weak. You screw yourself up to the sticking-point and you are going to be holy and yet never are! You mean to turn to God and yet never do. Why, you are wasting time! You are wasting thought! You are wasting opportunity! You are wasting the Gospel under which you sit! These bad lodgers are causing you such daily loss that before long you will be utterly ruined unless you can cleanse your house of them! You cannot afford to give them shelter—send them packing at once! Worse than their damaging your house, they are damaging you!

Bad lodgers will break your windows, burn your shutters, pull down your wainscots and do a thousand spiteful things. When they will neither pay nor go, they will do all the mischief they can! And thus do vain thoughts—foolish, ineffectual thoughts—work us grievous ill, for the man that resolves and does not carry out the resolve grows in irreso-

lution. He that yesterday said he would, but today does not, may today say he will, but there will not be so much strength in his resolve as there was in that of yesterday. And since he failed yesterday, he is even more certain to fail now. A man that has been 10 years making up his mind to think about eternity is 10 degrees less likely to do so. A man who has had 10 years' sermons earnestly driven at him and yet they have not penetrated him, is as one that has been 10 years hammered on the anvil and is just so much the harder. O, how men are hardened, besotted, befooled and enslaved by vain thoughts! How long will you let these lodge within you? Shall they remain till they have plundered you of heart and hope and left your mind a wreck and ruin?

Worst of all, these vain thoughts are bad lodgers because they bring you under condemnation. There have been times when to entertain certain persons was treason and many individuals have been put to death for harboring traitors. Rebels condemned to die have been discovered in a man's house and he has been condemned for affording them a hiding place. Now, God declares that these vain thoughts of yours are condemned traitors. Are you going to harbor them any longer? If a lodger came to your house and, after a while, a policeman called and said, "You let your front room, I think." "Yes." "What kind of a person is your lodger and what is his business?" I think after one or two visits of that kind you would say to your lodger, "I shall be obliged if you will go somewhere else," for you would not enjoy the idea of having a suspected person within your doors. Nobody does.

Now, these vain thoughts, these self-righteous thoughts, these boasts in *self*—they are something more than suspected—they have been judged and condemned to die! And, oh, let not your heart become a haunt for things that God abhors! And when He sends a summons, as He does tonight in the words of the text, "How long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?" oh, that God would grant you Grace to drive out the Canaanites who will dwell in the land as long as they can find a den to hide in! Let Beddome's hymn be your prayer—

*"Astonished and distressed,
I turn my eyes within:
My heart with loads of guilt oppressed,
The seat of every sin.
What crowds of evil thoughts,
What vile affections there!
Envy and pride, deceit and guile,
Distrust and slavish fear.
Almighty King of saints,
These tyrant lusts subdue;
Drive the old serpent from his seat,
And all my pow'rs renew.
This done, my cheerful voice
Shall loud hosannas raise;
My soul shall glow with gratitude,
My lips proclaim Your praise."*

III. That brings me to my closing head, which is LET US SEE WHAT TO DO WITH THESE BAD LODGERS. The first thing is to give them notice to leave at once. Let there be no waiting. When a man is converted, it is done at once. There may be a long process by which he comes up to it and there may be a long succession of the breaking Light of God before he gets clear about it, but there is a turning point. There is a line, thin as a razor's edge, which divides death from life—a point of decision which separates the saved from the lost. Did you ever notice, in our Lord's parable of the prodigal son, the decision of the repenting one? He said, "I will arise and go unto my father"—and he arose and went to his father and, as I heard a quaint Divine say, he did not give his master a day's notice!

The narrative tells us that he had joined himself to a citizen of that country who had sent him into the fields to feed swine. He ran off, then and there, just as he was! If he had gone to see his master and had said, "Sir, I am obliged to go home and see my father," or if he had stopped to clean himself—if he had stopped to purchase better linen and a fairer suit of clothes before he went home, he would have died of hunger at the swine trough. But, instead of that, he did the right thing—he ran for his life—and that is what you must do. "Well, I shall, I hope," says one. You never will, my Friend, if you get no farther than that! It must be done at once. And, possibly, it is, "now or never"—before the clock ticks again.

Will you have Christ and go to Heaven, or your sins and go to Hell? Quick! Sharp! God help you to answer aright, for on that answer may hang eternal things! I believe that it is always so. Men decide at once, or not at all. It was so with me. I was thinking, as I stood up here to preach, that this is just the kind of weather in which I found the Savior. Some did not come out that morning, it snowed so hard. But I had a heavy heart and I wanted to lighten it and so I went out to the place of worship and when I heard the Gospel and he that preached it said to me, “Look! Look, young man! Look, now!” I did, then and there, look to Jesus, otherwise I had never looked! When the Word of God came to me, by His Grace, I immediately received it!

There is one heavy knock, sometimes, at a man’s door and he must open *then*, or no other knock may come. I think that somebody has come in here tonight that, in God’s name, I may give that knock at his heart. And if the door is opened and he says, “Come in, blessed Savior,” then it shall be well. The first thing, then, is to give a notice to leave to all self-righteousness. Away with it! Away with it! What a fool I was ever to have any! All self-confidence—away with it! I had better lean on a broken reed than lean on myself! To all delays—to all hopes that I shall live another week—away with them! Away with them! I have no ground for such hopes. Away with them! Leave, leave, vain thoughts! Oh, that they would go at the bidding!

Suppose that these vain thoughts will not go just when you bid them to go? I will tell you what to do to get rid of them—starve them out! Lock the door and let nothing enter upon which they can feed. I would have you unconverted people say, “We confess that we have fed our vain thoughts, but now we will not go where they can get food. We will not go to ungodly amusements, nor into evil company, nor will we talk with idlers on our way home.” Send into your heart what you know vain thoughts cannot be nourished upon—what will be poison to them. Give them God’s Word! Read it and study it and cry to God to have mercy upon you. Do nothing which will help these vain thoughts live.

I will tell you a secret and then I have done. The best way in all the world that I know of to get rid of vain thoughts out of your house—these bad lodgers that have gone in and that you cannot get out—is to sell the house over their heads. Let the house change owners! When you have done that, you know, it will be the *new* Owner that will have the trouble of turning them out—and He will do it. I recommend every sinner here that wants to find salvation to give himself up to Christ. Come out, you vain thoughts! They will not come out. We give you a notice of eviction—but they will not go!

Now we will tell them something that will change the nature of the struggle. Lord Jesus, I trust You to be my Savior from every form of evil and I am not my own, now, for You have bought me with a price. Ah, now the stronger than they are has come and He will bind the strong ones and He will fling them out of the window and so break them to pieces with their fall that they shall never be able to crawl up the stairs again! He knows how to do it! He can expel them—you cannot. Oh, that you might have Grace, now, to give your whole nature to your Creator and Redeemer! Give the house over to the new Owner and let Him come and He will drive them out and He, Himself, will come and live there and His Divine Spirit will come and fill every chamber with His own Presence and there shall be no fear that these bad lodgers shall ever come back again!

God bless this simple word to many, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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