

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE GREAT SIN OF DOING NOTHING.

A Sermon

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“But if ye will not do, so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.”—Numbers xxxii. 23.

THERE are many dear friends engaged in business who can only reach the Tabernacle in time for the middle of the service, and therefore they lose the reading of the Scriptures and the exposition, which make up a whole with the sermon. This is a great loss to them, but as it is not their fault we must not let them suffer for it, so far as we can remedy the evil. With this design let me explain to them that, according to the chapter which we have read and expounded, the Israelites had conquered the country possessed by Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites; and the tribes of Reuben and Gad, having great quantities of cattle, thought that so rich a pasture-country would be eminently suitable for them and for their flocks. They were no bad judges, for the country was specially fitted for sheep-farming. They therefore asked of Moses that they might have that country to be theirs. But Moses objected. Did they mean to sit still and enjoy that country, and then leave the rest of the tribes to cross the Jordan, and to fight for their possessions? If so, he declared that it was a very evil course to take—that they were selfish in seeking their own ease, and that they would be discouraging God's people, and doing all sorts of mischief. He therefore proposed to them that, if they were to have that conquered country for their own, they should at least cross the river with their brethren, and fight and continue fighting until the land on the other side of Jordan had been cleared of its old inhabitants, and the whole of Israel could take the whole of the country, and each tribe could possess its portion. He put it to them as a matter of honour, and as a matter of right, that they ought to help in conquering the rest of the land. Why should they receive their lot without fighting, and leave the other tribes to bear the toil and danger of war? Had not God bidden them all to go up and drive out the condemned Canaanites? How could they evade their duty without great sin? He would have them take their full share in the war, and on that condition they might have the

rich meadows of Bashan, but not else. This was clearly just and equitable, and commended itself to those concerned. They at once agreed to the proposal; and Moses, to enforce the agreement, told them in the words of the text that, if they did not keep their covenant, and give all due aid to their brethren, then they would sin against God; and they might be sure that their sin would find them out.

I remarked in reading the chapter that Moses spoke very wisely, very forcibly, very honestly; and the people were very pliant. They yielded to his persuasions, and the difficulty which threatened to divide the nation was readily got over. It is well to have a wise leader. It is well for him when he leads a reasonable people. Oh, that I may be able to-night to speak a word in season, and may your ears be ready to hear it! May the Lord bring as gracious an issue out of this service as he did out of the discourse of his servant Moses! To his Holy Spirit shall be all the praise.

We shall speak at this time, first, of *what was this sin?* Secondly, *what would be the chief sin of that sin?* "If ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord." This would be the peculiar atrocity of their sin, that it would be levelled at God himself. And then there is a third point: *What would be the consequence of such sin?* "Be sure your sin will find you out." They would be guilty, and would not long go unpunished.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS THIS SIN? What is this sin about which the Spirit of God says by Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out"? A learned divine has delivered a sermon upon the sin of murder from this text, another upon theft, another upon falsehood. Now they are very good sermons, but they have nothing to do with this text, if it be read as Moses uttered it. If you take the text as it stands, there is nothing in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men do, but it is about *what men do not do*. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not so often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning,—"If ye will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out."

What, then, was this sin? Remember that it is the sin of God's own people. It is not the sin of Egyptians and Philistines, but the sin of God's chosen nation; and therefore this text is for you that belong to any of the tribes of Israel—you to whom God has given a portion among his beloved ones. It is to you, professed Christians and church-members, that the text comes, "Be sure your sin will find you out." And what is that sin? Very sadly common it is among professed Christians, and needs to be dealt with: it is the sin which leads any to forget their share in the holy war which is to be carried out for God and for his church. A great many wrongs are tangled together in this crime, and we must try to separate them, and set them in order before your eyes.

First, it was *the sin of idleness and of self-indulgence*. "We have cattle: here is a land that yields much pasture: let us have this for our cattle, and we will build folds for our sheep with the abundant stones that lie about, and we will repair these cities of the Amorites, and we will dwell in them. They are nearly ready for us, and there shall our little ones dwell in comfort. We do not care about fighting:

we have seen enough of it already in the wars with Sihon and Og. Reuben would rather abide by the sheepfolds. Gad has more delight in the bleating of the sheep and in the folding of the lambs in his bosom than in going forth to battle." Alas, the tribe of Reuben is not dead, and the tribe of Gad has not passed away! Many who are of the household of faith are equally indisposed to exertion, equally fond of ease. Hear them say, "Thank God we are safe! We have passed from death unto life. We have named the name of Christ; we are washed in his precious blood, and therefore we are secure." Then, with a strange inconsistency, they permit the evil of the flesh to crave carnal ease, and they cry, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Spiritual self-indulgence is a monstrous evil; yet we see it all around. On Sunday these loafers must be well fed. They look out for such sermons as will feed their souls. The thought does not occur to these people that there is something else to be done besides feeding. Soul-saving is pushed into the background. The crowds are perishing at their gates; the multitudes with their sins defile the air; the age is getting worse and worse, and man, by a process of evolution, is evolving a devil; and yet these people want pleasant things preached to them. They eat the fat and drink the sweet, and they crowd to the feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined—spiritual festivals are their delight: sermons, conferences, Bible-readings, and so forth, are sought after, but regular service in ordinary ways is neglected. Not a hand's turn will they do. They gird on no armour, they grasp no sword, they wield no sling, they throw no stone. No, they have gotten their possession; they know they have, and they sit down in carnal security, satisfied to do nothing. They neither work for life, nor from life: they are arrant sluggards, as lazy as they are long. Nowhere are they at home except where they can enjoy themselves, and take things easy. They love their beds, but the Lord's fields they will neither plough nor reap. This is the sin pointed out in the text—"If ye do not go forth to the battles of the Lord, and contend for the Lord God and for his people, ye do sin against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the others. The sin of sitting still while your brethren go forth to war breaks both tables of the law, and has in it a huge idolatry of self, which neither allows love to God or man. Horrible idleness! God save us from it!

This sin may be viewed under another aspect, as *selfishness and unbrotherliness*. Gad and Reuben ask to have their inheritance at once, and to make themselves comfortable in Bashan, on this side Jordan. What about Judah, Levi, Simeon, Benjamin, and all the rest of the tribes? How are they to get their inheritance? They do not care, but it is evident that Bashan is suitable for themselves with their multitude of cattle. Some of them reply, "You see, they must look to themselves, as the proverb hath it, 'Every man for himself, and God for us all.'" Did I not hear some one in the company say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I know that gentleman. I heard his voice years ago. His name is Cain, and I have this to say to him: it is true that he is not his brother's keeper, but he is his brother's killer. Every man is either the keeper

of his brother, or the destroyer of his brother. Soul-murder can be wrought without an act or even a will; it can be, and is constantly, accomplished by neglect. Yonder perishing heathen—does not the Lord enquire, “Who slew all these?” The millions of this city unevangelized—who is guilty of their blood? Are not idle Christians starving the multitude by refusing to hand out the bread of life? Is not this a grievous sin?

“But oh,” says another, “they can conquer the land themselves. God is with them, and he can do his own work, and therefore I do not see that I need trouble myself about other people.” That is selfishness; and selfishness is never worse than when it puts on the garb of religion. The boy at school, who selfishly feeds himself upon his luxuries, and gives nothing to his young companions, is generally their ridicule. He is the greedy boy whom all despise. A man with large stores, who, in time of famine, would feed himself, but never think of the poor, is despised among men. But what shall I say of the man who, concerning the things of the soul—concerning heaven, and hell, and Christ, and eternity—is so selfish that, being saved himself, he cares not one jot for others? He is so unbrotherly that I am half afraid he is no brother. He is so inhuman that I can scarcely think a touch of the life of Christ can ever have quickened him. How is he a Christian who is not like Christ, but who just feels, “Well, I am all right; and if I look to myself other people must look to themselves. God will see to them all, no doubt! I have nothing to do with it”? Now unless we shake off that horrible selfishness, and feel that the very essence of our religion lies in love, and that one of the first-fruits of it is to make us care about the salvation of our fellow-men—unless, I say, we shake that off and go forth to fight the Lord’s battles—then this text threatens us very solemnly,—“If ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.” O my brothers, hear ye this text, and let it operate with salutary influence to produce in you constant effort for the salvation of those around you!

But with this there was mingled *ingratitude* of a very dark order. These children of Gad and Reuben would appropriate to themselves lands for which all the Israelites had laboured. God had led them forth to battle, and they had conquered Sihon and Og, and now these men would take possession of what others have struggled for, but they are not to fight themselves. This is vile ingratitude; and I fear it is common among us at this very day. How come we to be Christians at all? Instrumentally, it is through those holy missionaries who won our fathers from the cruel worship of the Druids, and afterwards from the fierce dominion of Woden and Thor. We must also trace our gospel light to those stakes at Smithfield, where men of God counted not their lives dear to them, but willingly gave up all they had, and their lives also by a painful death, that they might keep truth alive in the land. Some of you came to be Christian men through the earnest labours of men who wept by the roadside, or by the loving entreaties of tender mothers who wept you to the Saviour, or by the faithful ministry of some brother from the pulpit, or the equally faithful teaching of an earnest Sunday-school teacher. We owe under God much to past ages, and much to present labourers. There is no man among us but stands immensely indebted to

the church of God. Though God be our Father, yet the church is our mother, and through her various agencies we have been born to God. Do we acknowledge all this debt, and are we not going to pay it? Are we to receive all, and then give out nothing at all? Are we to be like candles burning under bushels? Are we to waste our life by much receiving and little distributing? This will never do. This will not be life, but death. I do not charge this home upon anybody personally; but if this cap fits anybody, pray let him wear it. If any man must acknowledge his obligation to the church of God, and yet he is not repaying it, let him cover his face for very shame. Wilt thou not hand on the light thou hast received? Verily thou deservest to perish in darkness. Art thou fed, and wilt thou not break thy bread to the hungry, or pass a cup of cold water to the thirsty? What art thou at, strange ingrate! that thou shouldst simply be a stagnant reservoir into which streams of mercy fall never to run out of thee again, but to stand and putrefy in selfishness? Remember the Dead Sea, and tremble lest thou be like it, a pool accursed and cursing all around thee! O God, have mercy upon the great mass of thy professing people to whom this must be solemnly applied: that they do receive, but give to thee and to thy cause so little either of time, substance, talent, prayer, or anything else!

The text, when spiritually interpreted, says concerning our personal service in the conquest of the world for Christ,—“if ye do not so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.”

Again, we may view this from another point of view. It is the sin of *untruthfulness*. These people pledged themselves that they would go forth with the other tribes, and that they would not return to their own homes until the whole of the campaign was ended. Now, if after that they did not go to the war, and did not fight to the close of it, then they would be guilty of a barefaced lie. It is a wretched thing for a man to be a covenant-breaker. It is sacrilege for any man to lie, not only unto man, but unto God. I would speak very tenderly, but if any man has been converted from the error of his ways, by that very conversion he is bound to serve the Lord. If he has been baptized as a believer, by that baptism he declared that he was dead to the world, and buried to it, that henceforth he might live in newness of life. Now, if he lives only to make money and hoard it, and he does nothing for God's church and for poor sinners, is not his baptism a lie? Such a baptized person was buried, but he was never dead: is not this to turn baptism into a farce? He gave himself up to the church of God, he became a member of it; and by that act and deed he pledged himself to do all he could for its growth and its prosperity; and if he does nothing, he is a deceiver. If his joining a church meant anything, it meant that he would take part in the common service of God. A doing nothing professor is a merely nominal member, and a nominal member is a real hindrance. He neither contributes, nor prays, nor works, nor agonizes for souls, nor takes any part in Christian service, and yet he partakes in all the privileges of the church. Is this fair? What is the use of him? He sits and hears, and sometimes sleeps under the sermon. That is all. Is not his union with the church a practical falsehood? I

will not say so, but I will ask the question. It does seem to me that if I belong to the Israelites, and they are sent by God to conquer a country, and I do not go forth to the war with them, and take my part in the conflict, I am not a true Israelite. I am unworthy of my nation; I am disloyal to the standard; I am false to my fellow-soldiers. I think it is so: do not you? Having entered the Christian ministry, if I did nothing in it, I should feel that I disgraced it. If I simply tried to enjoy religion without an effort to spread it, I ought to be drummed out of the army of preachers. If there be any in the church who have talent that they do not use for God, or money which they do not lay out for Christ, or time which they do not use for holy purposes, they are sinning, and their sin will find them out. Your buried talent, will it not rust; and rusting, will it not create within your spirits a most horrible disease, and be a peril to you? Must it not be so? Are they not guilty of an acted lie before high heaven who call themselves servants of God, and yet do not serve him? You often sing—

“’Tis done! the great transaction’s done;
I am my Lord’s, and he is mine:
He drew me, and I follow’d on,
Charm’d to confess the voice divine.

High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew’d shall daily hear:
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”

Is that hymn true? Do you mean those verses, or do you mock God? You have all sung the hymn many times, and made, “Happy day! Happy day!” the chorus; but is your singing true or false? If any man or woman among you shall after such a song sink back into himself, and do nothing for his Lord, what truth is there in him? God save us from using our lips to mock his holy name! It can be little short of blasphemy to sing such words and yet live a selfish, indolent life. Will a man thus insult his God? O sirs, I beseech you make such language true, or else have done with it, lest the record of it destroy your souls!

Once more, and I will have done with this painful subject. What would their sin be? According to Moses *it would be a grave injury to others*. Do you not notice how he put it to them? “Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall ye sit here?” What an example to set! If one Christian man is right in never joining a Christian church, then all other Christian men would be right in not doing so, and there would be no visible Christian church. Do you not see, you non-professing believers, that your example is destructive of all church-life? What are you at? If one Christian man, with the talent to preach, is right in not preaching, then other Christian men have a right to trifle in the same way, and then there would be no ministry left. An idler is a great waster, and makes others wasters too: his example is likely to make all around him as indolent as himself. I notice in our churches that a few earnest men and women lead the way, and others are sweetly drawn to follow them. How precious are the earnest few in a Christian community. David

knew the value of the first three in his band. But if the leading spirits are dead, cold, indifferent, what happens? Why, lethargy spreads over the whole. I am sorry to say that I hear of instances in which a minister laments, "I labour with all my might, but I am persuaded that nothing will ever be done while Mr. So-and-so is there." He is often a cold-blooded deacon, or a purse-proud member. When you come to know him, you feel, "While there is such a great big iceberg floating close to the shore, the garden by the sea must be frostbitten: nothing can grow." It were a pity that any of us should freeze others. God save us from it! "Oh," says one, "nobody knows me, and therefore I cannot have much influence either for good or for evil." Not over your own child—your daughter, your son? That influence which you have over even one or two little ones may spread far further than you imagine. We cannot calculate the range of moral influence: it is immeasurable. I suppose that there is not a single moving atom of matter which does not influence in some measure the entire universe. One atom impinges upon another, and that upon another, and so it reaches the remotest star. Whether we do or do not do, what we do or do not do, will have an influence upon all that are round about us, perhaps to all eternity. Perhaps the word I speak tonight shall thrill when yonder sun has burned out like a coal, and the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair. I am not sure but that our thoughts upon our bed may throb throughout the ages in their incessant results. "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself": for good or for evil we are yoked with the universe, and there is no possibility of severance. There is much influence for evil in an idle example: possibly such an example would not be set by certain persons if they would but think of the consequences. To such consideration of consequences I invite all whose gravest fault is forbearing to do good. O barren tree, do not excuse thyself because thou dost not drip with poison like the upas! It is crime enough that thou cumberest the ground!

Moses goes on to remark that if these people did not go forth to war they would *discourage all the rest*. "Wherefore discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them?" It is no slight sin to discourage holy zeal and perseverance in others. May we never be guilty of killing holy desires even in children! How often has a burning desire in a boy's heart been quenched by his own father, who has thought him too impulsive, or too ardent! How frequently the conversation of a friend, so called, has dried up the springs of holy desire in the person with whom he has conversed! Let it not be so. Yet without cold words our chill neglects may freeze. I know a terrace where the shutting up of one or two shops has a deadening effect upon the trade of the other shops. Somehow, the closed shutters give a gloomy look to the place, and customers are repelled. Does not the same thing happen to groups of workers when one grows idle? Does not the one dull brother deaden the rest? We cannot neglect our own gardens without injuring our neighbours. Do you live anywhere near a house that is not let, which has a back garden left to run to waste? All manner of seeds are blown over upon your ground; and, though you keep the

hoe going, yet the weeds baffle you, for there is such a nursery for them just over the wall. One mechanic coming late among a set of workmen may throw the whole company out of order for the day. One railway truck off the rails may block the entire system. Depend upon it, if we are not serving the Lord our God, we are committing the sin of discouraging our fellow-men. They are more likely to imitate our lethargy than our energy. Why should we wish to hinder others from being earnest? How dare we rob God of the services of others by our own neglect? O God, deliver us from this sin!

If I had preached a sermon about murder or theft, you would all have escaped the lash; but few of us will be without rebuke now that I have kept the text in the setting in which God originally put it, and in which he meant it to be presented for our rebuke and exhortation.

II. Secondly, let us carefully notice WHAT WAS THE CHIEF SIN IN THIS SIN? Of course, if the Reubenites did not keep their solemn agreement to go over Jordan, and help their brethren, they would sin against their brethren; but this is not the offence which rises first to the mind of Moses. Moses overlooks the lesser, because he knows it to be comprehended in the greater; and he says, "Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord." In this he anticipated the confession of David, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." To refuse to help their brethren would be disobedience to the Lord. Did he not command all Israel to drive out the Canaanites? In like manner, neglect of holy work is positive sin against the Lord. It is *disobedience* against the Lord not to be preaching his truth if we are able to do so. Did not our Lord say, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"? This command was not confined to a dozen or so, but was meant for all his people, as they have opportunity and ability. We who hear the gospel are bidden to proclaim it, for it is written, "Let him that heareth say, Come." The hearer of the gospel is bound to be a repeater of the gospel. We are all called upon, as we know the Lord, to tell to others what the Lord has told to us; and if we do not so, we are guilty of disobedience to a great gospel precept.

We are certainly guilty, dear friends, of *ingratitude*, if, as I have already said, we owe so much to other men, and yet do not seek to bless mankind; but chiefly we owe everything to the grace of God, and, if God has given us grace in our own hearts, and saved us with the precious blood of the Only-Begotten, how can we sit still, and allow others to perish? As we value salvation we are under bonds to make it known. We rejoice to be in the kingdom of God—should we not spend and be spent for the growth of that kingdom? He that doth not bear arms in this war is a traitor to his sovereign Lord.

There would be sin against God in the conduct of these people, if they did not aid in the conquest of Canaan for they would be *dividing God's Israel*. Shall the Lord's heritage be rent in twain? God meant them all to keep together. They all came out of Egypt together; they all marched through the wilderness together, and now he meant them to fight his battles together. Were these to take their inheritance, and abide among the sheep-cotes, and leave the other ten and a half tribes

to go over Jordan and wage the war alone? This would be scattering the family of God. Can it be that any of us are dividing the church of God; that is, dividing it into drones and workers? This would be a terrible division: and I fear that it exists already. It is apparent to those who are able to observe; and it is mourned over by those who are jealous for the God of Israel. Half the schisms in churches arise out of the real division which exists between idlers and workers. Mind this. Be not sowers of division by being busy-bodies, working not at all.

If you are not serving the Lord, you are sinning against the sacred Trinity. You sin against our Father, who would have you do good, and be imitators of him as dear children. You sin against the Son of God, who has bought you with a price that you might be zealous for his glory. You sin against the Holy Ghost, whose impulses are not to sleep and idleness, but to quickening and to holiness. May we no longer sin against the Lord by refusing to perform his will!

III. We have now reached the last point, and the point that is most serious: WHAT WILL COME OF THIS SIN OF DOING NOTHING? What will come of it? "*Be sure your sin will find you out.*" Now, as the time is nearly gone, I will not do more than show that these Gadites and Kencubites would be sure to be found out by their own neglect. Their sin would find them out to their shame and sorrow if they did not lend all their strength to their brethren according to their promise.

It would find them out thus: they would be *ill at ease*. One of these days their sin would leap upon their consciences as a lion on its prey. They would wake up and say, "We were wrong. We were bound to have taken our share in that war"; and every man among them that was good for anything would be troubled in heart because he had failed to do his duty in the hour of need. He would feel uneasy: he would not want anybody to point him out with the finger, but he would point himself out and he would say to himself, "I failed in that case. I know I did. I acted very wrongly. I ought to have been with Joshua chasing out those Canaanites: I received my own portion of the land, and I ought therefore to have helped others to win their portions."

When conscience was thus aroused, they would also feel themselves to be *mean and despicable*. As king after king was conquered, and the notes of victory were heard all over Canaan, they would think themselves mice rather than men to have shunned so glorious a conflict. They would feel disgraced by their own inaction. Their manhood would be held cheap by the other tribes: in fact, they would become a by-word and a proverb, as men do who are notoriously greedy and selfish. Surely it is an intolerable disgrace to any one to profess to be a man of God, and to have no care about the souls of others, while they are perishing by millions.

More than that, the tribes who went not to the war would be *enslaved* by their own inaction. God would have his people learn war; but if these men did not go to the fight they would not be soldierly, and they would not be able to take care of themselves when their land was invaded. How much of sacred education we miss when we turn away from the service of God! I believe that no man understands salvation so well as the man who, having tasted it for himself, has also preached it to

those about him. If you want to know the evil of the human heart, try to do good to the unconverted, and endeavour to guide the unbeliever to Jesus. Get a dozen girls around you, my sister, and watch the workings of their hearts as you seek to lead them to Christ, and you will learn much more than you knew before. My dear brother, gather a number of youths about you, and observe their feeling and conduct while you seek their conversion. You will soon know the depravity of human nature if you watch for souls for a little season; and if you get souls converted, and act as a spiritual father to them, you will soon see how much they need the Holy Spirit to keep them; and how much you need him to keep you also, for your patience will be tried. You will learn both the sweet and the bitter of the things of God by being engaged in Christ's service. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me": service is a yoke we must bear in order to learn of Christ. The only way to learn to swim is to get into the water. To be a soldier and never know the smell of gunpowder is impossible: at least, such soldiers are little to be relied on in case of war. No, no; our sin, if we do nothing, will find us out in our being enfeebled, in our being disgraced, in our feeling that we are mean, and in the accusation of our conscience. Let us find this sin out, and shake ourselves free from it before it finds us out.

Their sin would also have found them out, had they fallen into it, because they would have been *divided from the rest of God's Israel*. If they had not gone across the Jordan to fight, the ten and a half tribes would always have said, "What have we to do with you? The Jordan rolls between us, and so let it do. We do not want any connection with those who acted so basely to us in our hour of need." They would practically have cut themselves off from union with the Israel of God, and they would have secured to themselves the loss of all fellowship with earnest men. Those who are non-workers lose much by not keeping pace with those who are running the heavenly race. The active are happy: the hand of the diligent maketh rich in a spiritual sense. There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty: I am sure it is so in a spiritual sense.

To come more practically home, brethren beloved, if you and I are not serving the Lord, our sin will find us out. It will find us out perhaps in this way. There will be many added to the church, and God will prosper it, and we shall hear of it: but *we shall feel no joy therein*. We had no finger in the work, and we shall find no comfort in the result. We did not point out the way to troubled consciences; we never went to early morning prayer-meetings, nor to any prayer-meetings, to pray for a blessing; we never spoke a word or even gave a tract away; and therefore we shall see the blessing with our eyes, but we shall not eat thereof. While God's people lift up their loud hallelujahs of joy we shall only mourn, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" It is no joy to see a harvest reaped from fields which we refused to plough.

It may be that you will begin to lose all the sweetness of public services. By doing nothing you *lose your appetite*. Many a person who has no appetite needs a wise doctor to say to him, "Of course you cannot eat, for you do not work. Exercise yourself, and your appetite will return." He that earns his breakfast enjoys his breakfast; and

he who labours for Christ finds that the services of the sanctuary are exceedingly sweet to him. I know some dear brethren here who cannot get to a Sunday sermon because they have something to do for their Lord throughout the Sabbath; therefore they drop in to this Thursday evening sermon. Thus they gain a Sabbath in the middle of the week, which is exceedingly sweet to them. They can only attend one service on the Sunday, but that is doubly refreshing to them. They are engaged at the ragged-school, or at the corner of the street, where they are accustomed to preach: and the Lord makes up to them their lost opportunities. Believe me, when they do get a meal they heartily appreciate it; for they come with an appetite which they have gathered in the service of their Master. If you do not work, your sin will find you out in the loss of enjoyment when present at the means of grace.

I have known this sin find people out *in their families*. There is a Christian man: we honour and love him, but he has a son that is a drunkard. Did his good father ever bear any protest against strong drink in all his life? No; he did not like the blue ribbon, of course. I will not dispute about total abstinence, but I do not feel much astonished at a boy drinking much when he sees his godly father drink a little regularly. Every man should labour by precept and example to put down intemperance, and he who does not do so may be sure that his sin will find him out.

Here is another. His children have all grown up thoughtless, careless, giddy. He took them to his place of worship, and he now enquires, "Why are they not converted?" Did he ever take them one by one and pray with them? Did he ever speak earnestly to each boy and each girl, and labour for the conversion of each one? I am afraid that in many cases nothing of the sort has been attempted. Certain mistaken individuals almost think it wrong to seek the conversion of their children while they are children, and their sin finds them out when they see them growing up in ungodliness.

Besides, if we do not look after God's children, it may be that he will not look after ours. "No," says God, "there were other people's children in the streets, and you had no concern about them, why should your children fare better? You never opened a ragged-school for the poor, why should I bless you? There were men in your employment by whom you gained your living, but you never spoke to them about their souls, nor cared whether they were saved or damned, and I am not going to look after your family when you have no concern for mine." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I do not know how this warning may come home to any brother or sister here who has been idling: but it is better that my warning should find him out than that his sin should find him out. I do not know whether there are any idlers here, though I have a pretty shrewd guess that there are. Friends, neglect of the Lord's work will come home to you, and I will tell you when it will come to you, if it does not do so before. When you are sick and ill, your faith in Christ will bring you great comfort, but you will be sorrowful if you have to say to yourself, "Oh, that I had served God while I was young!" A friend said to me not long ago, "My dear sir, you are often laid aside, and no doubt

the reason is the imprudent manner in which you worked away in your youth. You preached ten times in a week almost all the year round, year after year, and of course you wore yourself out." "Oh, yes," I said, "it may be so, but I do not regret it in the least. Thank God, I preached with all my might all over the land when I could do so, and I would again if I could only get renewed strength!" If I cannot work so much as in earlier days, I have not the misery of saying, "I wasted my opportunities, and spent my best days in ease." I do say to myself, "Would God I had done more, or had done it better; but I am thankful to be able to exonerate myself from all charge of sloth." If those of us who do much have to whip ourselves a bit, what should those do who practically do nothing at all, and discourage others? What can idlers do but fear that their sin will find them out?

Thus far have I spoken to God's people, and if you think that this is rather rough upon them, what shall I say to you who do not love the Lord at all? O sirs, if the fan that is in Christ's hand purges his own floor in this stern way, what will that fan do with you who are as chaff to the wheat! If he sits here as a refiner, and purifies the sons of Levi, and puts even the gold into the fire, what will become of the dross? "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If the language of God is sharp even to his own beloved, because he says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent," what will his language be to those who are not his children, but are living in open rebellion against him? Tremble, ye that forget God. Hear his own words, they are none of mine: "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God help you to flee from the sin of doing nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ himself lead you into the Father's service! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Numbers xxxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—968, 660, 84 (version I.)