

God's Profound Declaration About Himself to Sinners

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- Psalter 399:3, 4
- Scripture: Ezekiel 33:1-20
- Text: Ezekiel 33:11
- Psalter 233:3-6
- Psalter 138:1, 4
- Psalter 431:4,5

Congregation, at the dawn of man's history God would come in the cool of the day to commune with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden - His sanctuary in the midst of the wonderful world He had created. What an inexpressibly blessed moment it must have been when Adam and Eve heard the voice of their Maker -- when God spoke to them and when He unveiled His heart of love to them! How they must have listened to His wondrous voice with holy adoration and have worshipped at His feet! Yet, this blessed state was of short duration, for not long afterward an evil spirit came into the Garden of Eden and whispered in Eve's ear, "Hath God said?" Satan came and suggested to her, and through her to our covenant head Adam, that in all that God had said and revealed to them, He was neither sincere. nor upright. He had withheld from them the fact that they too could be as God. Tragically, our first parents listened to that insinuation; they listened to that insidious lie. At once they began to doubt the integrity and sincerity of God. How tragic were the consequences, for our first parents fell into the sin of all sins: *unbelief!* Satan had successfully persuaded them that God was not upright, and that He was withholding something from them. In other words, he successfully maligned the character of God. Ever since that day, we are all too ready to listen to that liar from the beginning. Congregation, this is especially true when we live under the ministry of the gospel by means of which God also communes with us.

Satan works overtime in the hearts of the children of men. He is present in this worship service, and is ready to whisper in your ear as the Word of God is being

preached, "Hath God said?" When God comes to us with the sincere invitations of the gospel; when He calls us to turn unto Him; when He calls us to flee the wrath to come; when He declares in His Word that He stands ready with open arms to receive the vilest sinner; when He tells us that there is an open door in Jesus Christ for the vilest sinner - Satan is there to whisper, "Hath God said?" The great liar is ever ready to abuse God's Word and tell us, "It is all true what you hear, but remember, God has to do it. You cannot do anything yourself; you cannot convert yourself; you cannot give it to yourself." In doing so, he successfully engages our unbelieving and hostile hearts to make the Word of God of none effect, for by responding thus we are ultimately saying, "What God says in His Word is not true." When God says "Seek," we respond, "He does not really mean that because He knows that I cannot do it myself." What this means, however, is that we make God a liar, for we refuse to believe the express testimony of His Word.

The children of Israel were also guilty of that dreadful sin. They also dared to make God a liar. In Ezekiel 18 the Lord says twice to the children of Israel, "I have no pleasure in your death." They did not believe it, however, replying, "No; God's way is not equal." In other words, God is not sincere; He cannot demand this from us. Thus they piously excused their unbelief and unwillingness to repent by hiding behind their present condition.

My dear friends, how often have you done likewise under the preaching of the Word of God? How many times - perhaps you have never dared to verbalize it - have you not inwardly questioned the integrity of God's Word when it comes to us directly, speaks to us, invites us, exhorts us, and calls us to repentance?

The Lord knows, however, how inclined we are to not believe Him. There is no greater insult imaginable than when we call God a liar and that is what every unbeliever does. As long as we persevere in our unbelief, we call God a liar because we do not believe the record He has given of His Son. How righteous God would be if He would respond to such sheer wickedness by saying, "I am done; I will cut them off!" How many are there also not among us who have heard the gospel their entire lifetime! Righteously God could say now, "It is enough! They refuse to hear Me and will not believe My words. It is done! I will cut them off in the midst of their sin."

Yet, congregation, He does the contrary! Listen to His voice today; listen to the voice of your Creator as He speaks to us. He is addressing a people who are inclined not to believe Him ----sinners who are inclined to declare Him a liar. What does He say to them? Listen to His Word as it comes to us in the text of this sermon, recorded in verse 11 of Ezekiel 33. *"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"*

Congregation, these text words contain: "God's Profound Declaration About Himself to Sinners."

We wish to consider:

1. The Significant Introduction of the Declaration (*as I live, saith the Lord GOD...*)
2. The Unmistakable Contents of this Declaration (*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...*)
3. The Moving Conclusion to this Declaration (*turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*)

I repeat, *God's Profound Declaration About Himself to Sinners* - (1) the significant introduction of this declaration; (2) the unmistakable contents of this declaration; (3) the moving conclusion to this declaration.

1. The Significant Introduction of this Declaration.

Congregation, this chapter begins with a striking parable. In this parable the Lord sets before Ezekiel an illustration to which everyone during his era could readily relate. The Lord says to him (and I paraphrase), "Suppose that I bring the sword upon the land" — that is, war upon the land -- "and suppose a watchman was on duty on the wall." Such a scenario was the rule of the day, for all cities were surrounded by walls, Especially in times of danger, however, there would always be a watchman on duty, whose calling it was to warn the city in the event of approaching danger. "Now suppose," the Lord says, "that the watchman saw the sword coming, that is, he saw danger coming, and he warned the city. If the inhabitants of the city would not give heed to what they heard, and if they would

then consequently perish, the watchman would not be at fault. The citizens themselves would be at fault, having refused to heed the warning of the watchman.

“However, if this watchman saw the sword coming and he were to remain silent, those who would perish would still perish because of their sin, but that watchman would be responsible for the death of the inhabitants of that city.”

After relating this parable, the Lord makes the application by saying, as it were, "Ezekiel, I have set you as a watchman over the house of Israel. If I say to you, that you must call the wicked to turn unto Me, thus calling them to repentance, and if they do not listen to you, they will die in their sin but you will be free from their blood. However, if I command you to tell the wicked to turn from his ways, saying unto the wicked, 'O wicked man, thou shalt surely die' (vs. 8), and if thou warn the wicked in his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou has delivered thy soul" (vs. 9).

Why did the Lord direct Ezekiel to say this? The Lord had called Ezekiel to be His prophet to the people of Israel who had been led captive to Babylon. What a wonder it was that though Israel had been brought to Babylon due to its persistent idolatry and wickedness, the Lord did not forsake His people! Even there He raises up a man to preach to them and to call them to repentance. However, instead of the Israelites being humbled by the fact that they had to reside in Babylon because of their iniquity, they were still gainsaying. They were still talking back to the Lord, accusing Him that He was unreasonable in His dealings with them, that He was not compassionate with them, and that His ways with them were not equal. This greatly discouraged Ezekiel - as is true for all God's servants when their preaching falls upon deaf ears.

Presently, the Lord wants to remind him of his calling, saying to him in so many words, "Ezekiel, you are my servant; you must continue to say to them what I command you to say. Ezekiel, once more you must go to them, to this rebellious and gainsaying people. You must again declare to them in My Name that they must turn unto Me and live, and that I have no pleasure in their death." Ezekiel must proclaim this to a people of whom the Lord says in verse 10, "Thus ye speak saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" What they mean to say is that the Lord is not really

interested in their well-being. However, to a gainsaying people, a people who are questioning Him, His integrity, His goodness, His mercy, His covenant faithfulness toward them — to such a people he must go and say in the Lord's Name what follows in the text.

This is also what I am commanded to say to you today, congregation. This message is especially intended for those among us who in word and deed manifest that you are still without God and without hope in the world. My dear unconverted friend, this means that you are still living in unbelief -- that somehow you still make the Word of God of none effect by refusing to obey His call to repent and believe. Yet, also to you comes the Word of God in this hour. Also to you the Lord says, "As I live, I have no pleasure in *your* death."

It is remarkable that the Lord introduces this declaration with an oath. Twice you will find language almost identical to the language of our text in Ezekiel 18. You will observe, however, that these declarations are not preceded by an oath. However, in this text the Lord does the ultimate. He begins this declaration by swearing an oath. He says, "As I live," that is, "As I, *Adonai-Jehovah* live!" These are two of His most glorious Old Testament names. These names reveal that He is the *I am that I am*, the God of the covenant, who is also the sovereign and omnipotent Ruler of this universe. The Lord is thus saying, "I, in the totality of My being, in all that I have revealed of Myself, I have no pleasure in your death." It is as if God is saying to the children of Israel, "Children of Israel, you do not believe what I say to you; you are questioning My integrity; you are questioning My sincerity. However, as true as I am God, so true it is that I have no pleasure in your death." Reverently speaking, God puts His own existence on the line. It is as if God says, "If it is not true that I have no pleasure in your death, then I cease to be God; then I am not what I have revealed Myself to be. But as true as it is that I am God, and as true as it is that My name is Adonai Jehovah, so true it is that I have no pleasure in your death."

Congregation, what an overwhelming thought this is! And yet it ought to make us deeply ashamed that God has to resort to an oath to underscore the truth of this statement! Why is this so? Had we not fallen, congregation, there would never have been a need for the swearing of an oath. Why do we live in a society in which

the swearing of an oath is necessary? The answer is painfully obvious: We are liars! As fallen human beings we have become the children of the devil who is the father of lies. We are no longer truthful. That is why our words are no longer trustworthy; man's yea is no longer yea and his nay is no longer nay. Is that not tragic? Have all of us not been stung by the words of those whom we thought we could trust, and who yet proved not to be trustworthy? Let us put our hands in our own bosom! Is there anyone here who would dare to say that he has a clean record? Have we never been dishonest or twisted the truth? It is the inclination of our fallen nature to be untruthful. This explains why at crucial moments in the courtroom or in business transactions, we need an oath. In other words, our inclination to lie mandates that the truth be stated in the presence of an all-knowing God, calling His judgment down upon us in the event we are not truthful. However, even that does not seem to bother people anymore; today people will commit perjury without blinking an eye. Such is our wretched existence!

Do you now understand what the Lord is doing here? He is saying, "Israel, you do not trust Me; you treat Me as if I am lying to you -- as if I am not upright. Now I will avail Myself of an oath. Since you neither trust My Word nor My servant, I will stoop to your level and swear an oath. I will swear by My own Name and My own existence, that as truly as I am God, so true it is that I have no pleasure in your death."

Congregation, we may say that we have even a more sure word of testimony than Israel had, because the ultimate confirmation of this oath is to be seen in His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. In the gift of His only-begotten Son, God has sworn His ultimate oath. In the gift of His Son God has once and for all confirmed the truth of these words, because He gave His only-begotten Son into this wicked world of unbelief - into a world of sinners who have no desire after God and the knowledge of His ways. He gave His Son into the midst of a sinful human race which by nature does not believe His Word. In His Son we have the ultimate confirmation of these words.

We must go a step further, however. We must go to Calvary's cross where God's only-begotten Son was hanging between heaven and earth, bleeding and dying on behalf of sinners. There we must go if we would truly understand this text. We

may say with holy reverence that God declared on Golgotha's hill, "Oh, look at My Son on the cross! As I live, as you see Him hanging there bleeding and dying, I have no pleasure in the death of fallen sons and daughters of Adam, and therefore I gave My only-begotten Son. To that end I subjected Him to the curse due upon sin; and therefore I made Him sin who knew no sin in order that His righteousness might become the portion of fallen sons and daughters of Adam." Thus, in the gift of His Son, in His death on the cross, and in His finished work, we have the ultimate confirmation of this oath. Calvary renders the ultimate proof, congregation, that God has no pleasure in your death, but therein that you would turn unto Him and live.

Having considered this oath, let us now proceed to meditate upon:

2. The Unmistakable Contents of this Declaration.

Let us reflect for a moment upon the subjects of this declaration. The Lord says, "I have no pleasure in the death of the *wicked*." It is not very flattering to be called "wicked," congregation. However, that is what God thinks of us in our natural state, God's opinion of us, sinners, is that we are *wicked*. When we think of the word wicked we readily think of people who are guilty of criminal behavior -- which is indeed true for the Hebrew word which means precisely that. The Hebrew word translated here as wicked was used to designate criminals. However, as fallen sinners we are all criminals, for a criminal is someone who deliberately transgresses the law. To be a law breaker is to be a criminal — which is thus true for all of us in our natural state.

Congregation, are you offended by the fact that God calls us wicked? If so, then it is a tragic indication that we have no self-knowledge. For when God begins to work in our soul and when by the light of His Spirit He penetrates the recesses of our heart, we will soon discover that we are wicked indeed, Then we will readily concur with God's evaluation of us that we are wicked at heart. By nature we are breakers of His law and trample upon that law. More than that - We despise His goodness and His love. Yet, it is against that background, against that black and dreadful background of our sinful existence and wickedness - and thus of our criminal conduct, unbelief being the crime of all crimes and the sin of all sins — that the Lord lays bare His heart in this text, saying, "I have no pleasure in the

death of the wicked."

Congregation, we must also consider, however, that He is speaking here to the children of Israel; He is speaking to His covenant people; He is speaking to those to whom the oracles of God have been committed; He is speaking to people like you and me. That makes us even more wicked than the people who dwell in the world. The people in the world, those who know nothing about God and His precepts, can never be guilty of what we are guilty of when we live under the gospel. That is why the Lord Jesus declares that in the Day of Judgment it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for us.

And yet for such despisers of His law and His love, God has a message of mercy. He is saying to us, "Oh sinner, oh wicked one, I have no pleasure in your death." However, death is precisely what we deserve; that is our worthy due. The Lord said to Adam and Eve, "The day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Death and eternal damnation are thus the only things to which we have a right, congregation. As fallen sinners we have no other rights. We have no right to this life; we have no right to live a long life; we have no inalienable right to happiness. We only deserve one thing, and that is to die -- spiritually, temporally, and eternally!

However, instead of pronouncing condemnation, the Lord says, "But sinner, I have *no* pleasure in your death." The word *pleasure* is a powerful word. It is a Hebrew word that conveys *intense emotion*. In fact, this word is the equivalent of the Greek word found in God's declaration at the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan, when He said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well *pleased*," Thus, the Lord is saying, "From the very recesses of My own eternal heart, I declare unto you this day that I have no pleasure in your death, but that the wicked would turn from his way and live."

In the words "his way" we have another description of our sinful existence, do we not? Being wicked, we go our way rather than God's way. That is the essence of Satan's suggestion to Adam: "Adam, I have a better way; follow my way; and if you follow my way you shall be as God." Congregation, ever since that day we have followed his example and we walk in our way. As religious and as orthodox as you may be, yet as long as you live in a state of unbelief and are unconverted,

you are on *your* way instead of God's way. To such sinners the Lord says in our text, "Sinner, turn from *your* way; I set before you My way. Turn to My Way, sinner, and live."

The word *turn* is a word which occurs very frequently in the Old Testament. It is the word that signifies *repentance*, and occurs almost three thousand times. We could actually say that the message God gave to the prophets in sending them to Israel was in essence always a call to repentance, for they were a people bent toward backsliding. They were ever inclined to turn away from the Lord. In response to this the Lord sent His servants, and they would say in His Name, "Turn again back unto Me."

Let us consider this remarkable word, the word *turn*. We often talk about repentance, but I fear that we have a wrong notion of what God means by repentance. The word *turn* makes it very clear and plain, however.

Let me illustrate this with a passage from Scripture. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul writes the following to the Thessalonians: "Ye turned to God from idols." Notice, he does not say here: "*Ye turned from idols to God.*" Rather, he says "Ye turned to God from idols." In other words, their turning from idols was the result of their turning unto God. As they turned unto God, as God became real to them, and as they came face to face with God and the holy demands of His law - in other words, when they began to fear God, they were thereby motivated to turn away from their idols. If we reverse the order of these words, congregation, do you know what then happens? We will then become legalists, being preoccupied with turning from our idols rather than turning to God. We will then turn from our sins, the result of which is that we will no longer commit this or that sin anymore. We will break with sin and endeavor to reform our lives — perhaps in a most impressive manner. Such a person will often begin to live a very strict life. However, in all our turning *we have never turned to God!* That is why a legalist remains a legalist until God opens his eyes. "No," Paul says, "you turned to God and therefore you turned from your idols."

It is thus this turning to Him which God demands from you today, congregation, and that is what I must summon you to do in His Name. God is not calling you to first reform your life before coming to Him. Rather, His calling to you today is,

"Sinner, turn to Me; sinner, face Me." By nature we are turned with our backs toward God and we are fleeing from Him just as our first father Adam did. He could not face his Maker anymore. He ran from Him and hid himself, trying to avoid coming face to face with God. My unconverted friend, that is what you are doing; you are on the run. You are guilty of what Jonah did: You are fleeing from the presence of God. You refuse to come face to face with your Maker. You refuse to turn to Him.

Therefore, if you ask me, "What must I do then; what does it mean to turn?) the Lord's reply is, "Sinner, turn around and fall at My feet; acknowledge Me for who I am, your sovereign Maker. Come face to face with Me. Bow before Me and acknowledge your iniquity. Acknowledge that you have trampled upon My law and acknowledge that you have despised My goodness. Acknowledge your iniquity and humble yourself before Me."

Congregation, that is what God calls you to do today. Sinner, turn, oh turn to your Maker today! That is not my word, but it is God's Word. He says it! Never mind that we are not able to do it. He knows that better than you and I do. Your inability is not the issue here, but rather His holy claim as Creator upon you and your life. God wants us to come face to face with His holy demand. We want to find a way to escape this demand, but the Lord will not give us a way out. We want to leave church after this service, and be able to get out from under what we heard, so that we can continue to walk in our way. The Lord will not let us escape, however, for He says, "No, sinner; I am calling *you* today. You *must* turn and you must bow before Me. You must face Me and bow in the dust before Me; you must acknowledge that I am Adonai Jehovah, your sovereign Maker. You must acknowledge that I have a holy claim on your life."

Sinner, are you giving heed to the Word of God? Or do you prefer to live on in your sin? Your Creator is speaking to *you* today. He is speaking to you out of the love of His heart. He is saying, "Sinner, turn to Me today and *live!*" What is implied here? The answer is clear: "If you will not turn to Me, you will not live. If you insist on going your own way, you will perish." That means that the Lord is also saying under oath, "As I live, if you do not turn to Me, sinner, you shall surely die." That is the inescapable implication of this verse.

Do you believe this, or are you still secretly blaming God for your unconverted state? Oh how I wish you would stop arguing with the Word of God! The Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes, saying, "Through your tradition you have made the Word of God of none effect," I am afraid there are so many who have clung to a tradition for years already -- a tradition which leads you to set the Word of God aside in a seemingly orthodox way. Reality is, however, that you are setting it aside so that you do not have to deal with it. Oh, that God would cure you of that wickedness today, and that you would no longer argue with God's Word! If, instead, you feel the overwhelming reality that you are neither willing nor able to turn, then I say to you, "Bow at His feet and confess it before the Lord, begging Him to turn you." It has been my experience that those who truly discover that they cannot turn, will not seek to excuse themselves. Those who have truly discovered that they cannot turn without the grace of God, have stopped arguing with God's Word and will confess their unwillingness and inability before the Lord. My dear friend, if you can still say, "I cannot convert myself," without shedding a tear and without bowing your knees, and if in spite of that reality you can still go to sleep at night, then this is the best proof that it has never become a grievous reality to you that you cannot turn to God.

Congregation, this Word must bring you to your knees, for even that is implied in the Lord's call to turn. He is even saying, "Sinner, if you feel and realize within yourself your hopelessness, your helplessness, and your unwillingness; if you feel the hardness of your heart and your own impenitence, then turn to Me because I am the only One who can do something about it. I alone can make you willing in the day of My power. I alone can open your ears, your heart, and your eyes. Therefore sinner, you *must* turn to Me, for if you do not turn you will certainly die."

However, there is also a wonderful implication in this call to repentance, congregation, God's call to repentance always implies that if we do turn, we will find Him to be a gracious God in Jesus Christ. In Psalm 50:23 the Lord says, "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." When God calls to repentance, it is never with the intent to destroy us. That was even true when the Lord sent Jonah to Nineveh - and Jonah knew that. He said, as it were, "Lord, I knew it all along that Thou art a gracious God." When he was called to go

to Nineveh, he feared that the result of his ministry would be that the Ninevites would repent, which they did.

Therefore, sinner, when your Maker calls you to turn to Him, He is calling you in order that you might live, for when you turn to Him you will find a gracious God in His Son Jesus Christ. In Christ..you will find Him to be a God who is ready to forgive, a God who is very gracious, and a God who will by no means cast you out. Jesus is the way, the Truth, and the Life. In Him, the Father is willing to receive prodigal sons and daughters whom He invites also in this text to come to Him without money and price.

Congregation, what more can I say? And what more can God say to us today to persuade us to turn unto Him? Your own Creator, your Maker is standing before you in the garment of His Word, swearing by His very own Name that He has no pleasure in your death but that you would turn unto Him and live. Yet, the Lord knows the stubbornness of our hearts. He knows how unwilling we are to listen to Him. He knows how we refuse to be persuaded by His Word, and therefore let us consider what He adds to this declaration. He adds one more urgent plea. Out of the mouth of God comes the heartrending cry, "Turn ye, turn ye...for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Before we consider this, let us first sing together from Psalter 138:1,4.

3. The Moving Conclusion to this Declaration

Congregation, in the Hebrew language there is no such thing as an exclamation mark. The Hebrews had a much more effective way of emphasizing something. The Hebrew method of emphasis is repetition, stating a truth twice, or sometimes three times. Thus, we read in Isaiah 6, for instance, that the angels cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts." It literally means that He is thrice holy — that He is holy in the supreme and the superlative sense of the word. We find this method of repetition all through the Scriptures. A unique example of this is found in Psalm 19. There are several verses there that speak about God's Word. Upon reading it, you will see how the psalmist says one thing, and then restates this truth in different words emphasizing what he had just said before, while simultaneously unveiling a new dimension.

Also in this final plea from the mouth of God, the Lord uses repetition. He uses repetition to underscore the holy urgency and the sincerity of this plea which proceeds from His holy heart. Listen to the voice of God as it comes to you today, congregation: "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, o house of Israel?" Thus, the Lord is saying this to us with the greatest possible emphasis. It is, reverently speaking, as if the Lord wants to shout it in our ears. Oh congregation, how do we dare turn our ears from such a plea? If we turn from these words today; if we can leave this house of prayer, and go on in the pathway of sin, congregation, then you will have despised your Maker again! Again you will have made His Word of none effect. Once more you will have made Him a liar, who exclaims, "Turn ye, turn ye...for why will ye die?"

The Lord calls us to turn from our evil ways. What a striking description again of our sinnership! The word evil refers to the *state of our hearts* — to our evil disposition. We have an evil heart -- an evil heart of unbelief. Consequently, our ways are also evil, because the word *way* indicates the idea of a *habit*. In other words, it is the very habit of our life to sin. We are habitual sinners, for the word way is a word that relates to a *well-worn path* - a path worn into a field by repeated use.

Especially in a farming community everyone will know of those well-worn paths used by humans or cattle. Congregation, that depicts our life; our life by nature resembles a well-worn path. We are habitual sinners. To such the Lord is saying, "Sinner, turn from your evil way, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Is it not incomprehensible that as fallen sinners we would rather die? That is exactly what the Lord is saying here. He is saying, "Sinner, by nature you are intent on dying, for you insist on persevering in your habitual indulgence in sin." You may respond that this is strong language. But is it really so? Consider what Scripture says in Proverbs 8. There we read that wisdom (the personification of the Lord Jesus) says, "All they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36).

Congregation, as long as we are unbelievers and habitual sinners, regardless of all our religion and all our orthodoxy, we are haters of God and haters of His Son. To hate means that I have contempt for someone. That may be a bitter pill for you to swallow, especially if you faithfully come to the house of God. However, this is

not my word; it is God's Word which declares that "all they that hate me love death." And as long as you do not love Christ, you hate Him. There is no third possibility!

What a solemn reality! And yet the Lord says, "Why, why will you die, sinner? Why, sinner, do you insist on going on in your way? Why do you insist on ignoring Me? Why do you insist on setting My Word aside? Why will you not hear Me? Why are you so determined to destroy yourself? Why will you not come to My Son so that you might have life? Why will you die?"

My heart goes out to our young people. Young people, teenagers, the Lord is also speaking to you today. This period of your life is fraught with danger. You are surrounded by temptations with which we, your parents, have never been confronted in such a measure. Furthermore, some of you are yielding to these temptations by dabbling in sin; some of you are drinking it in; some of you are playing with fire, Oh, listen to the voice of the God in whose Name you were baptized! Why, my dear young friend, why will you die? Why do you go on in the way of sin? Why are you so bent on self-destruction? Why do you want to drink in sin by full draughts? Why do you want to destroy yourself? Are there young people here today who are playing with the fire of sin? Remember, I may not know, the consistory may not know, your parents may not even know, but there is One who does know. He sees your and my life with His all-seeing and omniscient eye. He knows how you are living and He knows what you are doing. Yet, His voice also comes to you today, my dear young friend, "Why, why will you die?" Oh that you would heed the voice of your Maker this day before you will enter an eternal night! Young people and children, already when you were baptized God swore a holy oath, declaring, "As I live, the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I have no pleasure in the death of this child." Dear friends, God already expressed the contents of our text at the beginning of your life, before you yourself even knew you existed. That is why you are here today in the house of God and may sit under the ministry of His Word. That is why God has spared your life until this day. That is why you have survived every illness with which you have been afflicted, and have survived every accident and mishap you have encountered. Why? Because the Lord has not ceased to deal with you; the Lord is still pursuing you with His

mercy. You are still under the ministry of the gospel because God has no pleasure in your death. Oh, listen to His voice today! "Why, why will you die?"

The Lord is warning you today, sinner. If you do not turn you will die. Listen to Psalm 50:22. There the Lord says to Israel, a people who were also ignoring Him, "Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." What a statement, congregation! Does that mean that God has a delight in tearing sinners to pieces, which, in fact, would be a contradiction of our text? No; listen carefully to what He says: "*Lest* I tear you in pieces." In other words, "If you will go on ignoring Me, if you will continue to forget Me, then the day will come that I must execute My judgment and pour out My wrath upon you." Sinner, that is also what the Lord is saying to you today. Spurgeon put it this way: "If you will not turn, you will burn."

And so it is! This may be the last call to repentance in your lifetime. Nothing is more uncertain than life and more certain than death. Everyone of us is but a heartbeat and breath away from being summoned before the judgment seat of Christ. If you do not turn to your Maker, you will perish. Oh, do not waste your time any longer. "Today," the Lord says, "is the acceptable day, the acceptable time," Today is the day of salvation, and that means night is coming. Therefore, fall at His feet. Beg Him to make you willing in the day of His power. What an encouraging truth it is that when God demands something from us, He always promises to give what He demands! Not only does God command us to repent, but He has also exalted His Son Jesus Christ as Prince and Savior to *give* repentance! (Acts 5:31).

Thus, your Maker who *calls* you to repentance also gives repentance. What excuse do we then have, congregation? There is no excuse. The Lord is saying, "Fall at My feet, sinner; open your mouth wide. I am willing to grant you that which you need. I have exalted My Son to give repentance. Oh, ask Me then! Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it?"

Congregation, there is nothing else to be added. Therefore, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts! Turn to Him who is able and willing to save the chief of sinners. Beg Him to pierce through the barrier of your unbelief and to prick you in your hearts today, so that this very day you may fall at His feet, crying out with the

publican, "Oh God, be merciful to me a sinner!"; with the Pentecostal multitude, "Oh men and brethren, what must I do?"; and with the jailer, "What must I do to be saved?"

My dear friend, do not turn a deaf ear to the God who speaks to you and declares in our midst today, "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" AMEN.