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A

**DISCOURSE,**

DELIVERED IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH,

CARLOWVILLE, ALABAMA,

BY

**REV. CHARLES A. STILLMAN,**

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

**EUTAW, ALABAMA.**

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)



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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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CARLOWVILLE, (ALABAMA.) AUGUST 10TH, 1848.

REV. MR. STILLMAN—

*Dear Sir:* Having listened with much interest to the discourse which you delivered last evening, at the Carlowville Baptist Church, and believing that the cause of truth might be much promoted by its publication, the undersigned respectfully solicit a copy of said Sermon for this purpose. We believe that we express, in this request, the wishes of a great majority, if not all of the auditory.

We are, sir, with sentiments of much esteem,

Your obedient servants,

W. H. MERIDETH,\*

J. M. GILLESPIE,†

R. W. BROOME,\*

A. M. McIVER, JR.,‡

C. M. LIDE,‡

J. H. SMITH,‡

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V. W. PATTON,‡

W. A. KIRVEN,‡

\*Cumberland Presbyterians.

†Presbyterians.

‡Baptists.

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EUTAW, (ALABAMA,) AUGUST 23D, 1848.

REV. W. H. MERIDETH, AND OTHERS—

*Gentlemen:* Your communication of 10th instant, requesting for publication a copy of my discourse delivered in the Baptist Church at Carlowville, on the evening of the 9th instant, has been received. A request, coming as this does, from Ministers and members of two denominations besides my own, who could have no other than disinterested motives, and whose judgment is entitled to high consideration, I do not feel at liberty to decline. Accompanying this, I send you a copy of said discourse, humbly trusting and fervently praying that its publication may promote the cause of truth and of practical godliness.

With regard, and Christian affection,

Your brother in the Gospel,

CHARLES A. STILLMAN.

## DISCOURSE.

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### HEBREWS VI : 4—6.

“ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

In introducing to your attention, this apparently difficult and much disputed passage of Scripture, I feel it proper, in the outset, to disclaim all intention of entering on the field of controversy. While it is necessary to “ contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints,” and to resist and oppose every doctrine that contradicts the true sense of the word of God, the purpose of the present discourse, though on a much controverted text, is entirely practical. From the nature of the subject it will be necessary to prove that these verses furnish no argument in favor of the notion that true Christians may totally apostatize and finally be lost. This, however, is only a subordinate design. Our main purpose is to overthrow the false hopes of hypocrisy and self-deception—to exhibit the insufficiency of certain tests on which many rely as proving their conversion, and to show the dreadful danger in which many are placed—not only avowed unbelievers, but also many professors of piety.

In a world such as this, so full of sorrow and disappointment, it is very natural for the mind to have a constant leaning to a hope of something better in the future. Hence the readiness with which many are disposed to come to a favorable conclusion as to their prospects for eternity. The agreeable anticipations which are thus awakened have a powerful tendency to lighten the burdens, and alleviate the ills of life, and in most cases, they are sufficient to suppress those painful fears to which every immortal sinner is exposed. In these circumstances, every humane heart is conscious of a degree of reluctance to do or say anything which may disturb these pleasant hopes, or dash these fond expectations. But it must be remembered, that if these hopes are in any case fallacious—not resting on a true foundation, and if they remain undisturbed during this life, they will ensure to the soul in the last great day of trial, an inheritance of everlasting shame, confusion and disappointment. Benevolence, therefore, as well as fidelity to God, compels the ambassadors of Christ to subject every man’s hopes of salvation to the test which Divine revelation has prescribed, and to persuade all men carefully to examine the foundation on which they may be reposing.

The design of the author of this epistle was to guard from apostacy, those Hebrews who had professed Christianity. This he does by presenting various considerations, adapted to confirm their faith—and the one which is presented in the portion of the epistle from which our text is taken, refers to the truly awful results of such a sin. Those who committed this crime, and there were such in the Apostle's day, could never be renewed to repentance, they were rejected of God, they were "nigh unto cursing," and their "end was to be burned." This was a dreadful doom, and it was aggravated by the advantages which these persons had enjoyed, by the gifts they had received, by the influences they had felt, and by the attainments they had made. The velocity, the injury and the irrecoverableness of their fall were proportioned to the height which they had reached. They had "been enlightened," they had "tasted of the heavenly gift," they had "partaken of the Holy Ghost," they had "tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and from this elevated position they *had fallen*, they had renounced Christ, abandoned their profession, and were now the open enemies of God. Hence, they were ruined in soul and body, in a most awful destruction. And their ruin was *hopeless*. The voice of inspiration declared that it was impossible to renew them unto repentance—they were given over to the legitimate consequence of their course.

There are some, my hearers, who hold that this language is hypothetical—that this case is only a supposition of the Apostle, and that the like never occurred. But for my part, I am constrained to think differently. I believe that such cases are possible, and that they do occur. I believe they occurred in the times of PAUL, and I awfully fear that some are occurring now, and in our very midst. The danger which I suggest is not an imaginary, but a real and existing danger—and it is proper—it is necessary—it is full time to sound the alarm to all who are "at ease in Zion."

The language of the text, describing the gifts and attainments of the persons spoken of, is remarkable, strong, and is regarded by many as clearly pointing out the character of the true Christian—yet as we shall see it gives no chance to those, who possess no better evidence of conversion to shield themselves, or bolster up their hopes with the aid of the doctrine of "the Saint's final perseverance." That doctrine is true—it is clearly revealed in the Bible—it is a source of comfort—a means of sanctification, and it is a sure anchor of an un-failing hope to every true believer. But ~~neither~~ to that doctrine, nor to its antagonist—the possible destruction of the Christian—our text has no reference whatever. And this position we hope to render apparent, as we proceed.

The general explanation of the text, which I propose, in view of this position is—that the character and privileges which are here spoken of, may apply to many who have never been converted to God. They do not necessarily describe the genuine Christian—and in the case of all apostates, they refer to those who were never regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It is true, many if not all these particulars are found in true Christians: but they may be, and often are found

in the unconverted also. I say true Christians do possess them substantially—but then they possess something more—which is peculiar to them—which distinguishes them as Christians—something which is not named in our text—which unconverted sinners never possess, and which cannot be found in any apostate.

The general lesson which we are thus taught, is drawn from discovering how very far a man may go without being a Christian—what gifts and attainments he may possess and yet fall short of true piety—and how near he may seem to be to the kingdom of God, while he is still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity? A lesson which it is hoped all present will inculcate upon their own hearts with faithfulness and candor.

Without further delay, we shall now proceed to consider the several particulars which the text ascribes to those who are in danger of apostacy.

The first that is mentioned is, that they were “*once enlightened.*” The sense of this word must be evident to all—these persons were instructed in the truths of divine revelation. The natural mind is originally in a state of blindness and darkness as to spiritual knowledge. If it were left to itself, it would ever remain in this condition. By its perceptive and reasoning faculties it could discover many natural truths—it might reach to high and extensive attainments in knowledge, but it could never learn any spiritual truths—that is, such as relate to God, duty and salvation. To this end, a revelation is necessary—a communication must be received from God—man must be enlightened from above. The light which is thus received is of various degrees, from the gray twilight, which the more ignorant in Christian lands enjoy, to the mid-day brightness of the advanced and sanctified believer.

The point now before us is to ascertain the line which separates between all genuine believers and the most enlightened unbeliever. And I remark that this difference does not consist in the *amount* nor *accuracy* of religious knowledge. The unlettered, or the young christian may have but a limited store of information, as to the doctrine of Christianity, and yet he is accepted of God, and secured by his promise and grace from falling entirely away. While a man who has not a particle of grace in his soul, who is still unpardoned and in the road to destruction, may have acquired vast stores of biblical knowledge, and may be able to discourse most learnedly and long, upon the sublime doctrines of theology. I said further, that the difference does not consist in the *accuracy* of religious knowledge. But this remark requires some qualification—for if any man mistake the essential doctrines of salvation, he cannot claim to be a Christian. The genuine believer may, however, err on some minor points—while there are many whose creed is as orthodox as the Bible itself, who hold all unessential and minor, as well as fundamental truths—who, yet, are strangers to God, and rejecters of his Gospel. Still, my hearers, there is a ~~time~~ <sup>line</sup> which divides a saving knowledge of the truth from that which only aggravates destruction. The Bible declares that the carnal mind cannot

*Line*

receive or truly know the things of God—and it refers to all carnal minds, as well those which are, as those which are not enlightened. The doctrine must not only be genuine, but it must also be received in love—it must be relished by the heart—it must be so experienced in its vital power as to become the food of a living faith, and the stimulus of a holy obedience. The observation of all, and the experience of many, furnish ample proof that a man may be extensively instructed on the subject of religion, without even feeling the saving efficacy of the word of God. He may learn the character of his maker, and be able to recount and describe his attributes, and yet continue to hate his person, and rebel against his authority. He may learn the nature of the atonement—the whole plan of salvation, and the means of obtaining its blessings, and yet reject the Gospel, and remain a condemned transgressor. Even admit that this knowledge has been conveyed by the influence of the Holy Spirit accompanying the word, and yet, does not every congregation abound with instances of those who have been thus enlightened, and who yet do not pretend to have experienced a change of heart?

But it is needless, further to insist upon a position so plain as this. If any, however, are still incredulous upon this point, I would refer them to the example of those apostate spirits, who were cast out of heaven for their rebellion, who know far more than we do concerning God and the soul—heaven and hell—and other spiritual things, and who are said by the inspired volume, even to tremble in view of what they believe. Hence, we infer that *men* are capable of being enlightened in spiritual truth—speculatively—without an experience of saving conversion.

The next particular which is ascribed to those who may totally fall away and be lost, is that they have “*tasted of the heavenly gift.*” There have been given several different interpretations of the phrase “*heavenly gift.*” That which seems to be best sustained, and which we are constrained to adopt, is that it means *the influences of the Holy Spirit.* This is the pre-eminent gift of the Gospel dispensation—it was long promised before the birth of Christ, and frequently by him—and was bestowed by him on his ascension to heaven, after his resurrection. Our Saviour taught that the greatest importance was to be ascribed to this blessing—he declared its bestowment a sufficient reason for his ascension on high—he required his disciples to abstain from their work of erecting his kingdom until they had received this promise of the Father—and finally, the Scriptures teach most fully that this divine agency is necessary to give efficacy and success to the whole work of salvation. Hence, we conclude that this is *the heavenly gift* which is here spoken of. It is true this same blessing is separately and distinctly mentioned immediately after. That, however, may be regarded as explanatory of this, and as thus establishing our interpretation. But even if we adopt another sense of this phrase, for which some contend—viz: “*the blessings and privileges of the Gospel*”—still, our general position will be undisturbed. For how many are there who enjoy these privileges in an eminent degree, who never improve or even prize them?

How many hear of a Saviour, and have pardon and eternal life offered them, who never partake of either? These persons are said to have “*tasted*” of this heavenly gift. But does that mean that they have embraced the Gospel and fed upon Christ, and that they have inwardly experienced the efficacy of his blood? Does not this word rather imply—nay does it not seem chosen to express that there has been only an outward and faint experience of the blessing? and does it not present a contrast with that deep and inward and powerful and efficacious experience, which is saving in its results? Now we contend that under the preaching of the Gospel, a man may be led to feel that he is a sinner—he may see that he needs salvation—he may have a speculative understanding of the Gospel, and he may imagine and conclude that he has believed and been pardoned—he may do and feel all this, and yet he may never truly trust in the Saviour. He may have mistaken some essential truth or condition—he may be cherishing some favorite sin, or he may be relying still, to some extent, upon his own righteousness. Any of these would vitiate the whole matter, and he would be left in his sins. Such cases are of frequent occurrence, and many, many have confessed, after this delusion has lasted for years, that they had never truly known the first element of Christianity. Now may not such persons properly be said to have “*tasted*” the heavenly gift? For many such have possessed feelings which resemble somewhat the feelings of the true convert. They have felt relief from a burden—they have felt some change—they have had new sensations—they have experienced confidence and joy and hope—and yet they have afterwards acknowledged that all these emotions were counterfeit—that they had been deceived—that they had never known by real experience, what genuine conversion is.

The interpretation which I have adopted of the phrase “*heavenly gift*,” will be considered in connexion with the third particular named in the text, which we will now proceed to examine. They were “*made partakers of the Holy Ghost*.” The operations of this spiritual agent exhibit results of countless degrees—from the feeblest light and conviction that is ever found in the sinner’s mind, to the perfect brightness and purity of the ransomed in eternal glory.—It is his influence that enlightens—that regenerates—that convinces of sin—that confers spiritual gifts and graces—that sanctifies and seals the believer, sustains his feeble hopes, subdues his passions, and prepares him for heaven. Such is the extended range of his multiform agencies. Still the fruits which he produces has much to do in distinguishing between the children and the enemies of God.

These operations are divided into two classes—viz: those which are common, and those which are special—*i. e.*, those which are peculiar to the Christian, and those which are common to him and the sinner. If this distinction be correct, then may many be partakers of the Holy Ghost, who never are true believers. That it is correct, is fully proved by the Scriptures; and not to introduce the entire proof, I refer you to those passages which teach that the Holy Spirit may be “*grieved*,” “*resisted*,” and “*disobeyed*.” But,

besides, this divine agent may produce certain visible and salutary results, which fall short of conversion. All admit that in many cases of conversion he does many things before he actually renews the soul. Why then may he not stop with these, and leave the soul unconverted? That such is often the case, is proved by the observation and experience of large numbers. We have already seen how much light he may communicate to the mind of one who never becomes a true child of God. He often proceeds much farther in such cases. A man may be convinced of sin to a certain degree—he may resolve to lead a better life—he may abandon outward vicious habits—he may commence outward duties, and yet he may remain under the power of the flesh and fail to “walk after the Spirit.” A man may exhibit some change of life and conversation—he may have feelings he never had before—he may make a profession of religion—his life may be above the censures of the Church—he may suffer shame and loss for his profession, even giving his body to be burned—he may do all this, and more, under convictions and impressions made too by the Spirit of God, and yet that spirit may never find a home in his heart. Nay, farther, a man may be useful in the Church—he may be in the habit of some sort of prayer—he may exhibit many traits of character worthy of imitation, and still be unrenewed, unpardoned, and at last be condemned. To be spiritual—regenerated—a Christian, the Spirit of God must have his residence in the heart. He must produce genuine love to God. He must produce a cordial hatred of all sin. He must lead the soul to a full, sincere and unhesitating faith in the blood and the righteousness of Christ; to a hearty surrender to God, and to sincere endeavors to lead a holy and godly life. All that come short of this, come short of genuine, saving christianity.

The fourth particular in the text alleges that these persons who may apostatize “*have tasted of the good word of God.*” In the prophecy of Jeremiah, God said to his people—“After seventy years I will visit you and perform my good word towards you.” The gospel is called by way of eminence, “glad tidings of great joy.” I am disposed to regard the phrase before us as having a very general signification—including the messages of mercy which God has sent us in his gospel—the assurances in that gospel of his willingness to pardon and save transgressors, and those promises of grace and compassion, of his presence and faithfulness which he makes to all who trust in Him.

Now it must be evident, from what has been already said, that “to taste” of this word does not imply its cordial and saving reception. Under the excitement produced by glowing descriptions of the Gospel—of the fulness and compassion of Christ and his infinite love to man, many are filled with elevated emotions—their admiration is called forth, and they have some outward perception of the glory and loveliness of the Saviour. When the “exceeding great and precious promises” of the Bible are unfolded—when the blessedness of Heaven is described—its freedom from evil—its security and peace—its joys and its raptures, and the immortality of its inheritance. When even the pre-



sent enjoyments of religion are the theme of discourse—the light of God's countenance—relief from the burden of guilt and fear—the bright hopes of a happy hereafter—and all the consolations which bless the Christian pilgrim—what wonder is there that all who hear should be interested and impressed and affected—that hope is enkindled and joy produced in the minds of many, and that even the enemy of God should obtain some temporary taste of this heavenly provision? But does this prove that their hearts are changed, and that they have a truly spiritual appetite? Does not the Bible speak of the *hope* of the *hypocrite*? Did not Herod *gladly* hear the things of God from the mouth of the very man whom he soon after murdered? Did not Simon Magus *rejoice* in the preaching of the Apostles? And did not our Saviour say there were some who were like “stony ground;” “which lacked depth of earth;” “who heard the word and anon with *joy*, received it—yet not having root in themselves, endured but for a while, but when tribulation and persecution arose, by and by, were offended?” And so, my hearers, does it appear that even to *taste* of the good word of God—to have hope and satisfaction and joy therein, is no certain evidence of a state of grace. The most confident hope may have a false foundation. A perfect assurance may rest upon insufficient grounds—and even extacies of delight may be the fruits of unsanctified enthusiasm; and thus may the religion of many an apparently flourishing professor be naught but a fancy or a dream.

But there is yet one more particular to which we must look for a moment. A man may have all these gifts and attainments and not be a Christian; and now we see that he may have something more, and yet be deficient. Shall I proceed, my brethren? O, perhaps there are some here who are already trembling for their safety, who have had, one by one, swept from beneath them, the props of their confidence, they may be now clinging to a single straw, as that which alone keeps them from despair—shall it be torn from their grasp? If it is not sufficient to withstand the fearful storm of the last great day—fidelity—honesty—*—nay*, benevolence—compassion—necessity, even, cry *yes*. Better blast every hope of those who are on the verge of unconscious and unlooked for ruin, than to preserve a momentary peace and joy, at the expense of an unending woe.

These persons warned against apostasy had even “*tasted of the powers of the world to come.*” And what does this mean? Say some—those who have felt the influence of eternal things—who have heard of eternity and have been led to realize the brevity of life, the vanity of the world and the importance and value of the soul—who have heard of Heaven and sighed for its joys, and longed for its possession, and have been ready to labor and suffer and even die for its inheritance—who have heard of hell, and trembled in view of its torments and deprecated its darkness, and shrunk back in fear from its uncovered caverns of blasphemy and despair. O, is it so—that there ever was a man who realized and felt thus much in view of these future things, and yet came short

of genuine religion? Brethren, it is not terror for the future—it is not concern for eternity alone that can shield the soul from the frown of an insulted God! We must shun *sin* as well as torment—we must *live for* eternity as well as think of it—we must *prepare* for Heaven as well as long and sigh for its glories.

But there is another view of this phrase which I would present to you—which, although as we believe the correct one, does not disprove what has just been asserted. “The world to come” is a Jewish phrase for the Gospel dispensation. The powers which distinguished the opening of that economy were of a miraculous nature. When the Spirit was conferred upon the primitive church, many were endowed with the gift of tongues, were enabled to speak a foreign language without previous study—some were qualified to utter prophecies—some were empowered to work miracles. The sick were healed—the blind and lame were restored—and even the dead were raised—through the instrumentality of Christ’s ambassadors. These were wonderful demonstrations—the multitude beheld them with astonishment, and they were compelled to yield a formal assent to the truth of Christianity. These Hebrew professors to whom PAUL was writing had enjoyed this same privilege. They had beheld the power of God in the Church—they had had all proof of the divinity of the Christian system—and hence, there was no excuse for their rejection of that system. Still, many who had been thus favored—perhaps some who had experienced and even possessed these powers apostatized from Christ, and put him to an open shame. Thus do these words imply, and history and other Scriptures besides the text, prove that even the possession and exercise of miraculous powers was not a positive proof of genuine piety. Did not JUDAS work miracles when sent forth by the Master before his death? And yet his conduct proved that he never possessed an iota of true grace in his soul. Is it said that JUDAS fell from a holy estate? I point you then to the language of the Saviour in his description of the final judgment. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”—*Matthew, vii: 22, 23.*

He does not deny their allegations as to what they had done. He does not dispute the genuineness of their miracles. He charges upon them their *sins*—and condemns them notwithstanding all their gifts. Nor does he leave room for the supposition that these individuals fell from true piety. His language is—“*I never knew you.*” And what a lesson is here taught, by the plainest inference! We may have spiritual gifts—we may know much spiritual truth—we may have the gift of religious conversation—we may have the gift of prayer, and yet Christ may never have recognized us as his true followers.—We must have the *graces* as well as the *gifts* of the Spirit.

But again, my hearers, we see that these persons warned against apostasy

had done many eminent services to the kingdom of Christ. So we infer some of you may have done much for the Church, and the cause of religion. You may have given your influence—your good word—your time, and what I fear, many think most valuable of all—your *money*—and yet all these may not be heard of in the judgment; while to all your protestations the Saviour may say to you—“I never knew you—depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Such are the views on which we rest the general position we have assumed—that this passage does not refer to genuine believers. But in addition to these, consider the following points, which we have not time to discuss at present—1. There is not one phrase or word in this whole description that necessarily marks the true Christian—nothing said of the new birth, faith, justification, election or adoption. 2. The subjects of this passage are in the next verses *contrasted with the Christians*, and compared to ground, which being often rained on, is yet barren and useless, and therefore rejected. 3. The writer turns from this point to address Christians, and says—“Brethren, I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.” Evidently, the things before mentioned did not necessarily accompany or imply salvation. 4. He ascribes to true Christians in these following verses, the genuine fruits of piety as peculiar to them—their “work and labour of love.” He assures them that God is not unrighteous to forget these—he assures them of their part in the promises of God, and directs them to rely upon his unchanging fidelity.

But it is time to draw this discourse to a close. It is not necessary to our purpose to give a full exposition of the remaining part of the text. We are told that those who have reached all these attainments are liable to apostasy—they may reject Christ, and if they do, it will be impossible to renew them to repentance, because they have thereby “crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.” The only means of salvation is, by faith in Christ. But these men have known Christ; have tasted of his Gospel, and now have rejected both. Where else shall they obtain deliverance? Besides, after all, they have learned and felt and enjoyed through the mercy of God, and then despised him and his salvation, is it reasonable to suppose that they would ever come to the Saviour? Will they not rather be given over to their hardness and impenitence of heart?

I offer in conclusion, only three brief practical remarks—and the first is—that *it is truly surprising and alarming to discover how far a man may go in his religious attainments—his gifts—in his resemblance to true piety, and yet fail to be a Christian.* And if we may go as far as I have described, what becomes of those who have not advanced thus far? If the persons described, with all their privileges, and light, and convictions, and experiences, and services, fall fatally short, where shall those stand who have but little care to learn spiritual truth—who neglect even the form of devotion—who are living for this world, instead of the world to come—who are unimpressed by Divine things—are

living in carelessness and sin—and who so live as to shut out from their hearts the Holy Spirit of God? Brethren, let us examine ourselves. Look to your hopes and their foundation—and beware lest you come short, when it shall be too late to remedy your error. It is truly painful to speak thus—but it seems to be necessary in every part of the Church—for many in Zion, we fear, are deceiving themselves, who are dreaming of naught but salvation, while they are destitute of the very first title to its possession. Still, I would not give needless alarm—God forbid that one of his dear children—even the least of his little ones, should be discouraged by anything I have said. To such I would say, in the second place—*that those who are truly penitent have no part in the warning of the text.* Every true penitent will infallibly be saved. The impossibility here spoken of is in regard to repentance—these apostates cannot be renewed to repentance. If then, you are a genuine penitent, mourning with godly sorrow over your sins and deficiencies, you are no apostate, and you never will be one. You are God's child, and you shall inherit the kingdom. But, beware how you receive and apply this encouragement. See that you are a genuine penitent, showing forth by your lives and conversation, the fruits meet for repentance."

My last remark is, *that this subject suggests a most solemn warning to the impenitent sinner*, him who makes no profession of piety. The question with you, this night is, not whether you are a Christian or not, but whether there is a probability that you shall ever become one. Consider how far your case has now been described. Have you not been instructed in religious truth?—Have you not heard the Gospel and been made to feel the force of its claims? Have you not felt the strivings of the Spirit of God? Have you not trembled in view of judgment and hell? And have not your eyes beheld many instances of the power of God in the conversion of men? Still you are, at this moment, an unbeliever—still hardened and unmoved. Now remember, my fellow sinner, that it is not necessary to be converted in order to be in danger of fatal apostacy—you may fall from your present position—you may *love* your present ground—your present convictions and sensibility to holy influences—Satan may bring into your heart seven other spirits worse than himself—God may abandon you to his influence, and to your own chosen delusion—and then it will be impossible to renew you even to repentance—you will be "past feeling"—neither the most awakening appeals from God's messengers—nor the tears of friends, nor the prospect of judgment—nor the fear of eternal agony, will be able to move to penitence that hard and God abandoned heart. In view then of all the influences you have felt and resisted, I appeal to you, are you not in danger of realizing in your own experience the dreadful evil of which you are warned in the text? Your only safety is in a timely surrender of your heart to the Saviour. May God enable you to yield now, least delay may prove fatal to your soul.