

Standing in Slippery Places

By Paris Reidhead*

Now will you turn please to Psalm 73, the 73rd Psalm. Our verse, our text is the 18th verse. I think I shall read beginning with the first verse and through the 18th, in order that you can understand something of the setting that we have for our text. The text is seen in its context best.

¹Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. ²But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. ³For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. ⁵They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. ⁶Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. ⁷Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. ⁸They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. ⁹They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. ¹⁰Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. ¹¹And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? ¹²Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. ¹³Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. ¹⁴For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. ¹⁵If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. ¹⁶When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; ¹⁷Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. ¹⁸Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. ¹⁹How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

Let us bow our hearts together in prayer. Our Father, this is a vital, meaningful precious word we come to tonight. It is a hard word, but it is Thy Word; and we ask that the Holy Spirit shall tender our hearts to receive it in the manner in which we ought to view it. Give to us a great compassion for those without Christ. Give to us a great hatred for sin, and warn us each one, Lord, against the possibility that we would presume upon Thy grace. And so we look to Thee now. Speak through lips of clay living Truth that shall never cease in its ministry of love. May we never be the same because we have been here tonight. In Jesus Name and for His sake we ask it. Amen.

Any Word of God is like a hammer that breaketh a rock in pieces. Therefore, when God repeats the same truth or the same word or the same idea four times in four different periods, you can understand that it is important to Him, and it ought to be important to us. If you were to turn to Deuteronomy the 32nd chapter, you would hear Moses speaking for God a most terrifying truth of warning against evil. The climax of this tender yet fearful appeal to his people to avoid wrath is in the 35th verses, "To Me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time, for the day of their calamity is at hand."

This was the text that Jonathan Edwards used in that ministry in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts. As a candidate for the Mission Field, living in Monterey, New Hampshire (I believe it was. Is that correct? Massachusetts. Monterey-I've forgotten--Monterey, Massachusetts) We went to West Stockbridge. And I was deeply moved when I stood in that little church, little humble church. It wasn't the same church actually. I suppose it had been rebuilt many times. But whether or not, the fact is that I stood on the very ground where Jonathan Edwards had preached the sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," from this text from Deuteronomy.

Can you visualize him? A scholarly man, later became President of Princeton University; In fact he is still referred to invariably as President Edwards, though he only served for a short time. But can you see him with a closely written manuscript in his hands, up against his eyes, right up in front of his face, for he used very thick heavy glasses. And can you imagine the power and presence of the Holy Spirit working, that as he read with his manuscript right up against his face the Spirit of God so moved upon the congregation that strong men got up from their seats, came over and took a hold of the posts such as those beside you and put their feet up, lest they should fall into the yawning gaping mouth of hell. This marked the beginning - or the

continuance - beginning in the area of Stockbridge - of the great awakening. "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."¹ Their foot shall slide in due time. The day of their calamity is at hand.

To Israel again, under David, twice in the Psalms, once in our text, but again in Psalm 35, verse 4 and 6. Listen to these words: "Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul. Let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let their ways be dark and slippery. Let the Angel of the Lord persecute them." This is the prayer of David: Let their ways be dark and slippery.

Again the Prophet Jeremiah is inspired to use these same words, as he speaks God's wrath against the false prophets and preachers of his generation. If you cared to see it, you could turn to Jeremiah 23, verses 11 and 12. And here for the fourth time, this same idea almost the same words: "For both prophet and priest are profane. Yea in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. They shall be driven on and fall therein for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord."

With such a strong buttressing of truth, we come to our text of the evening. Psalm 73:18. Who will dare to turn away his ear from hearing the Word of the Lord, when God has spoken that word four times in the Scripture. "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction."

Now David had a problem, a very very - Asaph rather had a problem. A very difficult, hard perplexing problem. This is what it was. Notice verse 5 of Psalm 73. He said, "I look out around me and I see wicked men, haughty, arrogant, proud, rebellious, lustful, selfish, disobedient; and they are not in trouble as other men." Verse 5. Do you see it? They are not in trouble as other men. Then he said it seems to me that these people that are so disobedient are not plagued like other men. Verse 5. "It's the righteous that are plagued, not the wicked." Then said he, "It seems to me that I see these people with pride compassing them about as a chain, and violence wrapped around them like a garment." But in verse 7, "they have more than their heart could wish. This is what troubles me." And then verse 12, "Behold these are the ungodly who prosper in the world and increase in riches" And he said, "I don't understand it. It's a problem."

Well now, have you ever felt that way? Have you ever faced it? Is it apparent to you that the same thing is true perhaps in the 20th century? I wouldn't be surprised. What actually composed the prosperity of these people that seemingly were so blessed? Well, they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. What did they have? In what did these riches consist?

First, it was things that will perish. For all that is in the world will perish with the using. We know that it wasn't enduring riches. It was just for a little time. The lust of the eyes, the things that they accumulated with money that was ill gotten, gave them the privilege of thinking themselves to be something because of what they could say is mine. This is mine, and that is mine. But it didn't last long.

Next time you are driving down the highway and you pass one of these cemeteries for used vehicles, drive a little slowly will you. And look out and see these cars that are stacked there, seven-eight high, rusty, broken, bent, and remember that the day that Daddy drove it home from the shop, the family came out and stood there and looked at it; and they said, "Our new car. Isn't it wonderful?" And you know what they did? They looked down the street to see how many old cars there were in front of houses in the same block. It made them feel good you know to have a new car, a symbol of status, a symbol of success and achievement. Well, every one of those rusting hulks out there on the lot caused someone to feel very happy that he had a new car. He found satisfaction in it.

But this is what the Psalmist came to see, that it was possessions that will perish.

Then the second thing that composed the riches of the wicked was honor, that will vanish. Honor that will vanish. Do you think that happens? Do you think that's true, that honor vanishes? How many of you can even name the Presidents of the United

¹ Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) Preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

States? Just 150, 60 years, and you've forgotten already. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and so on? Run out. When I was a boy in school we used to say, He's old. He can remember before Franklin Roosevelt. You see, its honor that vanishes. Just a little while and then it's gone. This is what composed the wealth of the wicked.

Health. The flesh. Sensual experience that will cease. The lust of the flesh. This was the area of their achievement and their accumulation. Things that perish, honor that vanishes, and experience - sensual experience that ceases. And this is what the wicked had in abundance.

Now, what was the effect of this prosperity on the wicked? Well there welled up in them a sense of carnal security which perverted their judgment until black seemed white and white seemed black. And because everything was going well and pay day didn't come on Saturday, and they got by with sin, and God didn't judge it (as one fellow said, you know I was brought up in a strict home and the first time I committed sin I figured that lightening was going to come out of the sky. It didn't and I've been comfortable in it ever since.) A lot of people have felt that way about sin, that because something didn't fall from heaven to hit them it must be all right. And so black now becomes white, and white becomes black. The old standards are abandoned. New ones come in their place, and it prompts them to think that God, since He has delayed judgment, actually condones or approves sin. Is this true? Does God condone sin? No. Does He approve sin? No. Does He judge all sin when it is committed? No. Does He punish all sinners at the time it happens? No. Then the consequence of this is, people sit back and say, "Well, I must not be so bad. This must not be so bad." Soon their impiety grows until they begin to act as though they themselves were God. That's right.

Do you remember what Satan said to Eve in the Garden? "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." And what happens to the wicked is, that because of this success and this achievement and getting by with sin they have abandoned the old standard and the old norms and the old measuring stick and now as gods they make a new frame of reference. This may be all wrong for somebody else, but it's right for me -- relative morality now takes over. This is a Satanic delusion which blinds the minds of them which believe not, making them think that the down is actually up, that wrong is actually right. Finally they come to the place where they say as you read in verse 11, "How doth God know and is there knowledge in the most High?" This is the effect of sin, of prosperity in sin on the part of the wicked.

But what is the effect of this prosperity on the part of the wicked on the righteous? How do the righteous feel about the fact that the world seems to get on in such glowing state, in such achievement and success without righteousness. Verse 3, "I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

Let's have a preview of the judgment day right now. Have you ever been envious of the wicked? Well I'd hate to have you say no, because I wouldn't believe it in the first place, and you would just perjure yourself in the test. It's happened to all of us, I am sure, that at some time along the way we've seen someone that was so crooked and so perverted and they seemingly got along so swimmingly that we had to say. "Well I don't know. I'm envious of the wicked." They seem to have such a good time, and seem to be so happy. And our hearts are bowed down with grief and cumbered with care, and we're concerned about things. Why I was envious at the foolish.

Then verse 13. This is what the righteous say when they see it from their own eyes. "I have cleansed my heart in vain." Have you ever felt that way? What's the use of being righteous? Let's be honest. What's the use? You've felt that way. This is what David, this is a universal experience. This is what happens in the heart as it brings things into certain relationship, seeing them from a horizontal level.

I've been doing a bit of flying on weekends, coming in the last Friday it was so much cloud we could hardly see, but flying over Niagara Falls, there was a gorgeous view of the river and the cataract and the falls. But you know if I hadn't known how high it is, it wouldn't have meant anything to me, because from 16,000 feet it just didn't look at all impressive. It depends on your point of view. Now if you were down there, swimming under the cataract it would look like a mountain, but when you're 16,000 feet above it it doesn't look like anything at all. It depends on your point of view.

And it's the point of view of the Christian now, as he is in relationship to the wicked and seeing their prosperity and success and their achievement, and his answer to it is, "I have cleansed my heart in vain; (in verse 14) all day long have I washed my hands in innocence and I have been plagued and chastened every morning." Well, this is what happens. Then again we see in verse 4, "When I sought to know this why the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer," the Psalmist said, "it was too painful for me. I didn't even want to think about it. It caused me a lot of grief. I just couldn't figure it out. I just couldn't get the answer."

Well, what does this actually represent? What are we facing? The Christian, the righteous man is stumbling at an apparent enigma. In his false heat of anger and in his impatience, he stumbles, and he falls. He ultimately realizes that he doubts the justice of Divine Government, and begins to waiver in his purpose. Do you know what it is? It is the uncovering of unbelief. That's right. And this is the reason why the Psalmist was permitted to feel this way. And perhaps it's the reason why the Lord permitted the wicked their little day of show, so that He could unveil to the righteous the disease of their heart and the plague of their heart, and cause them to see themselves aright.

I mentioned earlier in the 5:30 meeting that we become smug so easily. It isn't difficult for any of us to come to the place where we say, "Well thank God I am not like other men are." I rejoice that I have been saved from some of these terrible things that the wicked do. But isn't long after that, that the Lord begins to put us in strained circumstances which allow us to discover our own hearts. And the thing that God is dealing with in every one of His children, which is a greater insult to Him than many of the crimes of the wicked, is the heart of unbelief. Now I want to dwell on that for just a moment. I don't want to drive it into the ground. But I want to make it clear that unbelief in the heart of a Christian is a more horrendous sin and crime against God than many of the fleshly, wickedness of the unsaved, because the unsaved, the unconverted, know not God; the god of this world hath blinded their mind. Their intellects are warped and twisted. Their spirits are in utter darkness and blackness. Their wills are perverted. They have no light in them, and no life in them. Now when they do things, they are simply expressing fallen, wicked nature. But with the child of God, who has seen his crimes against God and seen something of the nature of his sin, and has been brought to a place of confession of his sin, acknowledgment of it, has been forgiven for his sin, has had some insight into the nature of God, and has had his outward life rectified and changed, but has in him, underneath, a heart of unbelief--this heart of unbelief in a child of God is morally and spiritually more devastating and despicable than many of the sensual crimes and sins of an impenitent world. And God is concerned about it. He's concerned about it in me. And He's concerned about it in you. And He is going to put us in appropriate circumstances to unveil to us this evil heart of unbelief. He's going to put us there. He's going to put us between the upper and the nether millstone. That's what's happened to the Psalmist. He's been put into the millstone and ground. And he looks out from between the stones, and he sees the wicked. And he said, "They're not being ground." Why? And then he begins to doubt Divine Wisdom, Divine Justice and Righteousness, and then he begins to doubt Divine Love. But what happens? In this, he discovers the nature of his own heart. And dear friend, God is concerned about you as one of His own, and He is determined to use every means that love can devise to take from you an evil heart of unbelief. He's going to do it. And so He's going to put you in the place where you are forced to recognize, if it exists, that you are doubting Divine Government, and doubting Divine Justice, and doubting Divine Love. It's the uncovering of the plague of your heart, and the disease of your soul and your spirit. Now what does it actually accomplish? The righteous person now begins to test his reason for serving God. When you find yourself in difficult straits economically, in terms of your career, other ways where everything seems to go wrong with you and go right with the wicked, well then comes the time when you have to look back and say, "Why am I serving God?" I'm a little troubled by our desire to equate financial success with spirituality. I'm a little troubled by our effort to aggrandize the successful. Success can be no more the evidence of the blessing of God than failure. In fact I would be inclined to think, (I've told some of our Christian Business Friends that the first time they have an annual convention and they put somebody up and say, "We're having Mr. So and So speak; he's just lost 7 million dollars." Then I'm going to fly or go at my own expense. If he's just made it, I'm not particularly interested, but if he's lost it and still has the grace of God and the fruit of the Spirit and joy of the Lord in his heart, I'd like to meet that man because here is someone that does not serve God for what he can get out of God, but for the Lord Himself.) Well one has to test his own reason for serving God.

You remember the impious question that Satan directed toward God, "Doth man serve God for naught?" It had to do with Job. Satan said the only reason that Job serves you is because you've made him rich and prosperous. You touch him; you take away his goods, you take away his children, you take away his prosperity. Well the Lord allowed it. I believe Job is the oldest book in the Bible. And I believe that the reason Job deals with just what it does and is the first and oldest book of the Bible, written in my estimation, long before the Pentateuch, is because God wanted to answer the calumny of Satan. Satan said, "Man is bad, incurably bad, irreparably bad, and nothing that God can do will help his any." And God said, "Look. Here's My servant Job. Grace has operated on his heart. Love and mercy, and pardon and power have operated in his life. Now you just do everything you want to do to Job, but don't take his life." I'm going to prove to you that, whereas the first pair - Adam and Eve - could be enticed away because of the lust of the world, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, that when grace operates and God had done His work it won't happen that way. And I'm so glad that Job, even though he had some problems to be settled, he proved the point that he wasn't serving God for what he got out of Him. And one of the reasons why God allows you to come into straitened circumstances is to test whether or not you are serving God because He is an answer to your mercantile interest.

If his faith, the man's faith, is unreal and spurious, he'll join himself to the wicked. But if his repentance and his faith is genuine, he will do what David did. He will go into the sanctuary of God where alone he can understand their end.

By being brought into these circumstances, it enables us to better understand God. We know now that God loves us because He's allowed us to be tested. He's brought our faith into the fire, and the trial of your faith is more precious than gold that perisheth. And when you are in these circumstances, when things go wrong for you and you find that the whole world is seemingly crumbling under you, what happens? Do you envy the wicked? Or do you do what Job did? Job fixed his mind on the Omniscience of God and he says, "God knows my heart. God knows why I've served Him. God knows my purpose."

When Jeremiah was brought into such circumstances, he fixed his mind and his heart on this principle: The Justice of God. God is just. Let men do what they will to me, I rest my case on the justice of God.

When the Prophet Habakkuk was brought into great trouble and great difficulty, he fixed his mind on the Holiness of God. And he said, "regardless of what men are, regardless of what they do, God is Holy."

And David, when he is brought into such pressure of circumstances, fixes his mind and his heart on the Goodness of God.

What do you do when you are brought into circumstances of this sort? Envy the wicked? Or do you say with Job, "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him?" (Job 13:15) Do you?

In this we have the third thing before us, the revelation of the true values of life. The wicked man's profit actually is a loss. The Psalmist declared that in the sanctuary he saw life in true perspective, and he saw it in its real value. He learned there that God, and God alone, could satisfy the human heart. Isn't it interesting that while he was worshipping God he was whole? Now I'd like to say this in all tender love. I want to say it in such a way that I can't be misunderstood, because I realize there's an ambivalence here; there are two sides to this question, and I want to be perfectly faithful to both. But, my friend, God did not save you to serve Him. God saved you to worship Him. God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. God seeketh such to worship Him. And nothing is right when you're not worshipping God. Everything is right when you're worshipping God. And one of the pressures, one of the things that I find as a Pastor is a nefarious, wicked, hell-invented and man-administrated conspiracy to keep the children of God from worship. You wait, you go home tonight, and say, "I remember what the preacher said tonight about worship; I'm going to worship the Lord." I just say to you that somebody's going to knock on the door, you're going to hear a fight in the apartment across the - Well, somebody's going to turn their radio on so loud, the telephone's going to ring, or you're going to come down with a headache that is just so splitting that you can't rest till you get an aspirin. This is what's going - something's - there's a conspiracy to keep you from worship. And the only place that anything is right is when you're worshipping God. Nothing can be more disastrous for your total spiritual life than service. Did you know that? The good becomes the enemy of the best. And this is true. I find it constantly in my own experience. You know for four years I was in Bible Conference ministry before the Lord led me here. It was wonderful. I think now, it was a period of heaven on earth. I'd go into a community church for a period of a week or ten days, two weeks,

morning ministry; but I'd have all morning to pray and worship and wait on the Lord. And then in the afternoon, all afternoon to wait on the Lord and to worship. And then to minister in the evening. And that's all I had to do. I can't imagine a human being with nothing more to do than just to preach twice a day and prepare for it. To spend five, six hours a day in worship, in waiting on the Lord.

One of the dear Brethren, recently has gone to be with the Lord, one of the Pastors said, "You know, Brother Reidhead, something's happened. I've been watching you. You know I saw you come to New York. You ministered so many times where I was before you went there." He said, "You know, something's happened. You used to come, I don't know it was just as though you'd come right out of the presence of the king, and now," he said, "It just looks as though you've, well, you've been working too hard and not getting enough sleep." I said, "You're right. You're right." Oh dear heart, as I speak to this point, I'm speaking to you because as I return in September I return not with a vow, but with a passion. Not with a moral commitment, but with a deep hunger. I assure you that the year that is to come is going to find me and I am going to far more concerned about my time for worship than for work. And I am going to under God and by His grace make whatever adjustments are necessary because I find that the tender Holy Spirit is drawing my heart out for worship. And if it's true of me it's equally true of you. Nothing is right. Everything is out of adjustment until you go into the sanctuary. The secret of the Lord is in the sanctuary.

Service can become a positive enemy of the purpose of God. Ah there should be service. Our Lord Jesus rightly understood the human heart when He said, "Come apart and rest a while." (Mark 6:31) It wasn't just for a vacation, as important as that is to you. I pray for every one of you as you go, somewhere, somehow to refresh yourself in Him. But it's a daily resting, a daily coming apart. The secret of the Lord is there. He went into the sanctuary, and he said "I didn't understand it until I went into the sanctuary." While he was praying he was perfectly at peace. "Great peace have they which love Thy Law, and nothing shall offend them." (Psalm 119:165) Do you find yourself being easily offended? Do you find yourself having affront? Do you find yourself suffering indignities? Ah, the answer to it for your heart and my heart is, "Great peace have they which love Thy Law. Nothing shall offend them."

The nearer you draw to Him, and the closer you stay with Him, and the more your heart is filled with His Word and filled with worship, the less consequence it has. I am amazed again and again from the aeroplane window, as I look down and cannot see the fence. I'm a farm boy. I guess every pair of blue jeans I ever wore in the years I lived on the farm had three corner tears in them from going through the barb wire. I was too heavy to jump over them, and too thick to crawl through them, and I never could get over a fence with ease. And I think my mother spent half her spare time mending. But you know, from an aeroplane you look down and you can't even see the fence. It isn't there. It just isn't a problem. And you're not offended any longer when you see it from the Throne. And while the Psalmist was in the presence of God worshipping, praying, waiting upon the Lord, he was perfectly confident that the Judge of all the earth would do right. There he realized that all the seeming prosperity of the wicked fails to do what it is expected to do, to satisfy the heart.

Isaiah 57 declares, "There is no peace saith my God to the wicked. There is no rest, no satisfaction. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose water cast up mire and dirt."

But there as peace in church sanctuary. There the Psalmist saw that by allowing the wicked to have all for which they thought they would be willing to sell their souls; God is showing them their folly, and inclining them to return to Him.

Listen to Isaiah 55:2, as he cries to a vain, wicked generation: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Think of it. Nothing of all the energy that is expended...And the devil is a hard taskmaster...can satisfy the human heart. I've urged the people in the Sunday School Class in the morning to read Ecclesiastes, and this evening also I've urged you to do it tonight. Read it. Let a natural man, let an unsaved man if you please, or speaking for the unsaved at least, let him tell you what he found. This is Solomon's word: "Then I looked on all the work that my hand had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." (Ecc. 2:11)

And thus, what is the effect of this? Solomon, after he has described his effort to satisfy his heart without God, said, What's the answer? The Answer, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (Ecc. 12:1) Don't waste your life. Nothing that the

wicked have can satisfy him. His heart is like the troubled sea. Then said the Psalmist, "I discovered that the lot of the righteous is preferable in every way. I'd rather have a little and the corner of the housetop than to be in a great house without peace and without rest." In this life, the presence of God and the blessings He brings satisfy the heart. No one is satisfied but the child of God. There is indescribable bliss and happiness that is the portion of the righteous. Then you begin to realize that life does not consist of the abundance of the thing a man has.

I've told you about him. I love him dearly, and I earnestly pray for him. But I think of this dear relative of mine, very wealthy, who in the days of his strongest vigor as a man used to take his bottle of alcoholic beverage and go into his room and shut the door, and drink until he was in a stupor, and the last thing he would do was throw himself down on the bed. No peace, no rest from all his wealth, and position and power. He simply had to somehow narcotize himself so that he could take his vain, empty unsatisfied heart to a little rest during the night. The Psalmist said, "Then I understood there in." What is the end of the righteous? Peace, rest in this life, salvation, and eternal life to come. What is the end of the wicked? Ruin, destruction, and eternal death to come. Unrest, distress, lack of joy, in this life. I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree, yet he passed away, and lo was not. I sought him, but he could not be found. - Mark the perfect man. Behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressor shall be destroyed. The end of the wicked shall be cut off. It was in the sanctuary that the Psalmist saw the imminent danger in which the wicked stand. He likened the danger of the wicked to standing in slippery places. We've already given it to you.

In Deuteronomy 32:35, "To Me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide into time for the clay of their calamity is at hand."

Jeremiah 23, verse 12 said, "Wherefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways. In the darkness they shall be driven on and fall therein."

And Psalm 35 said, "Let their way be dark and slippery."

In each case, each mention of it, reinforces the text, that we are considering. "Thou didst set them in slippery places." A man that is at war with God is standing in a slippery place, and cannot expect to stand there long. As long as he stands there, he's in danger of sliding. And when the sliding is once begun it cannot be stopped by the effort of the man or his friends. The higher the honor, the greater the riches, the more dangerous the place in which one is standing. Standing in slippery places.

And then our Text says one thing, and I close with this. There is nothing further required to seal the doom of the lost. And this is the point I want you to get from the message tonight. I trust you've had profit previously. The sinner does not need to commit one more sin. He doesn't need to break the law once more. He doesn't need to disobey God once more. He doesn't need to reject the Gospel once more. This is the truth of our Text. He's standing in slippery places. The cup of his guilt is full. The seal of his judgment is certain. God has said everything that needs to be said. You see, the unfortunate part of it is that our unrighteous, unsaved neighbors think that perhaps someday they may be lost. And the reason they think so is because we think so. And this is what our text assures us is not the case. Not another sin needs to be committed, not another instance of blasphemy, not another evidence of selfishness. The court of Heaven has had all the evidence it needs. The Judge of all the earth has put His sentence and said, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." (Eze. 18:4, 20) All of the crimes are duly recorded in the Book of Remembrance which will one day be opened against the sinner, and now God has pronounced the judgment. And the sinner is standing in slippery places. This is the truth that you need to remember about your unsaved loved ones. They are not going to be lost. They are lost. They may not someday be lost. They are lost.

When I was a little boy, probably six, we played hide and go seek, the neighbor children. I happened to be the leader, jumped around, came around, jumped over on the roof of this little old cistern. It held up all right, and then the little Johnson girl came and she jumped on it. And probably I weakened it, but no sooner had she touched it when she was in. The water was ten or twelve feet deep. What had happened had been that Mr. Hanchert, who was a very careful neighbor and a very fine man, would never have thought of leaving any trap for little children around his home; this looked perfectly solid from the top. But the moisture, and the air had attacked the wood; the strength of the wood had been weakened and the top had seemed safe, but wasn't and she fell in. She was rescued by Mr. Hanchert.

And my friend, your neighbors and your loved ones and the people that work around you are standing on what seems to be a perfectly safe, secure position. They're alive, they're well, they have blue cross and blue shield, they are in social security, they're careful drivers, they're counting on the law of statistics and the law of averages to keep them safe, they passed their last physical, they have a good job and prospects of promotion; Oh they're sinful, but they know lots of other sinful people, and so there's nothing really to worry about. But the Scripture says they are standing in slippery places. I want you to see something. Around the heart, around the motives, and around the appetites of this person are chains, invisible chains, but chains that go right down to hell. And if you can see Satan and the demons of hell on these chains doing everything they can to pull. Now visualize the same attractive, intelligent neighbor of yours, or loved one, and on top of them is a weight of guilt sufficient to plunge them forever, irrecoverably into hell, and so here they have chains from below that are drawing, and a weight of guilt that cries out for justice pressing, and something else - they are adding to this constantly by their impiety, by their blasphemy, by their lust, by their disobedience, by their unbelief. And so daily it gets heavier. There's not another crime that needs to be committed, not another sin that needs to be committed, they are standing in slippery places. What happens? What has to happen to the unsaved for them to be hopelessly and irrecoverably lost? Only one thing. God lets go. That is all. All God has to do is just let go, let go, because the only thing that holds them out of hell (I believe this with all my heart), the only thing that keeps the wicked out of hell is the hand of God, because if He were not restrained and hindered the devil would destroy here as he does in the countries where the missionaries are going, where he has done everything he could to exterminate whole tribes; and the only reason they are permitted to survive is because God holds them up, and all that has to happen is for God to let go. And the weight of the crimes upon them, and the pull of hell from beneath will drag them resistlessly down into eternal death. They've sinned a thousand times, and the Scripture says, "The soul that sinneth once, it shall surely die." The day of appointed execution draws nearer. Each day is one day nearer to that time when the impenitence of the rebel will meet its final irrecoverable doom - the justice of God demands it. Each rejection of grace is a further insult to the mercy of God, and the grace of an infinitely holy Judge.

Oh, can you see it tonight. I do not know that you can. God's justice cries out to be vindicated. God's law pleads to be upheld. Hell screams for the prey of its victim that it deserves. And Satan is doing everything he can to drag them out of life into eternal death. And this is your loved one, your friend, standing in slippery places. And all that needs to happen is for God to let go. That's all.

Well, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do about it? Let us pray. Our Father, what wilt Thou do to break through the casualness and carelessness of the Christians, and to awaken them to the need of the lost? Oh God, we've had twelve weeks now when we've been talking about themes, texts, Scriptures, intended to awaken sinners. Lord, is this people any more awake to the danger of the lost than they were twelve weeks ago? Are our hearts any more tender to them than they were then? What is the use of preaching, Father, unless the Holy Ghost can find hearts into which He can plant that truth, and that truth can lay hold upon them and govern them. Verily, our God, unless Thou dost do something we shall go out of this evening and be worse than we were twelve weeks ago. We've considered neglected truths that haven't been preached in this sequence and series in this fashion with this emphasis for years and years and years, and Lord here we are in the midst of the greatest Mission Field in the World perhaps, with unsaved around us on every hand. Lord dost Thou have here a people that are concerned about the lost? Dost Thou have here any that are burdened about the unsaved? Burdened enough to seek Thee, burdened enough to weep, burdened enough to lay themselves out before Thee, burdened enough to give themselves in agonizing entreaty and intercession? Oh Father, what will we do? What will we do, unless Thou dost come and cause the eyes of our spirits to be opened to see the lost as Thou dost see them. Words go and come back, and mock the one who sent them, unless those words are driven home by the Holy Ghost, and Lord Thou knowest my own heart as I stand before Thee, and the great longing of my heart is to have Calvary love in a measure that I have never known in the past. And what I pray for me Lord, I pray for these the people whom Thou hast put in this fellowship over which I would by Thy grace seek to stand as a faithful under Shepherd. Give us Calvary Love, Lord. Burn out of our hearts the coldness, and indifference. Take from our eyes the scales. Lord we must be a people that have a burden for the unsaved. We must be a people who are concerned about the lost. We must be a people who see them as sheep without a Shepherd, and are moved with compassion. What are we here for, Father, unless it is as a company of people to meet Thee and worship Thee, and be filled with the Spirit and then to go out and preach. They went everywhere preaching the Word, by their lives. and their witness and their testimony. Lord, Thou dost want

here a company of evangelists and missionaries, and every member of this fellowship is to be a witness for Thee. That's Thy purpose. O God of Grace, just pulverize us. Put us where Thou canst break down all of the indifference and the casualness, until Thou canst make it real. Lord, do something in all of our hearts, until we become a people that are motivated by one passion, and that is to see lost men brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, until we seek to see ourselves as effectual witnesses for Christ, until we seek to be filled with the Holy Ghost and taught of the Word, and equipped with the truth, and each of us in our place being what Thou wouldst have us to be. For Lord, if we consider the fact that sinners stand in slippery places and we have no compassion for them, and no burden for them, and we go the way we came, something has happened to harden our hearts, and inure us against truth, and send us away damaged rather than helped. And Lord we just wait before Thee. We plead for the Holy Ghost to come down upon us tonight, and to give to us hearts of compassion and hearts of burden, eyes that will weep, and knees that will bend, lips that will speak, and hands that will serve, to see the lost brought to Jesus Christ. We ask Thee, our Father, that there shall be something done, Lord, we feel hell pressing in. We feel all the demons of darkness trying to resist an effort to get a people that love Thy Word and love Thy Truth, and love Thy Church, and love the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and love lost souls with a Calvary Heart. And that is what Thou hast desired here, and that is what Thou dost want here, and that is what Thou art determined to get, and we long for Thee to get it here. But O God Thou must get a people whose concerns correspond with the concerns in the heart of the Lord Jesus, and we would be that people. And so we open our hearts to Thee, and our minds to Thee. We ask Thee to take the scales off our eyes and give to us Lord such a baptism of the Holy Ghost, such an anointing of the Spirit that we will see men as Thou dost see them, and pray as Thou wouldst pray, and witness as Thou wouldst witness, yea it will be Thee doing it through us. This is our cry Lord. We fear, our God, that we could be as those that pipe and the children dance, that preach and the people listen and go away just as they were when they came, only damage being done because now they will have to heard truth to which they'll never again respond. This could be true of us Lord, but it mustn't. It mustn't. Thou must do something and break in and break through and break upon until there shall come such a revelation of the Glory of what Thou art and the need of lost souls and all of their desperate plight, and the spiritual weapons and armor and equipment that Thou hast given us, that we'll be satisfied with nothing less than being everything the Lord Jesus died for us to be and intended us to be. And now, Lord, we're here. There may be some unsaved among us. Oh how we long for them to feel their need. Lord, we long for them to come to Christ tonight. We long as we leave one another that we may go realizing that the wicked around us are standing in slippery places. The next moment they could plunge out into a Christless eternity, and leave their blood upon our hands, because we failed to pray for them and to love them and to witness to them. Show us Lord that this isn't just words, isn't just theology, it isn't just preaching. It's the unchangeable truth of Thyself. Come Thou down upon us, Lord. We need Thee so. We're desperate. We must have Thee. Nothing else can do. Come down upon us. (Invitation, prayer, benediction.)

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, August 7, 1960 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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