

The Imminent Danger and the Only Sure Resource of this Nation
by John Newton, February 28, 1794, the day appointed for the *National Fast*.

John Newton live in London, England. He lived during the time of the French Revolution.

The French Revolution was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France and its colonies beginning in 1789 and ending in 1799. The Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, catalyzed violent periods of political turmoil (the movie “*A Tale of Two Cities*” tells of the horrors of that time), and finally culminated in a dictatorship, 1799, under Napoleon who brought many of its principles to areas he conquered in Western Europe and beyond. It was during the time of the French Revolution that the United Kingdom, (England being the largest of the United Kingdom,) was being threatened by the French. So on Feb. 28,1794 a “National Fast” was called for to pray that the Lord would protect them.

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“Come, let us return to the Lord! He has torn us in pieces; now He will heal us. He has injured us; now He will bandage our wounds!” Hosea 6:1

“*Who can tell? God may turn and relent; He may turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish!*” Jonah 3:9

How great is the power of God over the hearts of men! Nineveh was the capital of a powerful empire. The inhabitants were Heathen. The many prophets who, during a long series of years, had spoken in the name of the Lord to his professed people of Judah and Israel, had spoken almost in vain. The messengers were often mocked, and their message despised. The inhabitants of Nineveh, it is probable, had never seen a true prophet until Jonah was sent to them. If they had reasoned on his prediction, they might have thought it very improbable, that a great city, the head of a great kingdom, and in a time of peace, could be in danger of an overthrow within forty days. But it is said, “they believed God.” (Jonah 3:5) The awful denunciation made a general, a universal impression. The king arose from his throne, laid aside his robes, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. A sudden cessation of business and of pleasure took place; he proclaimed a strict fast, the rigor of which was extended even to the cattle. His subjects readily complied, and unanimously concurred in crying for mercy: though they had no encouragement but a ‘perhaps’, “Who can tell? God may turn and relent; He may turn from His burning anger so that we will not perish!”

It appears from this, and other passages of Scripture, that *the most express declarations of God’s displeasure against sinners, still afford ground and room for repentance*. Thus, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, “So when I tell the wicked person: You will surely die, but he repents of his sin and does what is just and right—he will certainly live; he will not die.” (Ezekiel 33:14-15) and again, in the prophecy of Jeremiah, “At one moment I might announce concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will uproot, tear down, and destroy it. However, if that nation I have made an announcement about, turns from its evil, I will not bring the disaster on it I had planned.” (Jer. 18:7-8)

The Lord God speaks to us by his Word, in plain and popular language. He condescends to our feeble apprehensions. God cannot *repent*, he is of one mind who can turn him? (Num. 23:19, Job 23:13) Yet, when afflictive providences lead men to a sense of their sins, to an acknowledgment of their demerits, and excite a spirit of humiliation, repentance, and prayer—he often mercifully changes his dispensations, and averts from them the impending evil. Such was the effect of Jonah’s message to the Ninevites. The people humbled themselves, and repented of their wickedness; and God suspended the execution of the sentence which he had pronounced against them.

My brethren, may we not fear, that the men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us, (Mat. 12:41) if we do not imitate their example, and humble ourselves before God? They repented at the preaching of Jonah, and immediately, on their first hearing him; and they sought for mercy upon a *perhaps*, when they could say no more, than, *Who can tell*, whether there may be the least room to hope for it, after what the prophet has so solemnly declared?

God does not speak to us by the audible voice of an inspired prophet; nor is it necessary. We know, or may know, from his written Word, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked (Isaiah 3:10-11) The appearance of an angel from heaven could add nothing to the certainty of the declarations he has already put into our hands. He has likewise raised up, and perpetuated a succession of his ministers, to enforce the warnings he has given us in the Scripture; to remind us of our sins, and the sure and dreadful consequences, if we persist in them. Nor are we left at an uncertainty as to the outcome, if we humbly confess them, and implore forgiveness, in the way which he has prescribed. The Gospel, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, is preached unto us. Jesus Christ, as crucified, is set forth among us. (Galatians 3:1, 1 Jo. 1:7, Romans 8:1, Acts 13:39) His blood cleanses from all sin; and those who believe in him are freed from condemnation, and completely justified. They have also free access to a throne of grace, and, like Israel, they have power, by prayer, to prevail

with God and with man. (Genesis 32:28) And shall it be said of any of us, that the Lord gave us space to repent, and invited us to repentance, and we repented not? (Revelation 2:21) May his mercy forbid it!

He now speaks to us by his *providence*. His judgments are abroad in the earth; and it behooves us to learn righteousness. (Isaiah 25:9-11) His hand is lifted up, and if any are so careless, or obstinate, that they will not see, yet, sooner or later, they must, they shall see. The *great God* has a controversy with the *potsherd*s of the earth. The point to be decided between him and many abroad, and, I fear, too many at home, is, whether he is the Governor of the earth or not? His own people, to whom His name and glory are dear, will hold all inferior concernment in subordination to this. If there is no other alternative, misery and havoc must spread, men must perish by millions, yes, the frame of nature must be dissolved, rather than God be dishonored and defied with impunity. But he will surely plead and gain his own cause, and, either in a way of judgment or of mercy, all men shall know that he is the Lord. I believe there is no expression in the Old Testament so frequently repeated as this, “You,” or they, “shall know that I am the Lord! Has he said it, and shall he not make it good?”

The rivers of human blood, and all the calamities and horrors which overspread a great part of the Continent, the distant report of which is sufficient to make our ears tingle, are all to be ascribed to this cause. God is not acknowledged; yes, in some places, he has been formally disowned and renounced. Therefore, God sometimes leaves men left to themselves—their furious passions are unchained, and they are given up, without restraint, to the lusts of their own evil hearts! A more dreadful judgment than this, cannot be inflicted on this side of hell. “Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!” Hosea 4:17

And, though we are still favored with peace at home, the dreadful storm is at no great distance; it seems to be moving our way, and we have reason to fear that it may burst upon us. But I would be thankful for the appointment of this day; for I should think the prospect dark indeed, if I did not rely on the Lord’s gracious attention to the united prayers of those who fear and trust him, and who know it is equally easy to him either to save or to destroy, by many or by few. (1 Samuel 14:6) Our fleets and armies may be well appointed and well commanded; but, without his blessing upon our councils and enterprises, they will be unable to defend us. He can take wisdom from the wise, and courage from the bold, in the moment when they are most needful. He can disable our forces by sickness or dissension; and, by his mighty wind, he can dash our ships to pieces against the rocks, against each other, or sink them like lead in the mighty waters! “Who is there who speaks and it happens—unless the Lord has ordained it?” Lamentations 3:37

Our Lord and Savior, when speaking of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, said to the Jews, “Those 18 that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed—do you think they were more sinful than all the people who live in Jerusalem? No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well!” Luke 13:4-5. May the application of these words sink deeply into our hearts! It will not befit us to say, either to God or man, that ‘*we have indeed sinned—but there are greater sinners than ourselves.*’ It is true, the French Convention, and many others who are infatuated by the same spirit, have exceeded the ordinary standard of human impiety and cruelty. But I hope there are multitudes in that nation, who, though they are overawed by their oppressors, and dare not speak their sentiments, yet are mourning in secrecy and silence, for the abominations which they cannot prevent. But the French have *not* sinned against such *advantages* as we possess. They were long the *slaves of despotic power*, and the *dupes of superstition*; and of late they have been the dupes of *fools*, assuming the name of *philosophers*.

We, on the contrary, were born and educated in a land distinguished from all the nations of the earth, by the eminent degree in which we enjoy civil and religious liberty, and the light of gospel truth. These privileges exceedingly aggravate our sins; and no just comparison, in this respect, can be formed between us and other nations, until we can find a people who have been equally favored, for an equal length of time, by the providence of God—and have likewise equaled us in disobedience and ingratitude!

The most dreadful enormities committed in France, are no more than *specimens of what human depravity is capable of*—when circumstances admit of its full exertion, and when the usual boundaries and restrictions necessary to the peace and welfare of civil society, are judicially removed. The influence of *daring infidelity* and *profligate example*, aided by the peculiar state of their public affairs, have broken, in many instances, the strongest ties of social and relative life, and extinguished the common feelings of humanity!

Yet the unhappy French, though our inveterate enemies, are not the proper objects of our *hatred* or our *scorn*—but rather of our *pity*. They know not what they do! Let us *pray* for them. Who can tell but God, to whom all things are possible, and whose mercies are higher than the heavens, may grant also them repentance! And let us pray for ourselves, that we may be instructed and warned by their history—for, by nature, *we are no better than they!*

I. But it is time to attend more immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting today, is to “humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold sins have most justly deserved; and imploring His blessing and assistance on our military, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdoms.” I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

Oh! for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described! “In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord! He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of His robe filled the Temple. Hovering around Him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. In a great chorus they sang, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with His glory!’ The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke! Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!’” Isaiah 6:1-5

Oh! that we, by the power of that faith, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realize the presence and the attitude of His attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of His majesty; and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render Him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to Him!

Oh! that, by faith, we could enter into the spirit of their ascription--‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is filled with His glory!’ If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet’s language. Or, if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, “Woe is me, for I am ruined!” we should, at least, say, (the Hebrew word might be so rendered,) “I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!”

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not perplex ourselves concerning the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin, contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts! And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear--to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look to OURSELVES. “*I am a man of unclean lips! I am a sinner!*” This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighboring hills, usually sees it obscured by a *cloud of smoke*. This *cloud of smoke* is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. This *cloud of smoke* is a fit emblem of the sin and the misery which abound in this great metropolis! The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, “Their iniquity is not yet full.” (Genesis 15:16) I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling more every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it.

True believers, though, by grace, delivered from the reigning power of sin, are still sinners. (Romans 6:14) In many things, we all sin in thought, word, and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our *ignorance*, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed *against light* and experience; for those *personal sins*, the record of which is known only to God and our consciences; for the *defects* and *defilements* of our best services; for our great and *manifold failures* in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dullness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns *his glory*, as compared with the quickness of our concerns, when our own *temporal interests* are affected, are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity! The sins of *the Lord’s own people* are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of his known goodness, that, if he was to enter into judgment with *them alone*, they could offer no other plea than that which he has mercifully provided for them, “If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared!” (Psalm 130:3-4)

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins can be competent judges of what the prophet meant or felt, when he said, “*I live among a people of unclean lips.*” We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the **sins of those among whom we dwell**, than for our own. We shall be so, if, with the eyes of our mind—we behold the King, the Lord Almighty; because his glory, which should be the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonored by them.

I think this nation (England) might be considered as the *Israel of the New Testament*, both with respect of his goodness to us, and our perverse returns to him. He has been pleased to select us, as a special people, and to show among us such instances of his protection, his favor, his grace, and his patience—as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation!

We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Savior was first known in England; it was, probably, at an early period of the Christian era. But we do know, that after the *long dark night of superstition and ignorance* which covered Christendom for many ages—the *dawn of returning gospel light* was first seen among us! From the time of *Wickliffe*, the morning-star of the Reformation, the true Gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when those who loved this Gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful, in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself! But those times are *past*. We enjoy not only *light*—but *liberty*, and the rights of *conscience* and *private judgment*, in a degree until of late unknown!

We have likewise been long favored with *national peace*, though often other nations in wars have suffered great calamities. Our internal broils at different times have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We

breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insulated geographical situation, and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and, when such have been attempted, the *winds* and *seas* have often fought our battles! Our wide spreading and flourishing *commerce*, has raised us to a *pitch of opulence* which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great Britain appears as but a small spot upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend, in every direction, to the uttermost parts of the earth!

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply with equal propriety to us? "What more could I have done for My vineyard than I did? Why, when I expected a yield of *good grapes*—did it yield only *worthless grapes*?" (Isaiah 5:4)

How is the blessed Gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe and know, that there are some among our various denominations, who prize and adorn the Gospel. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found to be a very considerable number; and, for their sakes, and, in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that *God's mercy* will still be afforded to us. But, compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonor the Gospel—I fear they are very few! Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both those who preach, and those who espouse them, are considered as *wild enthusiasts* or *hypocrites, knaves* or *fools*. The Gospel of God is shunned as a *pestilence*, or complained of as a *burden*, almost wherever it is known!

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16) The Gospel—recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery; guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. (Titus 2:12) But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not. Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversation, what open offences, may be found among many who would be thought professors of that Gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What, then, must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers, that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's worship, abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of his commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord Almighty calls to weeping and mourning—thoughtless security, dissipation, and open sin, are the characteristics of our national spirit. (Isaiah 22:12-13) The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless his mercy interposes in our behalf!

I would be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unholy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the *African slave-trade*. I do not rank this among our national sins, because I hope, and believe, a very great majority of the nation earnestly long for its suppression. But, hitherto, petty and selfish interests prevail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practiced in France—you would, perhaps, be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this slave traffic, which I know, not from hearsay—but from my own experience and observation, are equal in atrocity, and, perhaps, superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any, or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a *cry of blood* against us; a cry accumulated by the addition of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year!

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before him!

II. Have we not, therefore, cause to say, with the Ninevites, "*Who can tell?*" Is there not at least, '*a perhaps?*' Is there at least a possibility—that *we* may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations; and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed; if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others—but daringly trampled upon the gracious offers of his forgiveness, which he has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves; if "All day long I have spread out My hands to a disobedient and defiant people," (Romans 10:21) and, hitherto, almost in vain; if neither the tokens of his displeasure, nor the declarations of his love, have made a suitable impression upon our minds—who can tell if he will yet be entreated? May we not fear, lest he should say, "My Spirit shall strive with them no more!" "*They are joined to their idols—let them alone!*" "When you lift up your hands in prayer—I will refuse to look. Even though you offer countless prayers—I will not listen!" (Hos. 4:17, Isaiah 1:15)

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought as rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain tops. Nothing of them remains but their *names*. They perished, and

their memorials have almost perished with them. (Psalm 9:6) The *patience of God* bore with them for a time—until the purposes for which he raised them up were answered. But, when the measure of their iniquity was full—they passed away, and were dispersed, *like foam upon the waters!* What security have *we*—against such a catastrophe? Or, what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, “Should I not punish them for this?” asks the Lord. “Should I not avenge Myself against a nation such as this?” (Jeremiah 5:9)

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece and in Asia? When the apostle Paul wrote to the *Gentile* churches, and when our Lord wrote his epistles to the seven churches in *Asia* (Revelation 1-3) most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the *commendations* given to them were applicable to professors of the Gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our *faith* and *love* are everywhere spoken of, and that we are *examples* to all who believe? That our *works* and *service*, and *faith* and *patience*, are known, and the last works, to be more than the first? (Romans 1:8, 1 Th. 1:7, Revelation 2:1, 18, 19)

Or rather, may it not be truly said of too many, that while they *profess* to believe in God—that in *works* they deny him? that they are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold? that they have a *name* to live, and are dead? that they have forgotten their first love? (Titus 1:16, Revelation 3:1-15, 2:4) When these *defects* and *declensions* began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord *admonished* and *warned* them; but, instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became *more remiss!* At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were *removed* out of their places. Many regions, which once rejoiced in the light of the Gospel, have been long overspread with *Mohammedan darkness*, and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant, slaves!

Let us not trust in *outward privileges*, nor rest in a *form of godliness* destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, “The *temple* of the Lord, the *temple* of the Lord are we!” (Jer. 7:4) if the *Lord* of the temple should depart from us! When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their *vain confidence*. He delivered the *ark of his glory* into the hands of their enemies, (1 Samuel 4:5-11) to teach them, and to teach us, that *formal hypocritical worshipers* have no good ground to hope for his protection.

Alas! then, who can tell? Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our *foreign enemies*, we have much to be apprehensive of at *home!* A spirit of discord has gone forth. “Israel grew fat—and rebelled; the people grew heavy, plump, and stuffed! Then they abandoned the God who had made them; they made light of the Rock of their salvation!” (Deut. 32:15) Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by *other nations*—are *despised* and *depreciated* among ourselves; and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain in a time of national disturbance and confusion; but they are abetted and instigated by people of sense, character, and even of religion! I would be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord’s displeasure. When he withdraws his blessing, no unity or peace can long exist.

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a cheerful heart, even though you had an abundance of everything, you will serve your *enemies* the Lord will send against you, in famine, thirst, nakedness, and a lack of everything. He will place an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you!” Deuteronomy 28:47-48. These words of Moses to *rebellious Israel* emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation, who have been plundered, and were glad if only they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of *their all*, and at the peril of their lives, to a more peaceful shore. May *their sufferings* remind us of *our deserts!* Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to confess our deserved judgments, **let us not despond.** The Lord our God is a *merciful* God. “Who can tell? Perhaps even yet God will have pity on us and hold back his fierce anger from destroying us!”

If the *fast* of this day is not confined to one day—but if, by his blessing, it may produce sincere repentance—then I am warranted to tell you, from his Word, that *there is yet hope!* You who tremble for *God’s ark*, for the *cause of God*, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth—take courage! Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm; (Isaiah 7:2) but you have no cause to tremble like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place, and your hiding place! Under the shadow of His wings—you shall be safe! (Psalm 46:1, Psalm 90:1, Psalm 119:114)

1. He who loved you and died for your sins—is the Lord of glory! All power in heaven and in earth is committed unto him. The *Lord* reigns—though the *earth* be ever so agitated. All creatures are instruments of his will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise him; and shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of his great designs! And the remainder of that wrath, of all their projected violence, which does not coincide with his wise and comprehensive plan, he will restrain! (Mat. 28:18, Psalm 99:1, Psalm 76:10) In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten! They act under a *secret commission*, and can do no more than he permits them! If they attempt it—he has his hook and a bridle in their mouths!

When the enemies would come in like a flood—he can lift up a standard against them. As he has set bounds and bars to the *tempestuous sea*, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, “This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt!” So, with equal ease, he can “still the tumults of the nations!” (2 Kings 19:28, Isaiah 59:19, Job 38:10-11, Psalm 65:7)

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries—of those who know him not. But if you make the Almighty God your fear and your dread—he will be a *sanctuary* to you, and keep your hearts in peace! “Therefore we will not be afraid, though the earth trembles and the mountains topple into the depths of the seas!” (Isaiah 8:13-14, Psalm 46:2)

2. Your part and mine is to WATCH and PRAY. Let us pray for *ourselves*, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning, that we may be prepared to meet his will in every event. (Mark 13:35, Mark 14:38) Let us pray for the *peace of Jerusalem*, for *God’s church*, which is dear to him, as the pupil of his eye, for the spread of his Gospel, and the extension of his kingdom—until his great name is known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, (Mal. 1:11) and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory!

Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled; and he is now bringing forward their accomplishment. *Light* will undoubtedly arise out of this *darkness*. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our counsels of government and parliament, and upon all subordinate authorities in church and state—that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that true religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence! Thus we may hope to be secured by the sure, though secret, mark of *divine protection*. The Lord will be *our shield*—though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered. Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of his grace—he should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon him to afford us *strength according to our day*. He is always near to his people, a *very present help* in the time of trouble; and he can make the season of their *greatest tribulations*, to be the season of their *sweetest consolations!* (Ezekiel. 9:4, Mat. 9:30, Deu. 33:25, 2 Corinthians 1:5)

3. And let us pray in FAITH. Let us remember what great things the Lord *has* done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than ‘*God’s axe*’, or a ‘*saw in the hand of God*’. He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of capturing Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him—*upon his knees*. He spread Sennacherib’s blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple and prayed—and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. (Isaiah 10:15, 37:14-36) When *Peter* was locked up and chained in prison—the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened—while the church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance! (Acts 12:5-13)

And as we have *heard*—so have we *seen*. God has signally answered the prayers of his people, in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved King during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable, was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When God thus removed our fears, “we were like men who dreamed!” (Psalm 126:1)

I believe prayer was no less efficacious, towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of *danger* at that time as false, because the Lord was pleased to avert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the people we daily met with in the street, the many daring conspiracies which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters, upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the *hearts of men were turned like the tide*, in a critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident. We have had repeated proofs that God hears and answers prayer.

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us, as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our *enemies* are inveterate and enraged! Our *sins* testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for his mercy—who can tell, but that he may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? Yes, we have encouragement to hope, that if God will be *for us*—then none can prevail *against* us. (Romans 8:11) But without his blessing, our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings, cannot succeed for a moment!

You who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war—but the many thousands of souls who are yearly plunged by war into an eternal, unchangeable state—you, I trust, will show yourselves true friends to your country, by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against *SIN—the procuring cause of all our sorrows*; and by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy, in behalf of yourselves, and of the nation. If ten people, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom—it would have escaped destruction! (Genesis 18:32)

IV. There may be some people in this assembly, who are little concerned for their *own* sins, and are, of course, incapable of taking a proper part in the service of this day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I *pity* you, I *warn* you. If you should live

to see a time of public distress—*what* will you do? To *whom* will you look, or *where* will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it!

Or if it pleases God to prolong our tranquility, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, *death* is inevitable, and may be near! My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? Or can you be happy too soon? Many Christian people are now looking upon you—who once were as lost as you are now. And I doubt not—that they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself! Our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek him while he is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and he has said, “those who come to me—I will never cast out.” (John 6:37) He is likewise the author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to him. If you ask him for saving faith—he will give it to you; if you seek it, in the means of his appointment, you shall assuredly find it. (Mat. 7:7)

If you refuse this, there remains no other sacrifice for your sin. (Hebrews 10:26-27) If you are not saved by faith in his blood—you are lost forever! “Oh! Pay homage to the Son, or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion; for His anger may ignite at any moment! Blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” Psalm 2:12