

THE MADHOUSE OF THE UNIVERSE

A sermon by Oswald J. Smith



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Turn with me, if you will, to the Gospel according to Matthew, the thirteenth chapter, verses forty-one and forty-two: *“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”*

When I was a boy I saw a sight that I never can forget – a man carried out of his house in a sheet, in the dead of night. I was watching from an upper window and I was told that the man had gone insane and that he was being taken to a lunatic asylum. Never will I forget the impression it made upon me. I can still remember it.

It may be that there are those in this audience who have had loved ones put away in an asylum, and if so then you know something about it. Death would have been preferable. Perhaps even now you are thinking of a dear one who will have to spend the remainder of his days in such an institution.

We must have asylums to safeguard society. The sane and the insane cannot mix. They simply must be kept apart. For the sake and safety of the sane the insane must be put away.

Now God has an asylum. He, too, knows that the sane and the insane could never be happy together, and so in His asylum -- which, by the way, was never prepared for man - - the insane will one day have to be put. His asylum was made for the devil and his angels; but since it is the only one He has, therefore the spiritually insane have to be sent to it.

Have you ever visited an asylum? Have you ever seen the insane? I have. One sits thinking, thinking. Another continually weeps. Others wail aloud and gnash their teeth. Their brains have been deranged. They are not themselves. Hence they suffer, suffer in an indescribable way, and there is very little that can be done for them.

God's asylum is called Gehenna, and it is mentioned twelve times in the New Testament Scriptures: eleven times by Christ Himself and once by James. John calls it the Lake of Fire and the Second Death. I have called it the Madhouse of the Universe.

This asylum is a place of conscious suffering. Such words as fire, weeping, wailing, the gnashing of teeth, are used to describe it. Fire burns. People do not weep when they are happy, nor do they wail unless they are miserable. When they gnash their teeth they must be suffering real pain.

So terrible is it that Jesus recommended that loss of hand, foot and eye in preference to being consigned to it.

God Does Not Want You to Go There

Let me make it clear, however, that God does not want you to go there.

First of all, it is not His will that *any* should perish. He Himself says so. "*Not willing that any should perish*" (2 Peter 3:9). Hence if you perish and have to be consigned to the asylum prepared for the devil and his angels it will be your own fault. It is not the will of God.

In the second place, God has provided deliverance for you. He has redeemed all mankind. Salvation may be yours; there is no reason, then, why you should ever be consigned to the Madhouse of the Universe. "*Christ...is the propitiation for...the sins of the world*" (1 John 2:12).

In the third place, let me point out that He urges you to be saved. "*Be ye reconciled to God*" (2 Cor. 5:20). Again and again throughout the Scriptures He pleads with you to be reconciled. Hence it is not His plan to put you in the asylum that was never prepared for you, but if you refuse to be saved He has no alternative but to send you there.

Who Are the Insane?

Now who are the insane? That is the important question; and I want to make five suggestions, if I may, so that you can decide whether or not *you* are insane.

First of all, the man is insane who prepares for the present and not for the future.

You remember the rich fool. He stored up his grain in his barns; he made abundant provision for the present; he felt satisfied that he had all that he needed for the rest of his life, and yet God pronounced him a fool; God called him a lunatic, and told him that that very night his soul would be required of him. Why was he insane? Not because he was wealthy, not because he had worked hard, not because he had saved; but because he had made no preparation for the future. The preparation he made was for the present. He gave no thought to his soul. His only thought was for his body. Hence God

pronounced him a lunatic. That man was headed for the asylum – the Madhouse of the Universe.

Second, the man is insane who thinks he can sin and get away with it.

God has said, “*Be sure your sin will find you out.*” No man can sin and escape punishment. “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*” That is what God says. “*The wages of sin is death.*” This again is God’s pronouncement. Hence for a man to think that he can go on sinning and get away with it at last is insanity in itself. That man is a lunatic and is headed for the Madhouse of the Universe. Are you that man? I leave you to answer the question.

Third, the man is insane who rejects God’s plan and manufactures one of his own.

God has provided for man’s salvation. There is no other way of escape. God gave His Son to die on Calvary’s cross and to bear your sins in order that you might not have to bear them. If you reject God’s plan and manufacture one of your own, whether it be one of works or religion, or anything else, you are most assuredly insane. Why not accept the God-provided plan? Why try to invent one of your own?

Fourth, the man is insane who puts off his salvation until his death-bed.

I know the thief was saved on the cross just before he died but may I point out that the other thief was not? Therefore you are taking a terrible chance. I do not believe the thief ever had another chance. Probably the first time he met the Lord Jesus Christ was when he saw Him hanging by his side on the accursed tree. But you have heard the message again and again. Time after time God’s servants have pleaded with you to be reconciled to God and yet you have gone on in your rebellion and rejection, refusing God’s offer of mercy.

You have an idea that you can accept Jesus Christ on your death-bed. I would not take that chance for all the world. It has been my privilege to visit a great many of my parishioners who have passed on into the other life, and I want to bear testimony to the fact that in most cases they were far too weak at the end to even think about making a decision for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many who are dying are kept under drugs; their minds are confused; they cannot think aright. How, then, can they make such a momentous decision?

My friend, any moment you may be cut off. Little did the rich fool think that he would be called to an account that very night. On every side we are surrounded by accidents. In this mechanized world the newspaper is simply filled with reports of accidental deaths. Are you going to take a chance? You are insane if you do; and if you should be cut off without warning, remember- you will go to the Madhouse of the Universe.

These, then, are the men and the women who are insane; and if they are insane now, and if they die in their insanity, what can God do but assign them to His asylum, where

all must go who are spiritually insane? It would be impossible for God to allow them to associate with those who are spiritually sane. They would have nothing in common with them. Hence he has to separate them, and the only plan He has is to send them to Gehenna, the place we call hell, where the devil and his angles are to be consigned, there to be eternally separated from those who have accepted Jesus Christ and are therefore sane in the sight of God.

Jesus speaks of the tares being gathered and burned in the fire, and then He says, "*So shall it be in the end of this world*", or, as it is in the original, "*at the end of this age*". He himself will send forth His angels. They are the only ones who can distinguish the sane from the insane. First of all they will gather out of His Kingdom all that offend and those who practice iniquity. They will be cast into a furnace of fire, namely, God's asylum, the Madhouse of the Universe, and there, the Lord says, "*there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*".

After that He tells us about the sane, and He calls the sane the righteous. He says that they are to shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. The great division has taken place. The insane have been separated from the sane, and now those, by God pronounced sane, are to dwell together, shining as the sun through all the countless ages of eternity.

My friend, to which group do you belong? Are you sane or insane? Will you spend your eternity with the sane in the Kingdom of God, or will you be consigned to the Madhouse of the Universe?

They Were Insane

Thomas Paine was insane. He would call out during his paroxysms of distress, without intermission, "*O Lord, help me! God, help me! Jesus Christ, Help me! O Lord, help me!*" etc., repeating the same expressions without the least variations, in a tone that would alarm the house. That is a picture of an insane man. He was insane before he died, hence he has gone to the place of the insane.

Voltaire was insane. For three months remorse, reproach and blasphemy accompanied and characterized the long agony of the dying atheist. His death, the most terrible that is ever recorded to a stricken and impious man, will not be denied even by his companions in impiety. Rage succeeded to fury, and fury to rage again. The conspirators could hear him, the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God whom he had conspired against; and in plaintive accents would he cry out, "*O Christ! O Jesus Christ!*" and then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. His physicians, thunder-struck, retired, declaring the death of the impious man to be terrible indeed. These were the cries of insanity. Voltaire spent his life as an insane man and went to the Madhouse of the Universe.

Francis Newport was also insane. At the end of his life he wrote: *“How idle is it to bid the fire not to burn when fuel is administered, and to command the sea to be smooth in the midst of a storm! Such is my case. Whither am I going? Damned and lost forever.”* His voice failed and he began to struggle and gasp for breath; which, having recovered, with a groan dreadful and horrid, as if it had been more than human, cried out, *“Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!”* and then expired.

I once heard of a dying universalist who was most certainly insane. His exclamation was, *“I have despised mercy! I have scoffed at God! I have refused Christ! My day has gone by! I am lost! Oh, fool! Fool! I have been a fool all my days!”* He, too, was bound for the Madhouse of the Universe.

When Jennie Gordon was dying she cried, *“The fiends, they come; Oh, save me! They drag me down! Lost! Lost! Lost! Bind me, ye chains of darkness! Oh that I might cease to be, but still exist.”* These, again, are the exclamations and ravings of the insane. Her soul was doomed, and she, too, was on her way to the Madhouse of the Universe.

There was once a young girl who wanted to be saved, but her father said, *“If my daughter goes to that altar I will wade in blood to take her out of there.”* She did not go. Later she became seriously ill and God started to deal with her. Suddenly she cried aloud, *“My doom is sealed forever.”* Then, *“What time is it?”* Her father told her that it was four o’clock. *“Just think,”* she said, *“I am going where there is no time.”* A moment later she spoke again. *“Father,”* she cried, *“get me a drink from the old well, for I am going where there is no water.”*

A little later she spoke once more. *“Father,”* she said, *“put your arms under me and pull me up. My feet are on fire. My feet are slipping. Take my feet out of the fire.”* After thus agonizing, she again requested, *“Bring your daughter another drink of water.”* He started to get it, but before he got back his beautiful daughter had gone into eternity.

Insane she lived. Insane she died. And in her spiritual insanity she went where thousands, yea hundreds of thousands, of others are doomed to go – she went to the Madhouse of the Universe.

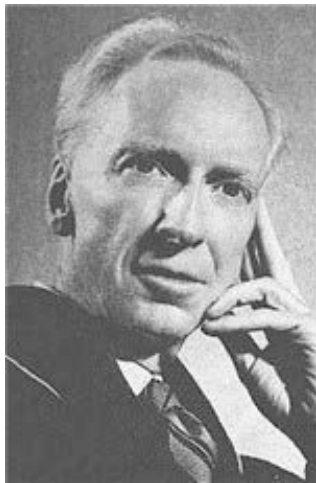
My Friends, I could go on. The whole world is insane and is bound for the Madhouse of the Universe. Only those who open their hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as a personal Savior ever become sane. It is for you to decide your own destiny. Are you going to spend it with the sane or the insane, with the children of God or with the children of Satan, saved or lost, in Heaven above or in the Madhouse of the Universe? It is for you to say.

If you refuse, you are insane and you do not want to become sane. You are determined to spend your eternity in the Madhouse of the Universe rather than in the Paradise of God. You prefer the company of the insane to the company of the sane. What a choice!

And yet the insane may be sane. Lunatics can be restored to their right minds. God can do for the spiritually insane what no doctor can do for the mentally insane. But not

against your will. You must cooperate with Him by choosing Jesus Christ, His Son, as your Savior.

How must I plead with you? What more can I say? Will you love your sin and go to hell, or leave your sin and go to heaven? *“Turn ye, oh, turn ye, for why will ye die?”* Choose now. Don't put it off. *“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.”* Make certain that you do not spend your eternity in the Madhouse of the Universe.



Oswald J. Smith (*November 8, 1889 - January 25, 1986*) was a Canadian pastor, author, and missions advocate. He founded The People's Church in Toronto, which grew to be a large congregation under his leadership, known for their missions giving. He also traveled throughout the world and used radio broadcasts to share the gospel message and stimulate missions awareness.

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