

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR LAST JOURNEY.

A Sermon

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“When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.”
Job xvi. 22.

THE season of the year may well remind us of our mortality. The corn, which a few weeks ago was green and vigorous, has now for the most part yielded to the sickle; many flowers which adorned our gardens have exchanged their bloom for ripening seed; the year has commenced to die, its glory and prime have gone. The dews of evening are heavy, and the mists linger in the morning, for the summer heat is declining. The leaves are just upon the turn, and the fall of the year is close at hand. These are creation's warnings, reminding us that the Lord hath set a harvest for us, and that we all do fade as a leaf. Nature hath her prophets as well as revelation, and autumn in his rugged garb is one of them. He has now come to us with this solemn message, “The harvest is passed and the summer is ended; prepare to meet your God!”

In addition to the warnings of nature, we have lately been saluted by voices from divine providence. Loud calls have come to us of late from almost every part of our church work. Death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces. Death, who seldom comes into the Orphanage, has forced his cruel hand into our nest of young ones, and has taken thence the widow's child. A funeral has left our gates, and little boys have gathered around a grave to see one like themselves laid in the silent earth. Death has set his axe also against the College, and has cut down one of our growing trees, upon which there were abundant tokens of future fruitfulness. Our brother Winter had sharpened his sword for the conflict, and was just about to leave us for actual service, when in a few days his strength departed, and he was not. Death has come also among the ministers who were once our students, and were our crown of rejoicing as labourers for the Lord. One of the ablest and best of them has put a whole town in mourning for he has been taken home at an early age, when he had already become foremost for usefulness. Middlesbrough mourns our brother Priter with

no common sorrow. Beyond all this, almost every day we have report of this one and that one in the membership and in the congregation going home. These dying ones are God's voices to us, and I should be unworthy of addressing you if I did not first hear them in the silence of my own soul, and then endeavour to interpret them to you. All these things bring to my mind the language of our text, "When a few years ere come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return;" will they not have the same effect upon you? He that hath ears to hear let him hear.

My subject is one upon which it would be quite impossible to say anything new, since death is neither novel nor uncommon, for from the days of Abel until now it has honeycombed the earth with graves. Nor need I seek out elegancies of speech, for these would be incongruous with such a theme. When we speak of eternal things the less attempt we make at fine language the better; such solemn topics are most powerful when suffered to have their own natural voice and speak for themselves. Begone all trifling thoughts! Let the mind put off all gay apparel, and wear awhile the shroud. Instead of rising with gaiety, let the imagination bow with solemnity, for now we have to do with the dying chamber, and the grave, and the judgment throne. The blast of the archangel's trumpet is ringing in our ears, and we are to anticipate the day in which we shall receive our final sentence from the Judge of all the earth. Solemnity, therefore, should possess our minds. Let us shut out the present world and become familiar with the world to come. Very simple and self-evident will be the considerations which I shall set before you, but if already moved to a solemn frame of mind, you will be prepared to derive profit from them. May God the Holy Spirit bless the word, and by its means prepare us for our last remove, of which the text speaks so plainly.

First, then, let us *realize our inevitable journey*—"I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Secondly, *let us contemplate its nearness*—"When a few years are come." Thirdly, let us *consider our non-return from the journey*—"Whence I shall not return;" and then we shall close in the fourth place by *enquiring whither we are going*. We are going whence we shall not return, but to what place are we bound? Is it endless bliss or ceaseless woe?

I. First then let us REALIZE OUR INEVITABLE JOURNEY. I desire that these words maybe earnestly taken up in a personal manner by each of us. The language is in the singular number. "*I shall go the way whence I shall not return.*" Let us apply it each one to himself. The fact that all men are mortal has little power over our minds, for we always make a tacit exception and put off the evil day for ourselves. We own ourselves mortal, but do not expect to die just now. Even the aged look forward to a continuance of life, and the consumptive dream of possible recovery. I will not, therefore, remind you so much of the general truth, but place before you the individual, pointed, personal declaration of the text. "I," the preacher; you, each one of you looking

upon the preacher now,—“*I shall go the way whence I shall not return.*” As surely as you live you will die. It may help you to realise this fact if I ask you to accompany me first of all into the chamber of *a dying man*, and as you look upon him I entreat you to remember that you yourself will lie there in a like case ere long. It is sometimes my duty, and a very hard and painful task it is, to communicate to sick and dying persons the fact that it is not possible that they should recover. One beats about the bush a little, but at last you come with tenderness to the sad point and say, “Friend, do you know that there is very little hope, if any, that you can recover? In fact, it is as nearly certain as a thing can be that you must die. Your physicians are compelled to believe that your end is near.” The news is taken in such different ways: sometimes it is not believed, at other times it occasions a thrill of pain which wounds your heart and cuts your soul to the quick. In many cases it is received with calm, patient resignation, but frequently have I seen the tidings accepted with joy, and the man of God has said, “It is a thing I have longed for. Now shall I be rid of this weary pain, and see the face of him whom my soul loveth.” Yet it is a solemn business, take it how you may—solemn to those who tell the news, and more solemn still to those who hear it. Look, then, at the poor dying man, wasting away before your eyes. He *must* now go to his long home. He *must* go. No one now can delay his departure. The chariot is at the door. If he could offer all the gold of the Indies he could not bribe inexorable death. No, he may be master of a mint of treasure, but it cannot buy him an hour’s life: his time is come, and he *must* go. His beloved wife would fain detain him, but he must be torn from her embrace. His children weep, but he must not stay to dry their tears. A kind friend would almost make an exchange, and die in his stead, but there can be no proxies here. There is no discharge in this war. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and die he *must*. The hour is come! His pulse is slow! His eye is glazing! Look at him! Do you not feel for a man in such solemn circumstances? There must you also lie, and thus must you also depart. I ask you to place yourself in his stead, and try this morning to feel as he must feel, seeing it is absolutely certain that to such a condition you also must come, unless, indeed, the Lord should descend from heaven with a shout at once, of which we know so little as to when it may be.

How the individuality of a man comes out in his dying hour! What an important being he becomes! You think more of that one man while dying than of all the thousands of the living who parade our streets. No matter who he is, he is dying, and we tread softly. Poor man, he must now die, and die alone. And now how important his character becomes! His life, his own life, is now being put into the balance, and he is looking back upon it. It is the most important thing in the universe to him. His outward circumstances are now a small matter, his life is the main consideration. Was he righteous or wicked? a fearer of God or a despiser of his grace? Be he rich or be he poor,

his rank and station are subjects of indifference. The hangings of the bed are of very small account, the man who lies there is the sole concern. Whether he is now waited upon by the best physician, hired by the costliest fee, or whether he lies in the hospital tended by gentle charity, it is the man himself, the man's soul, the man's personal character that is now seen in all its grandeur, demanding his whole thought. Be he peer or be he peasant, be he king or be he serf, it is much the same to each man to die. Differences on the dying bed arise out of character and not out of rank. Now he has to face for himself the great things of eternity, and cannot leave them to another. He used to hear about eternity as one of the mass, but now he has to experience it alone, and by himself. Into the cold river his own feet must descend, the cool waves must chill his blood, death must close his eye, and into the unknown future he must plunge alone. No brother's hand can grasp his hand when he has quitted the body, no fellow-mortal can fly side by side with him through the tracks unknown. How vividly the individuality of the man comes out, and the need of a personal interest in the great salvation. How much it is to be desired that it could be made quite as plain under happier circumstances. And yet how clear it is that each one of us must believe in the Saviour for himself, each serve God personally, and each have a good hope through grace wrought in his own soul. Will men never think of this till they come to die?

And now that candle burning in the sick man's chamber sheds a strange light upon his past life. Some said he was fortunate, but if he was sinful where is his good fortune? Men said he was a poor unsuccessful muddler, but he will be worth as much in a short time as if he had been the most prudent, and had prospered in the world, for here men come to a level. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked must I return thither." So must it be. In death the financial element looks contemptible, and *the moral and the spiritual come to be most esteemed*. How did he live? What were his thoughts? What was his heart towards God? Did he repent of sin? Does he still repent? Does he believe in Jesus? Is he resting upon the finished work of Christ or is he not? He, perhaps, failed to ask himself some of those questions a little while ago, but now, if he be in his sober senses, he is compelled to put his soul through its paces. How does his heart answer when cross-examined? Now he must reach down the accounts, the memoranda, and the day-book of his life, and he must look to what he did and what he was, and what he is. Ah me! how will the reckoning end? What will be the sum total? It matters little what he was before his fellow men, whose judgments are fallible, but the question is, what was he before the all-searching eye of the Most High God? Such an account *you* will have to render.

The individuality of the man is clear, and the man's character before God, and now it is also evident that *death tests all things*. If you look upon this poor dying man you see that he is past the time for pretences and shams. You yourself, if you knew but little of him before, feel very concerned to know

whether the religion he professed was truthful or not, whether he was really regenerate or merely dreamed that he was so. If *you* wish to answer that question, how much more does that poor dying man want to know for himself? Here let me tell you that very much of the comfort, with which we wrap ourselves up in days of health, proves to be very sorry stuff when we come to die. While you are in good health and strength you often derive a measure of peace of mind from things, which will not stand the fiery ordeal of an approaching eternity. Some of the best men that ever lived have found this out. You may know the name of Mr. Durham, the author of a famous book on Solomon's Song, one of the most earnest of Scotland's ancient preachers. Some days before he died he seemed to be in some perplexity about his future well-being, and said to his friend Mr. Carstairs, "Dear brother, for all that I have written or preached, there is but one Scripture which I can now remember or dare grip unto now that I am hastening to the grave. It is this—'Who-soever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' Pray tell me if I dare lay the weight of my salvation upon it." Mr. Carstairs justly replied, "Brother, you may depend upon it, though you had a thousand salvations at hazard." You see it was a plain sinner's text that he rested on. Just as Dr. Guthrie wanted them to sing a bairn's hymn, so do dying saints need the plain elementary doctrines of the gospel to rest upon. Those fine ideas and dainty notions, or our nearing perfection and becoming completely sanctified, dissolve like the hoar frost in the sun, when we come face to face with eternity. Those grand excitements, those high enjoyments, and those deep experiences, which lead us to think ourselves to be somebodies in the church of God are of small account in dying moments. Men cannot die on stilts. Death finds out the truth of our condition and blows away with his cold breath a heap of chaff which we thought to be good wheat. Then a man has to look to the mercy of God, to the blood of the covenant and to the promises of the gospel, and to cling as a poor, needy, guilty sinner to free, rich, sovereign grace, or else his spirit will utterly sink. When life is ebbing nothing will do but the faithful saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I have heard children of God speak in their last moments just as seeking souls speak. They come to God again just as they came at first, and they find in Jesus all their hope. Dying men want realities, they want a sinner's Saviour, they want atonement for guilt, for so only can they pass out of the world with hope. Oh, brethren, follow after that which is solid and real, for nothing else will serve your turn when you come to die.

Still keep your eye on that dying man whom I have tried to picture—he is vividly before me now. He must go: there is no alternative. He cannot resist the power which now summons him to depart. Willing or unwilling, it matters not, *he must go*. The sheriff's officer has him in his grip, and he *must go*. Is he prepared? Pray God he may be; but whether he be so or not it makes no difference, he must leave all and take his journey. Has he children dependent

upon him, and a wife who needs his support? Their necessities cannot detain him, he *must go*. Has he made his will, or has he left all his business affairs in a tangle? Whichever it is, he must go. The tide which bears all before it has seized his barque, and even now it drifts adown the stream.

That man who must go is yourself, projected only a little way further into time. Can you not realize what will certainly be the fact? Can you not already hear the ticking of the watch at your bed-head in the silence of your last night? Can you not anticipate that mysterious consultation of physicians, when each one owns to his fellows his incompetence to suggest a remedy. It is clear that the hour is come: you must go. This must happen to every mortal man and woman sitting or standing in this house this morning. Will you not lay it to heart?

Now survey another scene to help you to realize your departure. Look no longer on the dying, but bend over *the dead*. It is all over now. He has breathed his last, and he now lies upstairs alone in the darkened chamber. A loving one has stolen in and tremblingly lifted the coffin lid to gaze once more upon the dear face, and say another adieu; but there can be no more of this. The friends have gathered, and the mourners must go through the streets and bear him to the tomb. *That funeral is yours*.

The corpse is borne to the grave, and on the road it silently preaches to all passers by. Archbishop Leighton one morning was asked by a friend, "Have you heard a sermon?" He said, "No, but I met a sermon, for I met a dead man carried out to be buried." Let every funeral be a discourse to you. Within a short time to each one of us it will happen that within the narrow limits of the coffin we must lie, and then will come for us the opened grave, the lowering of the corpse, and the gathering of mourners around it. Upon your coffin lid and mine the mould shall fall—"Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." A green mound, a daisy or two amid the grass, a friend to bring a few fading flowers to scatter on our graves ever and anon; perhaps a head-stone, perhaps not,—to this we must all come. "Here he lies" is the universal epitaph. On the lap of earth *you* will lie; there shall I also lie. Do realize it; it is so near, so sure—when a few years shall come we shall be with the unnumbered throng.

Now let your realization go a little further. Can you picture the spirit of a man as it leaves the body? I confess my imagination does not enable me to picture it to myself, and certainly my words are not competent to convey to you what little I can realize to my mind. The soul finds itself rid of materialism; how will it feel when it has shaken itself loose of its shell of clay? I cannot tell. We all love this earthly house of our tabernacle, and leave it with reluctance.

"For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,

Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?"

But it does not matter what lingering looks we cast, our soul will have done with the body in its present fashion, and it must for a while dwell apart from all materialism. At once it must come before God. Its state will immediately after death be known to it beyond a question. In a moment it will know beyond all doubt whether it is accepted before God, and beyond all hope it will know whether it is reprobate and condemned. That knowledge will at once commence its happiness, a happiness which will be increased as ages roll on; or that knowledge will at once commence its misery, which will deepen evermore. The soul will abide in the disembodied state for a while, and then will come the clarion note of the resurrection trumpet, and the body shall rise again to be again inhabited by the soul. What will the meeting be? What will be the sensation of the remarriage of mind with matter, of soul with body? We know not. The resurrection is the blessed hope of the Christian, but it is a terrible dread to the ungodly. The soul shall never more return to the world's cares, nor to the world at all as the world now is, but it shall again inhabit the body, and stand before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the verdict from the lips of him who is appointed Judge of all mankind.

The divine verdict is given, and the soul must continue its journey. Still onward must it go: whether accepted or condemned, onward it must go. Onward, exulting in a bliss unspeakable like to the divine, if Christ pronounce it blessed; onward, in a misery unutterable if Christ pronounce it "cursed." I do not know whether you are able in imagination to place yourself in such a condition, but in such a condition you will certainly be found ere long. You will be stripped of this house of clay, and so you will die, but you will live again, ay, live for ever. You will live to be judged, to be justified or to be condemned, and then you will live for ever, in happiness or torment, *and all this you will know in a short time to come.*

Thus I have helped you as best I could, and I fear but poorly, to realize the inevitable journey.

II. Now, let us very briefly CONTEMPLATE ITS MEANING. Very soon we shall have to start upon our solemn and mysterious pilgrimage. If we should fulfil the entire tale of our years the allotted period of human life is but short. The text in the Hebrew speaks of "years of number": they are so few that a child may count them. At the commencement of life the view before us looks like an endless avenue, but as we advance along the path the end seems very near, and we perceive how short our time is. Middle life has but a short view, either backwards or forwards. As for some of you, upon whom age is descending, you should be well enough aware how short for certain your time for lingering here must be. Your lease has almost run out; can you doubt it?

What are seventy or eighty years, if we live so long? But then we are further warned by the consideration that we cannot safely reckon upon the whole of that brief period, for children are carried away and young men are cut down by the scythe; and we see frequently the maiden before she reaches the full bloom of her years carried off, with death as her bridegroom. Does not the text say, “a few years.” Read it months, read it days, read it hours, read it minutes, for we cannot tell how soon we must set sail for the far-off land. In a short time we must join the great caravan, and cross the desert to a land whence we shall not return. Life is so short, that we have scarce begun to live ere we are called to die.

Hence, dear brethren, if there is anything grievous to be borne, we may well bear it cheerfully, for it cannot last long. When a few years are come we shall be gone from the thorn and the briar which now prick and wound. Hence, too, if there is any work to be done for Jesus let us do it at once, or else we shall never do it, for when a few years are come we shall have gone whence we shall not return. Hence, too, if there be salvation to be sought let us seek it, for soon we shall be where salvation is no more proclaimed. Hence, again, if worldly goods are possessed by us let us hold them very loosely, for in a short time we must leave them. Let us lay them out for God’s glory, for our stewardship will not last for long, and we shall soon have to give an account. Hence, above all things, the need of being always prepared to die. Oh, brothers, he who is to die next had need be ready. Who is he? An old man who used to sell goods from house to house had an eccentric cry of his own, which he was wont to utter whenever he sold goods at the door. He would cry out aloud, “Who’ll be the next? Who’ll be the next?” One day a funeral passed just as he had given out his usual cry, and strange enough sounded the question—“Who’ll be the next?” I may ask with solemn emphasis whenever the cemetery’s gates are opened, and the funeral passes through, “Who will be the next? Who will be the next?” Your hymn says, “Who will be the next to follow Jesus?” but I must ask this morning, “Who will be the next among us to be carried to the silent tomb?” To be ready to depart is wisdom. It is the mark of the beast that it looks not beyond the present mouthful of grass which it crops from the sward. It never thinks of the butcher’s knife and the shambles. Be not as the brutes which perish, but, being gifted with minds, use them to look before you. It is the mark of the fool that he never looks before he leaps, but is content with present enjoyments though they leave him penniless. Be not as the fool, but be prudent and look before you, and consider your latter end. It is the mark of the worldling that he confines his thoughts within the narrow range of time: the Christian looks into the everlasting future as an immortal being should do. Be not worldlings, lest ye perish with them.

May God make you wise unto salvation! To be prepared to die is an immediate duty, will you neglect it? Some imagine that to be prepared to die

would involve a life of perpetual gloom. If it did so it were well to face it. When a man comes to die and finds himself prepared, even if he had endured fifty years of perpetual anguish of heart, and had denied himself every worldly comfort, he would think himself well paid to have the prospect of a blessed future. Heaven at any price is well secured. A good hope through grace is worth a thousand worlds. But it is a mistake to suppose that melancholy attends upon fitness to die. Why should it? To be unprepared for death, and to know that it may come at any moment, is a fair reason for sadness, but to have that great matter secure must surely be a source of joy. To be prepared to die is to be prepared to live; to be ready for eternity is in the best sense to be ready for time. Who so fit to live on earth as the man who is fit to live in heaven? Who hath brightness of the eye? Is it not the man who has looked within the gate of pearl, and seen his place prepared among the blessed? Who hath lightness of heart? Is it not the man who is unloaded of his sin, and has found mercy through the blood of Christ? Who can go to his bed and sleep in peace and wake with joy—who but the man that is reconciled to God by the death of his Son? Who hath the best of this world as well as the world to come? Is it not he to whom death has now become a changed thing, a cherub that has lost its way—no longer destruction, but rather development, and admission into a higher and nobler life? Since readiness for death is peace and happiness, and is above measure needful in prospect of the eternal state, let us see to it at once. We are to be gone so soon let us gird up our loins for our solemn journey. There is no time to spare. The end is drawing near. Every flying moment is hastening on our last hour. It is high time to awake out of sleep, and in earnest make ready to meet the Bridegroom, who is already on his way.

III. Now, thirdly, I want you to CONSIDER THE FACT THAT WE SHALL NOT RETURN—“ When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return.” To the occupations of life—to sow and reap, and mow; to the abodes of life—to the store and to the country house: to the pleasures of life,—the festival and the family, we shall not return. To the engagements of the sanctuary, the communion table, the pulpit, or the pew, we shall not return. To the chamber of love, to the hearth of affection, to the walk of friendship, we shall not return. To hopes and fears, and joys, and pains, we shall not return. To summer’s flowers and winter’s snows we shall not return. To our brothers, children, husband, or wife, we shall not return. To nothing that is done under the sun shall we return. Soul, unsaved soul, to the land of the gospel and the mercy seat thou shalt not return. If you die unsaved you will not be able to come back to the house of God to hear again the ministry of reconciliation. You will hear no more invitations and exhortations, neither will Jesus be set before you as your hope. You will not be able to come back to the prayer meeting and to the earnest entreaties of a godly mother and other loving friends, nor even back to your Bible and to the opportunity of

searching it that you may find eternal life. You will not return to find space for repentance, nor a second opportunity for prayer, nor another season for believing in Jesus. It shall be said concerning you, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Where the tree falleth there must it lie. Once pass the barriers of life unsaved, and ye cannot return to a new probation. The die is cast.

Beloved Christian friends, we need not wish to return. What is there here that should either tempt us to stay in this world or induce us to return to it if we could? Still, I could suppose in a future state some reasons for wishing to return. I can suppose we might have it in our hearts, for instance, to wish to undo the mischief which we did in life. If a dying man should receive mercy in his last moments, one might imagine him as desiring to return to earth to tell the glad tidings and beseech his family and friends to seek salvation. Who would not wish for once to plead with his children if he felt that he had neglected his duty to them. A man might wish, even if he were in the unquenchable flame, to come back to earth or to send a messenger, as the rich man did, to tell his brethren, lest they should come into the place of torment. Selfishness might wish to be spared the reproaches of those we helped to ruin. But you cannot come back or send back to undo your ill deeds. Therefore seek to mend matters now. Avoid the doing of evil, and as for that which is already done, confess it before God, and seek to administer the antidote by an earnest and godly life.

You cannot come back to carry out those good resolutions, which as yet are as unripe fruit. Young man, you mean to do good some day, do you not? You have it in your heart to lead a grand life. Well, you must do it now, for you cannot come back to revise your conduct. It will not be possible to correct and amend it, for death stereotypes all. After death you cannot return to develop your promises into performances. Therefore bestir yourself betimes. We shall not be able to come back to finish the work we have begun. The half-built house will never be completed by our labour. We have many projects which are but half developed, we had better proceed with them or they will never be completed. If we leave our ships on the stocks we shall not be able to return to launch them. When our lives below are at an end we have reached the finish of our earthly career.

Neither can we come back to rectify any mistake we have made in our life-work, nor even return to look after it, in order to preserve that which was good in it. I sometimes think if I were in heaven I should almost wish to visit my work at the Tabernacle, to see whether it will abide the test of time and prosper when I am gone. Will you keep to the truth? Will you hold to the grand old doctrines of the gospel? Or will this church, like so many others, go astray from the simplicity of its faith, and set up gaudy services and false doctrine? Methinks I should turn over in my grave if such a thing could be. God forbid it! But there will be no coming back, and therefore we must build

well, rejecting all wood, hay and stubble, using nothing but gold, silver, and precious stones. We must build quickly to get the work done, but fast as we labour we must do it surely and honestly and thoroughly, for the fire will try it when we are gone. It will be a pity that our work should suffer loss, even though we ourselves should be saved. We cannot return to save the burning mass, nor to rebuild the ruin, but we shall, doubtless, see and know what comes of it. "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Therefore, dear brother, if your hand findeth anything to do, do it at once with all your might. If your heart suggests anything that should be done, let it be done at once: see to the bringing up of your children, the conversion of your neighbours, the laying out of your talents for Christ, the consecration of your substance, the propagation of the precious truth which has been revealed to you. If a good work is to be done, do it! Do it, do it at once. The curfew of time is sounding. Your own vesper bell is ringing out, and these are the words which I set to its music—"What thou doest do quickly, for when a few years are come, thou must go whither thou wilt not return." Again I say, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

IV. And now, lastly, let us ENQUIRE WHITHER WE SHALL GO? In some respects it happeneth alike to all, for all go upon the long journey. All go to the grave, which is the place of all living. It matters very little where our grave shall be, whether beneath a weeping willow or in the solemn deeps: the best of all, I think, that can happen to any of us is to be laid where we shall quickly moulder into the common earth, that none may afterwards profane our bones; but if they do, what matters it? we shall know nothing of it, and precious in the sight of the Lord will our dust be, though it be trodden under foot or blown of the winds. We shall all die, and then we shall all pass into the disembodied state. But of what character shall my death be and where shall I spend the time of waiting? May I urge upon you to ask yourselves this question? May I press a second enquiry upon you? If at this very instant you were to leave your body where would your soul be? You may know very readily. Where does it delight to be now? I once visited an aged Christian woman who said to me when she was near death, "Sir, I do not think that God will appoint me my portion with the ungodly, for I could never bear their company; and I do hope I shall be among his people, though I am very unworthy, for I never was so happy as when I was with them." Yes, you will keep the same company for ever. The sheep shall be with the sheep, and the goats with the goats. Your delight prophesies your destiny. What you have chosen here shall be your portion hereafter. The scoffer, the drunkard, the liar, the unchaste shall be your comrades in hell if they were so here. If you love sin you shall be steeped up to the throat in it, and it shall burn around you like liquid fire. If you have loved the wages of unrighteousness, you shall receive them in full tale, for the wages of sin is death, and death shall rage about you and

gnaw you with his undying worm. But if your delights have been with your God, you shall dwell with him. If you have rejoiced in Christ Jesus, you shall reign with him, and if you have loved his people, you shall abide with them for ever. Your disembodied state shall be spent either with Christ and his people or with sin and sinners. If not in paradise with Jesus, you know where you must lie. Did not our Lord himself tell us of the great gulf which cannot be passed, and of the torment of those upon the other side. *You* may know it all before yon clock strikes again. Do think of it and tremble.

Then, as I have already stated, we shall all go forward in our journey towards resurrection. We shall, every one of us, stand in the latter day upon the earth. To the righteous this is the greatest joy. "I know that my next of kin still liveth, and though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Oh, blessed hope, it were worth while to die with this in prospect. A child of God who died not long ago said to one who stood by, "I have enjoyed more in the two hours I have been dying than in the fifty years that I was living. It is so blessed a thing to die, for I have a clear prospect of the resurrection. But, oh, to have no blessed resurrection before you, but instead thereof the certainty of rising to shame and to everlasting contempt; rising so that both body and soul may be cast into hell, till the tongue that now dares to curse will ask in vain for a drop of water to cool its burnings, and every limb shall be made to suffer because it yielded itself up to be an instrument of unrighteousness and of rebellion against God. Which shall your resurrection be—a blessing or a horror? God help you to decide. Yea, may the Holy Ghost so work upon your heart and will that you may lay hold on Jesus at once and find eternal life in him.

Speedily shall come the great and terrible scene of the judgment, when all that are in the earth and in the sea shall stand before the great white throne. What an assemblage! These mighty gatherings in the Tabernacle, and the crowds we hear of on great festival days, are but as a drop in a bucket compared with the innumerable hordes of men that shall spring up from their graves when the last trumpet soundeth. If you can think of anything, then, besides your Judge, you will cast your eye as far as you can see, and over hill and dale you will see myriads of our race. Men have been so numerous a host that they will cover every speck of earth; yea, and the sea itself shall yield for once a solid basis for them to stand upon, and all shall teem like a hive when the bees swarm around it, the world shall appear black with the multitude of men. And what a sight when the Assessor shall sit upon his throne, and he shall begin to divide them as the shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To the right! To the left! Blessed! Cursed! Come! Depart! Oh, the terror of that voice which shall pronounce a separate sentence upon each of the two great classes into which the population of earth shall then be divided. On which side would you be if now, instead of this poor voice saluting your

ears, there should suddenly be a transformation scene, and Christ should sit upon his throne, and you be there and I be there to be judged before him?

And then, after the judgment cometh the end, but what then? Do not flatter yourselves with the idea, ye ungodly, that ye shall be annihilated. You have chosen sin, you have deliberately rejected Christ, and if you continue to do so you have settled your own destiny, and settled it for ever. Look the danger in the face like honest men, and then escape from the wrath to come.

But if you believe in Jesus now, look your future in the face and rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh. See body and soul together, and both perfect, and Christ the Judge acquitting you, and saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world." Can you conceive your overflowing joy, your ecstatic delight? The presence of angels, the fellowship of perfect saints, the sight of your Saviour, near communion with your God, and all this for ever and for ever! Why, methinks it makes me willing to use my solemn text no longer as a dirge, but as a sonnet, and say right joyously, "When a few years are come, I shall go whence I shall not return, nor ever wish to return, but shall be for ever with the Lord." Amen, so let it be.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xc.

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