

ETERNAL LIFE WITHIN PRESENT GRASP

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**A SERMON
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*“Lay hold on eternal life.”
1 Timothy 6:12.*

*“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come,
that they may lay hold on eternal life.”
1 Timothy 6:19.*

“LAY hold on eternal life.” Observe that this precept is preceded by another—“Fight the good fight of faith.” Those who lay hold on eternal life will have to fight for it. The way of the spiritual life is no easy one; we shall have to contest every step of the way along which it leads us. “Contest the good contest of the faith” would be an accurate rendering of the passage and a contest it is against the world, the flesh, and the devil. If we live unto God we shall need to war a daily warfare, and tread down the powers of death and hell.

We fight the good fight by firm faith in the Lord our God, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith.” That fight is the fight of faith, fought for the faith, and by the faith. The article should be inserted, and then the words are—“Fight the good fight of *the* faith.” “Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” “Hold fast the form of sound words.” It is worth fighting for, even if we come to resistance unto blood. He who dies for the faith has laid down his life in a worthy cause, and he shall find it unto life eternal. We can only hope that we shall be able to live unto God by faith in Him, and faith in the great truths which He has revealed to be the object of our faith. When I say unto you, “Lay hold on eternal life,” do not imagine that this is to be done in a dream, or accomplished without awakening your utmost energies, nor even then without that divine assistance which only faith can receive.

As my text follows the command to “fight the good fight of the faith,” it teaches us that the best way of contending for the faith is, for ourselves personally to lay hold on eternal life. You cannot defend the faith by mere reasoning; victory does not come through an array of arguments which have been before used by men of learning; you must yourself possess the inward life, and exhibit the force and power of it in your daily conduct, if you would be successful in the holy war. Men who forget the divine life soon cast away the divine truth. If the life is not in us, we may make what profession of orthodoxy we like, but we shall, in all probability, before long, turn aside, like others, unto crooked ways. Well are the two commands joined together, “Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eternal life.” It reminds me of our Lord’s words, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

My brethren, *there is a higher and a better life than that which is known to the most of men.* There is an animal life which all possess; there is a mental life which lifts us up above the beasts, but there is another life as much above the mental life as the mental life is above the mere animal life. The bulk of men are not aware of this, and when they are told of it they do not believe the statement. Men whom they would believe upon any other subject, honest and true men, are, nevertheless, regarded as a sort of madmen when they begin to talk about a spiritual life. How should the carnal mind discern that which is spiritual? For it can only be spiritually discerned. But there is such a life, as many of us know assuredly, and this is the life eternal, which we are bidden to lay hold upon. The life of heaven is none other than the divine life which God’s grace imparts to believers here below; only it is developed and brought to perfection. There is no jerk to the believer in death; his line of life is unbroken. There is a change in his

condition, for he drops this mortal body and those tendencies to sin which cling to it, but the same life is in him, in the body or out of it, unclothed or clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. His life is the same day, only here it is the dawn, but in glory it is full moon. His life is one, and flows on like a river, widening and deepening until at last it swells into a sea of joyous, perfected life in heaven.

Dream not that any of you will ever obtain eternal life hereafter unless you receive it in this life. Unless you are partakers of it now, tremble for the consequences. Where death finds you eternity will leave you. Thus I read the Word of God, let others read as they may. The only laying hold on eternal life that can be practiced by us must be commenced now; it is now brought to light by Christ Jesus in the everlasting gospel, beware how you put it from you. Grip it now; lay hold of it now and hold on to it at all hazards. Do my expressions sound strange? Let me remind you of that exhortation of Holy Scripture—“Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light.” Once obtained, we may rest assured that this life will not be wrenched from us in the pangs of departure from the body, nor in the Day of Judgment, nor throughout eternity. “Lay hold on eternal life.” I would dwell upon this precept, entreating the aid of the Holy Spirit that I may speak of this true life in a living and true manner.

I. “Lay hold on eternal life,” that is, BELIEVE IN IT. You cannot lay hold on it unless you know it to be a reality. We do not lay hold on shadows, or fictions, or fancies, there must be something substantial and tangible for us to lay hold upon. It is needful, therefore, to begin by a realizing faith.

That we may believe in this life let me say that *Holy Scripture constantly describes men unrenewed by divine grace as being dead*; they are “dead in trespasses and sins.” They “shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them.” The natural life of fallen men, though it is cultivated to the highest degree, so that they become sages and philosophers, is nevertheless nothing better than death as compared with the inner life which is called eternal. The life which you possess today, if you are ungodly men, will be taken from you. How suddenly none of us can guess! In this very house we have lately had a solemn reminder of our mortality. But if God gives to you the new life, if there is infused into you the life divine, it is eternal, a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is the life of Christ in you, the sap of the undying vine flowing into the branches. Without this heavenly quickening you are dead while you live, and as the tendency of death is to corruption, you will grow more and more sinful. Men who are dead in trespasses and sins by and by proceed to a further stage, and frequently become so corrupt that society itself cries out, “Bury my dead out of my sight.” Without the quickening Spirit you will remain in spiritual death forever.

The Scripture represents believers everywhere as possessing everlasting life. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” Our death in sin has passed away when we have believed in Christ. That first look of the spiritual eye is sure proof that we possess within us the life of God, and henceforth we are so linked with Jesus that because He lives we shall live also. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.”

This life is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the heart. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” It is by the new life worked of the Spirit that we enter the kingdom. The infusion of the new life is the new birth, and the entrance into the kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, or, to use another expression, we are quickened and raised from among the dead. Beloved hearers, do you know this change by personal experience? I know that many here present have passed from death unto life, and I rejoice with them in Christ Jesus.

What a difference this quickening has made to those who have received it! What a marvelous life it is! It brings with it new perceptions, new emotions, new desires. It has new senses, there are new eyes, with which we see the invisible; new ears, with which we hear the voice of God, before inaudible. Then we have a new touch, with which we lay hold on divine truth; then we have a new taste, so that we “taste and see that the Lord is good.” This new life ushers us into a new world, and gives us new relationships and new privileges. The Lord Jesus, who makes all things new, sits upon the throne of the soul, and is the center of new power and rule. Do you know this life? Some of us confidently bear witness of this life, but what does this avail to dead men? There is no change that can be comparable to that which is worked in men when they are quickened by the infusion of the divine life; it is as though the dead left their graves, and much more than that. The new life is a life of reconciliation, the possessor of it is at

peace with God. We are no longer enemies, but friends of God; no longer heirs of wrath, but children of the Most High. The spirit of adoption within us cries, "Abba, Father." We delight ourselves in God, who becomes the spring of all our joys, the light of our delights. This delight in God draws us nearer and nearer to him in communion and fellowship, and this fellowship with God begets a new character in us like that of God. We are changed into the image of Him in whom we live, and with whom we have communion. The new life has about it a spirituality, an elevation, and a purity which are never found anywhere else. Under its power the man loves the things which are akin to the life of God, and he enters into sympathy with God. The spiritual life has instinctive aspirations after holiness, even as the old natural life has desires after evil. It has new pains and new passions; new joys and griefs. A heavenly fire burns upon the altar of the renewed soul which will utterly consume all that is contrary to holiness. As our God is a consuming fire, so is the life of God within the soul of man, ultimately it will destroy, by the spirit of burning, all the accumulated mass of original and acquired sinfulness. Much of smoke may blind our eyes, and make us weep during the process, but the end is beyond measure to be desired. Do we know this life? Does God live in us? And are our bodies, temples of the Holy Spirit? If not, since the Lord lives, we can never see His face till we live. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and only those that live unto Him in Christ Jesus can be in communion with Him.

I scarcely need to tell you that this life is one of high enjoyment. Truly it is a life of battle and of strife against the old death, but the life itself, is as peaceable as it is pure. The spiritual life has in it all the elements of heaven. There is a fullness of joy about it, inasmuch as it brings us into communion with the Ever-blessed One. On high days and holy days some of us have said, as a dear sister said to me last Thursday night, "I am happy as God Himself can make me." We can say, "God, my exceeding joy." The Lord's visits fill us with such calm content and overflowing peace that we rejoice with joy unspeakable. Those who know this happiness may truthfully be said *to live*, but those who know it not have missed "the life which is life indeed."

I want you all to get this idea into your heads—I mean all of you who have not learned this fact as yet, there is a life superior to that of common men—a life eternal, to be enjoyed now and here. I want this idea to become a practical force with you. Stephenson got the notion of a steam engine into his brain, and the steam engine soon became an actual fact with him. Palissy, the potter, had his mind full of his art, and for it he sacrificed everything till he gained his end, so may you, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lay hold upon eternal life as being a blessed possibility, and may you be moved to seek it! There is an eternal life, there is a life of God in the soul of man, and I trust that you will each one resolve, "If it is to be had I will have it." Henceforth direct your thoughts and desires this way. When the heart begins to value this life and to sigh after it, it is not far from the kingdom. The quickening Spirit is moving upon the soul when it begins to be restless in its fallen estate, and feels a hunger after higher things. Oh that the Lord Himself would convince you this morning that the life spiritual and eternal is no fancy of enthusiasts, but a literal fact, a matter worthy of your very best consideration! In this way you will begin to "lay hold on eternal life."

II. But this is not enough; it is merely the doorstep of the subject. "Lay hold on eternal life," that is to say, POSSESS IT. Get it into your soul; be yourself alive. What am I saying? My brethren, this eternal life must come to you before you will come to it. The Holy Spirit must breathe upon you, or you will remain in your natural death. Behold, He sends me to cry, "You dry bones, live!" and therefore I dare to speak as I have done. Apart from a divine commission I dare not speak thus to you.

How is eternal life grasped? Well, *it is laid hold of by faith in Jesus Christ*. It is a very simple thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet it is the only way of obtaining the eternal life. Jesus says, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" By faith we have done with self, and all the confidences that can ever grow out of self, and we rely upon the full atonement made by the Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, it is thus that we come to live. Faith and the new life go together, and can never be divided. God grant that we may all lay hold on eternal life by laying hold of God in Christ Jesus!

This life once laid hold upon *is exercised in holy acts*. From day to day we lay hold on eternal life by exercising ourselves unto godliness in deeds of holiness and loving-kindness. Let your life be love, for love is life. Let your life be one of prayer and praise, for these are the breath of the new life. We still live

the animal and mental life, but these must be the mere outer courts of our being; our innermost life must be spiritual, and be wholly consecrated to God. Henceforth let devotion be your breathing, faith your heartbeat, meditation your feeding, self-examination your washing, and holiness your walking. Let your best life be most thought of, and most exercised. Be not content to use your eyes, but practice your faith in God, neither be satisfied to exercise your limbs in moving your body, but in the power of the new life mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, walk without fainting. Lay hold on the eternal life by exercising it continually, and never allowing it to lie dormant.

In laying hold upon it, remember that it *is increased by growth*. Zealously grasp more and more of it. Do not be afraid of having too much spiritual life. Lay hold on it, for Christ has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. My brethren, we are none of us what we might be, let us reach after something higher. "To him that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance," let us not forget this encouraging word of our Lord. You that have much life have the promise of more. We may covet earnestly this heavenly treasure. We are quickened, but perhaps our life is sickly, let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, for He has healing beneath His wings. Let us lay hold of the fullest measures of eternal life, and go from strength to strength.

Remember that spiritual life is *enjoyed in the fullest sense in close communion with God*. "This is life eternal, to know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." "Acquaint now yourself with God, and be at peace." Do not think that those gates of heaven cut us off from God, for they are never shut, and we may enjoy daily fellowship with Him who reigns within. In heaven or on earth we are in the same Father's house, yes, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We are not in heaven yet, but heaven may be in us. Men do not yet say of us, "He is with God," but we know that God is with us. Let us endeavor now to enjoy the life eternal by abiding in the love of Christ. Then do we live indeed when He sups with us, and we with Him. He being raised from the dead dies no more, and we being raised with Him, live with Him, and for Him, and like Him. This Christ-life in us comes to the front and pushes back the lower order of things. We cry no longer, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "How shall we be clothed," but we cry, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" Oh, to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"!

III. Thirdly, "Lay hold on eternal life." That is, WATCH OVER IT, guard it, and protect it. Most men will preserve their lives at any cost. Unless they are drunk or mad, they will do anything for dear life, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." *Let every believer regard the life of God within him as being his most precious possession*, more valuable by far than the natural life. It would be wise to lay down a thousand natural lives, if we had them, in order to preserve the spiritual life. It is infinitely better to suffer than to sin, to lose property than purity. God has given us this priceless jewel; let us guard it as the apple of our eye. The other day we read in the newspapers of two persons in America being found dead from "starvation and cold," and we also read that each of these persons was possessed of a considerable sum of money. We say, "What fools!" Men with sums of money about their persons, or hidden away in their rooms, and yet suffering the ills of need till they actually die of hunger—what madness is this! Are those saner who injure and dwarf their spiritual life for the sake of intellectual pride, or carnal joy, or the esteem of men? Is not the spirit infinitely more precious than the body? Brethren, if we starve at all, let us starve our bodies, and not our spirits. If anything must be stunted, let it be the baser nature. Let us not live eagerly for this world, and languidly for the world to come. Having the Divine life within us, let us not neglect to feed it and supply its needs. Here is a man that gives up attendance at religious services in the week because he hungers to increase his business, he buys brass with gold. Another quits the place where he enjoys a gospel ministry to go at a larger salary to a place where his soul will be famished, he barter fine flour for husks. Another goes into all sorts of evil company, where he knows that his character is injured and his soul imperiled, and his excuse is that it pays. O sirs, is it so after all, that this eternal life which you profess to possess is of trifling value in your eyes? Then I protest before you that you do not possess it at all. How could you thus play the fool if the Lord had made you wise unto salvation? "Lay hold on eternal life," for this is the chief good, for the sake of which you may quit inferior things. "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteous-

ness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” First and foremost, guard beyond everything your life, your real life, wearing ever “the armor of light,” “the whole armor of God.” Here is a sinking ship, and none can escape but those who can swim. One man grasps a life belt and puts it about him. Sensible man! Another carefully makes up his gold into a girdle and binds it about his waist. Madman! He is treating himself as cruel wretches treat a dog that they sink into the water with a stone about him. This last individual is the portrait of professing Christians who will be rich, and thereby drown themselves in perdition and destruction. See the ninth verse of the chapter before us. Hold you first and foremost onto eternal life, and guard it with all your power, as being yourself, your all.

To that end the apostle bade Timothy *flee from those things which are detrimental to that life*. “You, O man of God, flee these things.” A man that is very careful of his life will not remain in a house where fever has been rife. He looks to the drains, and all other sanitary arrangements, and if these are hopelessly bad he quits the house. No measure of cheapness or convenience will make him risk his life. Have you heard of men in their senses who will hunt for dens of fever and cholera, and wantonly enter them? On the contrary, visitors are scared from a city or district by the mere rumor of cholera or other infectious disease. You who profess to be men of God must flee these things which are injurious to purity, to truth, to godliness, to communion with God, for these are detrimental to your best life.

Then the apostle tells Timothy to *seek after everything that would promote his eternal life*. He says, “Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness,” seek after that which will exercise and develop your highest life. Frequent those hills of holiness where the atmosphere is bracing for your new-born spirit. I notice how people who are sickly will leave their homes and journey far for health. Not only will they sojourn upon the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, but they will encounter the pitiless cold of the Alps in mid-winter at St. Maritz or Davoust in the hope of restoration. If physicians would only guarantee prolongation of life, men would immigrate to inhospitable Siberia or banish themselves to Greenland’s icy mountains. Men will do anything for life. Shall we not be eager to do all that we can to foster our spiritual life? Christian people, do nothing that will damage your heaven-born lives. Act in this according to the highest prudence.

God help us to lay hold on eternal life, and to that end *above all things lay hold on Christ!* We only live in Him, He is our life. To be divided from Christ is as surely death to us as it would be death to the body to be separated from the head. Make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of your existence, for without Him you can do nothing, nor even live. “This is the true God and eternal life.” To believe in Jesus is to live, to love Him much is to have life more abundantly. Cling to Jesus. Rest in the Lord, for He is our peace. Dwell on Calvary. Live between the first and second comings of the Lord. Lay hold on eternal life as a drowning man lays hold upon a mast, and will not relax his grasp. It is not a vain thing for you, for it is your life. “He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life,” let us therefore steadfastly abide in the Son of God, and so know that we have eternal life.

IV. But now, fourthly (and with the same brevity) “Lay hold on eternal life,” that is, FULFILL IT. Labor, that the time of your sojourning here shall be occupied, not with this poor, dying existence, but with the eternal life. *Fulfill the higher and the eternal life in every position of society.* The chapter opens with advice to servants, who then were slaves. Their earthly life was wretched indeed, but the apostle bids them live, not for this present life, but for the eternal life. Inasmuch as they could glorify God by continuing to bear the yoke, and would not glorify Him by rising in insurrection against their masters, he bade them remain in their position until better times might come. He would have them by divine grace fulfill the relationship in which they found themselves. Christianity is the deadly foe of slavery, but it took time to destroy it, and meanwhile believing slaves were bidden to glorify God in their station. And this is what the gospel says to every one of us: Honor your station by glorifying God in it. When the famous Spartan warrior Brasidas complained that Sparta was so small a state, his mother replied to him, “My son, Sparta has fallen to your lot, and it is your duty to adorn it.” Christian man, adorn the doctrine of God, your Savior, in all things. Wherever you are found endeavor in that place to live out eternal life. Be not so anxious to change your position as to use it for eternal purposes. Are you a preacher? Seek not popularity by pleasing the times, but seek honor by pleasing God. Are you a master? Seek not to use your position to please self, but to bless your day and generation. Are you a servant? Be not perpetually lamenting because of your hard work and scant wage, but let all men see what grace can do. The eternal

life should gild the lower life as the sun lights up the landscape. It is a sad pity when we let the lower life rise above us! Shall the horse ride the man? Shall the bullock drive the farmer? Let the position be bettered, if it may be, but if this cannot be improved, be you yourself, improved, and a greater thing is done. Live not for time, but for eternity. What if I am a servant, yet I am the Lord's freeman, let me live as such. What if I am poor, yet I am rich towards God, and let me enjoy my portion. Lay hold on eternal life all the more eagerly if in this temporal life you have little to lay hold on.

Fulfill this better life, also, by *leaving alone those questions which would swallow up the hour*. See how Paul destroys these devourers—"Questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself." He speaks in the end of the epistle of "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." We are overdone with these canker worms at this hour. Brethren, you can go and interfere in all the controversies of the day if you like, but beware of the consequences. You can be a party politician if you like, or you can be a man of culture, loving speculation better than revelation, if you think fit, but, if you take my advice, you will do nothing of the sort, but "lay hold on eternal life." I like that expression of Mr. Wesley's preachers, when they were asked to interfere in this or that political struggle, they replied, "Our work is to win souls, and we give ourselves to it." Oh that churches, would listen to this just now! They are going in for amusements, and the church is vying with the theater. Oh that we would lay hold on eternal life, and seek the salvation of men. Eternal life in our churches would soon cast out the rubbish which is now defiling them. Jesus in the churches would purify the temple of the puppets, as once He cleansed it of the traders. We need to receive anew this conviction, that our one great business here below is to lay hold on eternal life, first making our own calling and election sure, and then seeking to bring others to Christ. Other questions compared with this are mere debates as to tweedledum and tweedledee. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth until they break each other in their anger, but we strive only for the kingdom of heaven which lies not in trivial things. It is ours to lay hold upon eternal life, as for the rest the will of the Lord be done!

Further, the apostle bids us *do this so as to surmount the temptations of selfishness*. He warns us that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." He whose life's object is to accumulate money is not a Christian. No man can serve two masters, and if Mammon is his master Christ is not his Master. To prosper in business with the sincere desire of using everything for the honor and glory of God is laudable and proper, but to make this the end rather than the means is a horrible prostitution and debasement of our energies. To live for this world is to be dead to the world to come. The apostle bids us "lay hold on eternal life" rather than on this life; to gain riches of grace rather than riches of gold. Furthermore, he has a word for us if we become rich—for he supposes that such a thing may be, and that it did happen in his own day. He says—"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." As the alchemist was said to transmute brass and copper into gold (though he did no such thing), so there is a real alchemy which can sublime gold and silver into everlasting treasure. These talents are not to be despised, but put out to interest for the Lord. They can be laid by where no rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; they can be traded with in a heavenly market, and turned to everlasting gains. We can use them for helping on the work of the Lord, and by distribution to the poor and needy. I would that all men at this hour abounded in almsgiving, but specially those who are followers of the loving Jesus. Regard your transactions from the standpoint of eternity. Weigh what you do, not as it may be thought of by men of the world, but as it will be judged by yourself when you behold in the heavenly country the face of Him you love. I do not want you to have to say when you come to die, "I have had large possessions, but I have been a bad steward. I have had a competence, and I have wasted my Master's goods. All I have done with my wealth was to furnish my house well, perhaps to buy expensive pictures, and to allow myself luxuries which did me

more harm than good.” I hope, on the contrary, you will have to say, “I am saved by grace alone, but that grace enabled me to consecrate my substance, and put it to the best uses. I can render up my stewardship without fear. I did not live for the fleeting life which is now over, but for the life everlasting.” Brethren, some men spend so much upon themselves, and so little for the Lord, that they seem to me to eat the apple and give Christ the parings; they hoard up the flour and give the Lord a little of the bran. Happy man who can carry out in life what he has dared to say in song—

*“All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours;
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all.”*

The apostle means when he says, “lay hold on eternal life,” get beyond today and tomorrow, leap out of this month, and this year; live for the future, for eternity. Live not as insects that die in a day, but as men that live forever. This life is as a prick made on paper by a pin, it is too small a thing to compare with the everlasting future. The forever, whether of misery or bliss, dwarfs this life to nothing.

Once more, let me say, the apostle urges us to fulfill the higher life by sundry arguments. He says, “Whereunto you are also called.” Sovereign grace has called us to eternal life; we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God from among men, in order that we may live unto Him. We are bound to make eternal life our first and last consideration, for God has called us thereto. Be not false to the call. If you are a minister or deacon you have an official call. Be not unmindful of it, but live up to your high calling. The apostle adds, “And has professed a good profession before many witnesses.” Many of you did this in your baptism, when as believers you were buried with Christ “by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” In that sacred act you professed that the old nature was there and then to be regarded as buried and you would live for Christ and like Christ. Oh, be not false to your solemn vows, but lay hold on eternal life, and not upon the miserable wretchedness of the passing hour! Then the apostle sets before us the great example, “I charge you in the sight of God, who quickens all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment.” Christ sacrificed everything for us. He gave *Himself* for us. He laid hold on things eternal; as for anything here below, He let it slip by for our sakes. Eternity was always pressing upon the heart of Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Therefore, if you are a Christian, professing to follow Christ, lay hold on eternal life, and let this fill your grasp.

V. Last of all, and I have done, *EXPECT ETERNAL LIFE*. By the two hands of faith and hope lay hold on eternal life as the great reward of the righteous. Look for the crown of life which fades not away. The time comes when this mortal life shall be utterly swallowed up in eternal life. Let me suggest to you, my beloved brothers and sisters that we *think much about the life to come*. We shall soon be there in the endless home, let us send our thoughts there like couriers in advance. Let the harps of angels ring out their music to our listening ears; let the songs of the redeemed awaken us to unite with them in the praises of our Lord. You will soon be there; anticipate the joy. Put on your white robes by faith, and even if a little imagination should come to the aid of faith it will do no harm. Your heads will soon wear the crown—the crown which you will delight to cast at Jesus’ feet. Today you know the straits of poverty, but you are going where the streets are paved with transparent gold. You now know the aches and pains of this frail flesh, but you are going where perpetual youth and vigor shall cause all pain to flee away. You are passing quickly along the journey; think much of that journey’s end. Remember the rest which remains, the perfection which is promised, the victory which is secured, the communion which is provided, the glory which is dawning. “His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face.” Think much of your home; every good child will do so.

When you think of it and your heart grows warm with the thought; then *count it very near*. Suppose you are to live a comparatively long life, yet no human life is really long. Even to a young man, if he has to look forward to a grey old age, life is but a span. How brief it seems on looking back! When I re-

member the brother who died in yonder pew last Sunday, I can but feel how near heaven is to some among us. We have touched the celestial country; one brother has just leaped on shore. The other day, all of a sudden, I saw the white cliffs of Dover. The swift ship had performed the passage so rapidly that the sea had been crossed before I had reckoned on reaching land. There were the cliffs. Just ahead. Brethren, heaven is just ahead! Run to the bows! Heaven ahoy! Do not forever continue gazing at the misty shores behind you. Look ahead! You are far nearer than you think to the land of the immortal! We are within speaking distance of heaven! The Lord hears our cry, and we hear His promise—

*“How near to faith’s far-seeing eye
The golden gates appear!”*

In this way lay hold on eternal life by confident expectancy.

Rehearse eternal life! Rehearse the service and joy of heaven! They have rehearsals of fine pieces of music; let us have a rehearsal of heaven’s harmonies. The thing is practicable. We have often enjoyed rehearsals of temple music in this Tabernacle. In this pulpit I have been within half an inch of heaven, and I hope you know the same nearness in the pews. Let us begin the music here and now. Glorified saints praise the Lamb, let us praise Him; they worship the great God with transports of joy, let us worship with them. They find their all in Jesus; where else have we anything? Let our Sabbaths be each of them a foretaste of the Sabbath that shall have no end. Thus “lay hold on eternal life.”

“Ah!” says one, “I wish I were already in heaven.” Do not be in a hurry. The best expectancy is that which does with patience wait. Our esteemed brother, Mr. Lockhart, tells a story of one of his members, of the name of Carey—a royal name *that!* She was very sick and near to die, but she expressed a desire to live, at which he was somewhat astonished, for he knew her to be so well prepared to depart. She wished to stay here a while for a good and laudable reason. There was one thing which she could see here on earth, which she could not see in heaven, and she wished to remain here to see it again and again. “What is that?” Mr. Lockhart asked. “It is the tear of repentance on the sinner’s cheek; I want to see a great many more of those before I go home.” And so do I. O my unconverted hearers, I would willingly stay out of heaven to weep for you till you weep for sin. To see tears of repentance in all your eyes would be a heaven to me.

My brethren and sisters around me would be willing to wait also, even until Jesus comes, if we could, by our waiting, help to give you repentance. Tears of repentance bedewing the cheeks of sinners are the diamonds of angels and the jewels of saints. Oh, that my beloved helpers may see many drops of the dew of repentance this morning when they come round among you, and may Jesus see them, and speak peace to repenting hearts. Poor sinners! We would stay out of heaven for such as you, even as Jesus came out of heaven for such as you. Believe on the one appointed Savior, and enter into eternal life, and we will dwell in heaven together. The Lord grant it. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 TIMOTHY 6.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—885, 852, 229.**

My Sermon readers who from week to week learn what I have said to my congregation would greatly gratify me if they would take in my monthly magazine, “The Sword and the Trowel,” and so learn what is done, as well as what is said. I think they will be interested by this periodical, and I feel sure that this would lead to their lending a hand in those many holy enterprises in which I am engaged for my Lord’s sake. If I have helped you, dear readers, help me. Order the magazine, and see what those works are by which I try to show that the doctrine of the grace of God is not a fruitless thing.—C. H. S.

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