

THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED

NO. 721

A SERMON
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 BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”
1 Corinthians 15:26

OUR Savior stooped to the lowest depths of degradation, He shall be exalted to the topmost heights of glory. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”

Our Lord was trampled beneath the feet of all, but the day comes when all things shall be trampled beneath His feet. By so much as He descended, by so much shall He ascend, by the greatness of His sufferings may we judge of the unspeakable grandeur of His glory. Already sin lies beneath His feet, and Satan, like the old dragon bound, is there also. The systems of idolatry which were paramount in the days of His flesh, He has broken as with a rod of iron.

Where are the gods of Rome and Greece? Where are Jupiter, Diana, and Mercury? Let the moles and the bats reply. The colossal systems of idolatry which still dominate over the minds of men must yet come down. The truth as it is in Jesus must ere long prevail over those ancient dynasties of error, for Jesus our Lord must reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth.

In these last times, when sin in all its forms and Satan with all his craft shall be subdued, then death itself also, the unconquerable death, the insatiable devourer of the human race, who has swept them away as grass before the mower’s scythe—then shall death who has feared the face of none, but has laid armies prostrate in his wrath, be utterly destroyed.

He who is immortality and life shall bring death of death and destruction to the grave, and unto Him shall be songs of everlasting praise. Contemplate the glory of your Master, then, believer. From the base of the pyramid, deep in darkness, He rises to the summit which is high in glory, from the depths of the abyss of woe He leaps to the tops of the mountain of joy.

Anticipate His triumph by faith, for you shall partake in it. So surely as you share in His abasement, you shall also partake in His glory, and the more you shall become conformable unto Him in His sufferings, the more may you rest assured that you shall be partakers with Him in the glory which is to be revealed.

Come we now to the text itself. The text teaches us that death itself is at the last to be vanquished by Christ, nay, it is to be utterly destroyed by Him, so that it shall cease to be. In handling the text, there are four things which at once strike you. Here is *death an enemy*, but secondly, he is *the last enemy*. And thirdly, *he is an enemy to be destroyed*, but fourthly, *he is the last enemy that shall be destroyed*.

I. First then, you have in our banquet of this morning, as your first course, BITTER HERBS, wormwood mingled with gall, for you have death AN ENEMY.

It is not difficult to perceive in what respects death is an enemy. Consider him apart from the resurrection, apart from the glorious promises which spring up like sweet flowers sown by celestial hands upon the black soil of the tomb, and death is preeminently an enemy. Death is an enemy because *it is always repugnant to the nature of living creatures to die*. Flesh and blood cannot love death. God has wisely made self-preservation one of the first laws of our nature. It is an attribute of a living man to desire to prolong his life. “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life,” it is our dearest heritage.

To throw away life with the suicide is a crime, and to waste life in folly is no mean sin. We are bound to prize life. We must do so, it is one of the instincts of our humanity, and he were not greater but less than man who did not care to live. Death must always, then, by creatures that breathe, be looked upon as a foe.

Death may well be counted as a foe, because it entered into the world and became the master over the race of Adam through our worst enemy, viz., sin. It came not in accordance to the course of nature, but according to the course of evil. Death came not in by the door, but it climbed up some other way, and we may therefore rest assured that it is a thief and a robber.

It was not in the natural constitution of humanity that man should die, for the first man, Adam, was made a living soul. Eminent physiologists have said that they do not detect in the human system any particular reason why man should die at fourscore years. The same wheels which have gone on for twenty, thirty, forty years might have continued their revolutions for a hundred years, or even for centuries, so far as their own self-renewing power is concerned. There is no reason in man's body itself why it should inevitably return to the dust from which it was taken, or if there be now such a reason, it may be traceable to the disease which sin has brought into our constitution. But as originally formed, man might have been immortal—he *would* have been immortal.

In that garden, if the leaves had faded, *he* would not, and if the animals had died (and I suppose they would, for they certainly did die before Adam came into the world), yet there is no need that Adam should have died. He could have renewed his youth like the eagle and remained immortal amidst mortality, a king and priest forever, if God had so chosen it should be. Instead of which, through sin, though he be even now a priest, he must, like Aaron, go up to the top of the hill and put off his priestly garments and breathe out his life. Sin brought in death, and nothing that came in by sin can be man's friend. Death, the child of Sin, is the foe of man.

That the truth before us is most sure, some persons know by very bitter experience, for *it embitters their existence*. To some men this is the one drop of gall which has made their life bitter to them, the thought that they should die shades them with raven wings. By the fear of death they are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Like Uriah, the Hittite, they carry in their bosom the message which ordains their death, but unlike him, they know that it contains the fatal mandate.

Like cloth, which feeds the moth which devours it, their fears and forebodings feed the fatal worm. When their cups are sweetest they remember the dregs of death, and when their viands are the daintiest they think of the black servitor who will clear away the feast. They can enjoy nothing, because the darkness of death's shade lies across the landscape.

The ghost of death haunts them, the skeleton sits at their table, they are mournfully familiar with the shroud, the coffin, and the sepulcher, but they are familiar with these not as with friendly provisions for a good night's rest, but as the cruel ensigns of a dreaded foe. This makes death an enemy with emphasis, when our fears enable him thus to spoil our life. When death rides his pale horse roughshod over all terrestrial joys, he makes us feel that it is a poor thing to live because the thread of life is so soon to be cut, a miserable thing even to flourish, because we only flourish like the green herb, and like the green herb, are cut down and cast into the oven.

Many others have found death to be their foe, not so much because they themselves have been depressed by the thought, but because *the great enemy has made fearful breaches in their daily comforts*. O ye mourners! your somber garments tell me that your family circle has been broken into, time after time, by this ruthless destroyer. The widow has lost her comfort and her stay. The children have been left desolate and fatherless.

O death! you are the cruel enemy of our hearths and homes. The youthful spirit has lost half itself when the beloved one has been rent away, and men have seemed like maimed souls when the best half of their hearts has been snatched from them. Hope looked not forth at the window because the mourners went about the streets. Joy drank no more from her crystal cup, for the golden bowl was broken, and the wheel was broken at the cistern, and all the daughters of music were brought low.

How often have the unseen arrows of death afflicted our household, and smitten at our feet those whom we least could spare. The green have been taken as well as the ripe, death has cut down the father's hope and the mother's joy, and worse than this, he has pitilessly rent away from the house its strongest pillar and torn out of the wall the corner stone. Death has no bowels of compassion. His flinty heart feels for none. He spares neither young nor old. Tears cannot keep our friends for us, nor can our sighs and prayers reanimate their dust. He is an enemy indeed, and the very thought of his cruel frauds upon our love makes us weep.

He is an enemy to us in that *he has taken away from us One who is dearer to us than all others*. Death has even made a prey of Him who is immortality and life. On yonder cross behold death's most dreadful work. Could it not spare *Him*? Were there not enough of us? Why should it smite our David, who was worth ten thousand of us? Did it not suffice that we, the common men who had been tainted by sin, should fall by a doom that was justly due to our sin. But must the virgin-born, in whom there was no sin—the immaculate Savior—must He die?

Yes, death's vengeance was not satisfied till out of his quiver had been drawn the fatal arrow which should pierce the heart of the Son of God. Behold He dies! Those eyes that wept over Jerusalem are glazed in death's deepest darkness. Those hands that scattered blessings hang as inanimate clay by that bloodstained but lifeless side. The body must be wrapped in spices and fine linen, and laid within the silent tomb.

Weep, heaven! mourn, earth! for your King is dead, the Prince of life and glory is a prisoner in the tomb. Death, all-conquering tyrant, you are an enemy indeed, for you have slain and led our dearest one into your gloomy cell.

We may more fully perceive death's enmity in *our own persons*. He is an enemy to us because very soon *he will bear us away from all our prized possessions*. "These things," said one, as he walked through fine gardens and looked upon lawns, and parks, and mansions—"these things make it hard to die." To leave the fair goods and gains of earth, and to return into the womb of mother earth as naked as first we came forth from it, to have the crown taken from the head, and the ermine from the shoulder, and to be brought down to the same level as the poorest beggar who slept upon a dunghill, is no small thing.

Dives must be unwrapped of his scarlet, and if he shall find a tomb he shall be no more honored than Lazarus, though Lazarus should die unburied. Death is an enemy to man, because though he may store up his goods and build his barns and make them greater, yet it is death who saith, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

Death makes wealth a dream, it turns misers' gain to loss, and laughs a hoarse laugh at toiling slaves who load themselves with yellow dust. When the rich man has made his fortune, he wins six foot of earth and nothing more and what less has he who died a pauper?

Death is an enemy to Christians too because *it carries them away from choice society*. We have often said—

***“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this.”***

We love the saints, the people of God are our company, and with our brethren we walk to His house, who are our familiar companions, and alas, we are to be taken away from them. Nor is this all, we are to be parted from those who are nearer still, the wife of our bosom and the children of our care. Yes, we must bid farewell to every loved one, and go our way to the land from which no traveler returns, banished from the militant host of God and from the happy homes of men.

Death is an enemy because it breaks up all our *enjoyments*. No cheerful peals of Sabbath bells again for us, no going up to the much-loved sanctuary where the holy hymn has often borne us aloft as on eagle's wings, no more listening to the teachings of the Christian ministry, when Boanerges has aroused us and Barnabas has consoled us, until the desert of our life has blossomed like a rose. No mingling in

communion around the Master's table, no more drinking of the cup and eating of the bread which symbolizes the Master's sufferings, at death's door we bid farewell to all Sabbath enjoyment and sanctuary joys.

Oh you enemy, you do compel us to give a long, a last farewell to all our *employments*. The earnest and successful minister must leave the flock, perhaps to be scattered or torn by grievous wolves. Just when it seemed as if his life were most necessary the leader falls, and like a band of freshly enlisted young recruits who lose the warrior whose skill had led them on to victory, they are scattered when he seemed necessary to make them one, and lead them on to conquest.

She who was training up her children in God's fear sleeps in the grave when the children need her most, and he who spoke for Christ, or who was a pillar in the house of God, who served his day and generation—he too must fall asleep—no more to feed the hungry, or to clothe the naked, or to teach the ignorant, or comfort the feeble-minded. He is gone from the vineyard of the church that needed him to trim the vines, and from the house of God which needed him as a wise master builder to edify it to perfection. Who but an enemy could have taken him away at such a moment and from such engagements?

He is gone too, dear friends, from all the *success of life*, and herein has death been his bitter enemy. He is gone from hearing the cries of penitent sinners, the true success of God's ministers, gone from leading pilgrims to the cross, and hearing their songs of joy.

Great-heart has led many a caravan of pilgrims to the Celestial City, but now he himself must cross the Jordan. It little avails him that he has fought with Giant Despair and brought him to his knees, it boots but little that he slew old Giant Grim, who would have forced Christiana and the children to go back. Hero as he has been, the floods must still roll over his head, of that black and bitter stream he too must drink, and that too very probably when God had honored him most, and favored him with the prospect of yet greater success.

So, brethren and sisters, it may be with you, when you are most diligent in business, most fervent in spirit, and serving the Lord with the greatest joy, when your sheaves are heavy and you are shouting the Harvest Home, it may be then that this unwelcome enemy will hasten you from the field of your triumph to leave to others the work you loved so well.

Nor is this all. This enemy is peculiarly so to us, because *we are accustomed to surround the thought of his coming with many pains*, with many infirmities, and above all, since the decay, corruption, and utter dissolution of the body is in itself a most terrible thing, we are alarmed at the prospect of it. The pains and groans and dying strife drive us back from the grave's brink, and make us long to linger in our prison and our clay. We fear to pass through the gate of iron because of the grim porters of pain and sickness who sit before the gate.

Certainly to some it is hard work to die. While life is still vigorous it will not yield its dominion without a struggle. In other cases where old age has gradually smoothed the pathway, we have known many of our brethren and sisters sleep themselves into a better land, and none could tell when they passed the mysterious line which divides the realm of life from the domain of death.

It is not always that death is escorted by bodily griefs, but so often does he come with clouds and darkness round about him that men at the first glance conclude from his hostile array that he is no friend of theirs. He is an enemy, nay, *the enemy*, the very worst enemy that our fears could conjure up, for we could fight with Satan and overcome him, but who can overcome death?

We can master sin through the precious blood of Jesus, and can be more than a conqueror over all our fear, but we must bow before the iron specter of this grim tyrant, to the dust we must descend, and amidst the tombs we all must sleep (unless, indeed, unless the Lord should speedily come), for it is appointed unto men once to die.

II. Having said enough upon this topic we shall now take away the dish of bitter herbs, and bring forth *a little salt* while we speak upon the second point, viz., that, though death be an enemy, IT IS THE LAST ENEMY.

I say salt, because it is not altogether sweet, there is a pungency as well as a savor here. It is the last enemy—what if I say it is the dreaded reserve of the army of hell. When Satan shall have brought up every other adversary, and all these shall have been overcome through the blood of the Lamb, then the last, the bodyguard of hell, under the command of the King of Terrors, the strongest, the fiercest, the most terrible of foes, shall assail us!

It has been the custom of some great commanders to keep a body of picked men in reserve to make the final assault. Just when battalion after battalion have been swept away, and the main army reels, just when the victory is almost in the enemy's hands, the all but defeated commander pours his mightiest legions upon the foe, uncovers all his batteries and makes one terrible and final charge with the old guard that never has been beaten, and never can surrender, and then perhaps at the last moment he snatches triumph from between the foeman's teeth.

Ah, Christian, the last charge may be the worst you have ever known, you may find in your last moments that you will have need of all your strength and more, you will be constrained to cry to the Strong for strength, you will have to plead for heavenly reinforcements to succor you in that last article. Let no man conclude himself at the close of the war till he is within the pearly gate, for if there be but another five minutes to live, Satan will, if possible, avail himself of it. The enemy may come in like a flood precisely at that flattering moment when you hoped to dwell in the land Beulah, and to be lulled to rest by soft strains from the celestial choirs.

It is not always so, it is not often so, for, "at eventide there shall be light" is usually the experience of the Christian. But it is so sometimes, it has been notably so with those whose previous life has been very peaceful, a calm day has ended with a stormy evening, and a bright sun has set amid dark clouds. Some of those whose candle never went out before have been put to bed in the dark.

The soldiers of the cross have been pursued by the foe up to the city walls, as if the Lord had said to His soldier, "There are more laurels yet to win, behold I give you another opportunity of glorifying My name among My militant people."

Brethren, if death be the *last* enemy, I do not think we have to fight with him now. We have other enemies who claim our valor and our watchfulness today. We need not be taken up with devising plans of present defense against an enemy that does not yet assail us. The present business of life, the present service of God and of His cause are our main concern, and in attending to these we shall best, as Christians, be found prepared to die. To live well is the way to die well. Death is not our first foe but the last. Let us then fight our adversaries in order, and overcome them each in its turn, hoping that He who has been with us even until now will be with us until the end.

Notice, dear friends—for here lies the savor of the thought—it is the last enemy. Picture in your mind's eye our brave soldiers at the battle of Waterloo. For many weary hours they had been face to face with the foe. The fight had lasted so long and been so frequently renewed that they seemed to have encountered successive armies, and to have fought a dozen battles. Charge after charge had they borne like walls of stone. Imagine then that the commander is able to announce that they have only to endure one more onslaught of the foe.

How cheerfully do the ranks close! How gallantly are the squares formed! How firmly their feet are planted! "Now," say they, "let us stand like a wall of rock. Let no man shrink for a moment, for it is the last the enemy can do. He will do his worst, but soon he will be able to do no more but sound to boot and saddle, and leave the field to us."

The last enemy! Soldiers of Christ, do not the words animate you? Courage, Christian, courage, the tide *must* turn after this, it is the highest wave that now dashes over you. Courage, man, the night must close, you have come to its darkest hour, the day star already dawns!

Now that you are dying you begin to live. The last enemy conquered! Does it not bring tears to your eyes to think of bearing your last temptation? Little care we who the foe may be, if he be but conquered and be but the last, for have we not been perplexed with a succession of enemies? We have only conquered one foe to find another waiting for us. Our path has been hitherto from temptation to

temptation, from trial to trial, from tribulation to tribulation. We are growing weary, we cannot forever bear wave upon wave, grief upon grief, and temptation upon temptation. Like the warrior of old, our arm grows weary, but our hand (glory be to divine grace!) cleaves to our sword. We are faint, yet pursuing, but what good news when we shall hear that the present enemy is the last! Though it is death, we will rejoice!

O Christian, there will be no more poverty to tempt you to murmur, no more losses and crosses to cast your spirit down, no more inbred sins to mar your devotion, and to spoil the glory of your faith, no outward temptation, no sinners with their trifling talk to vex your ears, no blasphemies to torment your soul, no more aches and pains of body, no more tortures and troubles of spirit! The dog of hell will be silenced forever, there will be no more Canaanites to drive out of the land, the race of Amalek shall be utterly destroyed.

And where will you be? In the land that flows with milk and honey, in the home of peace and the abode of rapture—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God, eternally shut in.”*

Well may you welcome death! Let him come in his chariot of fire, he bears you to Elijah’s God! Let him lay hold of the shield and buckler, and frown upon you like a king of fierce speech and terrible countenance, he carries you not *into* captivity, but delivers you out of bondage. At his coming your sky may be darkened, the thunders may roll, and the solid pillars of your house may be shaken, but it is the last commotion, and is therefore the token of everlasting rest.

Having overcome death, peace is proclaimed, the sword is sheathed, the banners furled, and you are forever more than a conqueror through Him that loved you.

III. Having come so far, we may now proceed another step. Death is an enemy, the last enemy—HE IS AN ENEMY TO BE DESTROYED.

Here I take away the salt and bring *the milk and honey*, for surely here is much of exquisite sweetness and of true spiritual food to the child of God. Death is the last enemy to be destroyed. The destruction of death will be perfectly achieved at the resurrection, for then death’s castle, the tomb, will be demolished and not so much as one stone left upon another.

All death’s captives must go free, not a bone of the saints shall be kept as a trophy by the arch foe. Not so much as a particle of their dust shall he be able to show as a spoil which he has been able to preserve. He must disgorge the whole that he has fed upon. He must pay back all that he has stolen, the prey shall be taken from the mighty and the lawful captive shall be delivered. From the land and from the sea, those that were lately dead, and those that centuries ago had moldered into dust shall rise.

The quickening trumpet shall achieve a work as great as the creation. The voice of God which said, “Let there be light” and there was light, shall say, “Let there be life,” and there shall be life, and as in the valley of vision, bone shall come to bone, and the flesh shall come upon them, and life shall come into them, and they shall live.

The same bodies shall arise, the same for identity, but not the same for quality! The same, but oh, how changed! They were the shriveled seed when death sowed them in the earth, they shall be the fully developed flower when resurrection’s springtime shall bid them blossom from the dust. They were battered and time-worn when he dragged them to his den, they shall come forth with the dew of their youth upon them when Christ shall give them life.

Oh the sweet gains of death! “It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.” Oh the interest which we shall win from that arch usurer who thought to claim both principal and interest! “It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power,” it is sown a natural body, it is raised a heavenly and spiritual body.

O death! you are no gainer by us, but we shall be mighty gainers by you, for though this poor body shall become worms’ meat, and through and through and through this mortal frame decay shall drive its

tunnels and make its solemn ways, though back to dust, eye and arm and hand and brain must molder, yet not lost, nor in any degree injured, shall the whole fabric be. But as if it were filtered, purified by the grave, the fair body shall emerge again. The grave shall be to the believer's body as the bath of spices in which Esther bathed herself to make herself ready to behold the great King.

Corruption, earth, and worms do but refine this flesh, and make it pure according to God's will, until we shall put it on afresh at His bidding. We throw aside a workday dress, all torn, and crumpled and dusty. We are glad to put it off, glad that evening time has come, and that it is time to undress. But when we awake, we shall find instead of that worn-out vesture, a noble change of raiment. The same dress will be there, but marvelously changed—the great Fuller shall have exercised His art upon it, and made it like the array which Moses and Elias wore on Tabor.

How goodly will our royal robes be, how dressed with pearls, how stiff with threads of gold, and studs of silver, how fitted for God's priests and kings, how meet for those who shall enter the pearly gates, and tread the golden streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, how meet for those that shall walk in the golden light of the city that has foundations, whose maker and builder is God!

Death is thus to be destroyed by the resurrection of the body, when our Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, a resurrection which shall prove to assembled worlds that to those who are in Christ Jesus, "to die *is* gain."

But dear friends, although this is a great truth with regard to the future, I desire to conduct your minds for a few minutes over the road by which Christ has, in effect, virtually destroyed death already. In the first place, *He has taken away the shame of death*. It was once a shameful thing to die. A man might hold his head low in the presence of angels who could not die, for he might remember with shame that he is the brother of the worm and corruption is his sister. But now we can talk of death in the presence of archangels and not be ashamed, for Jesus died.

It is henceforth no degradation to man to die, to sleep in the bed where Christ reposed, It is an honor, and angels may almost regret that they have not the ability in this respect to be made like unto the angels' Lord. Oh, Christian, you need not speak of death with bated breath, but rather rejoice that you have fellowship with Jesus in His tomb, and shall have fellowship with Him as one of the children of the resurrection.

Christ has, moreover, taken away the *sting of death*. The sting of death lay in this, that we had sinned and were summoned to appear before the God whom we had offended. This is the sting of death to you unconverted ones, not that you are dying, but that after death is the judgment, and that you must stand before the Judge of quick and dead to receive a sentence for the sins which you have committed in your body against Him. This makes it death to die. This hangs the dying bed with black curtains, and puts out the light of the sick chamber, the second death makes death to be death indeed, but—

*"If sin be pardon'd I'm secure,
Death has no sting beside;
The law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my ransom, died."*

Christmas Evans represents the monster death as being so intent to destroy our Lord that it drove the dart in its tail right through the Savior, till it stuck in the cross on the other side, and the monster has never been able to draw it out again. Christ on the cross took away the sting of death, so that he has no further power to hurt the Christian. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our divine Lord has taken away from sin *its slavery*. The bondage of death arises from man's fearing to die. Death has fitted fetters upon many a man's wrists, and fixed an iron collar on his neck, and driven him with his whip about the world, but Jesus has taken away the yoke of death from the necks of His disciples. The Christian is not afraid to die. He looks forward to it sometimes with equanimity, and

frequently even with expectation. Hundreds of saints have been able to speak of dying as though it were but everyday work, and there have been hundreds more who have looked forward to their last day with as much delight as the bride hopes for the wedding. Was not our song which we sung just now a truthful one?

*“Sweet truth to me!
I shall arise,
And with these eyes
My Savior see.”*

It was to some of us at any rate, and we are still desirous to sing it, longing for that time when death shall come, and we shall enter into the joy of our Lord.

Moreover, Christ has abolished death by removing its greatest *sorrows*. I told you that death snatched us away from the society of those we loved on earth. It is true, but it introduces us into nobler society far. We leave the imperfect church on earth, but we claim membership with the perfect church in heaven. The church militant must know us no more, but of the church triumphant we shall be happy members.

We may not see time-honored men on earth who now serve Christ in the ministry, but we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the noble army of martyrs, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the glorious company of the apostles. We shall be no losers, certainly in the matter of society, but great gainers when we are introduced to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

I said that we should be taken away from enjoyments. I spoke of Sabbath bells that would ring no longer, of communion tables at which we could not sit, and songs of holy mirth in which we could not join—ah! it is small loss compared with the gain unspeakable, for we shall hear the bells of heaven ring out an unending Sabbath, we shall join the songs that never have a pause, and which know no discord, we shall sit at the banqueting table where the King Himself is present, where the symbols and the signs have vanished because the guests have found the substance, and the King eternal and immortal is visibly in their presence.

Beloved, we leave the desert to lie down in green pastures. We leave the scanty rills to bathe in the bottomless river of joy, we leave the wells of Elim for the land which flows with milk and honey. Did I speak of leaving possessions? What are the possessions? Moth-eaten garments, cankered gold and silver, things that rust consumes and that thieves destroy. But we go to the land where nothing corrupts or decays, where flowers fade not, and riches take not to themselves wings to fly away. Loss! Let the word be banished! Death gives us infinitely more than he takes away.

I spoke of death as an enemy because he took us from sacred employments. It is so, but does he not usher us into nobler employments far? To stand before that throne upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, to bow within the presence-chamber of the King of kings, gazing into the glory that excels, and to see the King in His beauty, the man that once was slain, wearing many crowns and arrayed in the vesture of His glory, His wounds like sparkling jewels still visible above.

Oh to cast our crowns at His feet, to lie there and shrink into nothing before the Eternal All, to fly into Jesu’s bosom, to behold the beauty of His love, and to taste the kisses of His mouth, to be in paradise, swallowed up in unutterable joy because taken into the closest, fullest, nearest communion with Himself, would not your soul burst from the body even now to obtain this rapture? Cannot you say—

*“I’d part with all the joys of sense
To gaze upon Thy throne,
Pleasure springs fresh for ever thence,
Unspeakable, unknown.”*

If death does but give us a sight of Jesus and makes it our employment forever to sing His praise, and forever to learn His character, forever to lie in His bosom, then let him come when he wills, we will scarcely call you enemy again. An enemy destroyed in this case becomes a friend. The sting is taken away from you, you hornet, and you become a bee to gather sweet honey for us. The lion is slain, and like Samson we go forth to gather handfuls of sweetness.

I shall not tarry longer, though greatly tempted, except to say this one thing more, the fear of death which arises from the prospect of pain and grief is also taken away by Christ when He reminds us that He will be with us in our last moments. He will make the dying bed feel soft, and in the midst of the river He will say, "Fear not, I am with thee." So that in all respects death is to be destroyed.

IV. Time warns us to clear the tables and send home the guests, with the fourth consideration, **THAT DEATH IS THE LAST ENEMY THAT WILL BE DESTROYED.**

Do not therefore give yourself so much concern if you do not feel death to be destroyed in you at present. Supposing that it does cause you pain and fear, remember that dying grace would be of no value to you in living moments. Expect that if your faith is not faith enough to die with, yet if it be faith as a grain of mustard seed it will grow, and growing, it will, into a more developed state enable you to die triumphantly when dying time comes.

When I looked at the Book of Martyrs and noticed the fearful pictures of Saints in their dying agonies, I asked myself, "Could I bear all that for Christ?" and I was compelled to say, "No, I know I could not as I now am." But suppose I were called to martyrdom should I bear it? and I thought I could say without presumption I could, for Christ would give me grace when grace was needed.

Now, death is to be destroyed, but not till the last. You have many enemies who are not destroyed, yet you have inbred sins unslain. Look well to them. Until they are all gone you must not expect death to be destroyed, for he is the last to die.

So then, friend, let me whisper in your ear, expect to lose your dear ones still, for death is not destroyed. Look not upon any of your friends as though they would be with you tomorrow, for death is not destroyed yet. See you the word "mortal" written upon all our brows. The most unlikely ones die first.

When I heard during this week of several cases of dear friends who have gone to their reward, I could have sooner believed it had been others, but God has been pleased to take from us and from our connection many whom we supposed to be what are called good lives, and they were good lives in the best sense, and that is why the Master took them. They were ripe, and He took them home, but we could not see that.

Now, remember that all your friends, your wife, your husband, your child, your kinsfolk, are all mortal. That makes you sad. Well, it may prevent your being more sad when they are taken away. Hold them with a loose hand, do not count that to be freehold which you have only received as a leasehold. Do not call that yours which is only lent you, for if you get a thing lent you and it is asked for back, you give it back freely, but if you entertain the notion that it was given you, you do not like to yield it up.

Now, remember, the enemy is not destroyed, and that he will make inroads into our family circle still. And then remember that you too must die. Bring yourself frequently face to face with this truth, that you must die. Do not forget it, Christian friend. No man knows whether his faith is good for anything or not if he does not frequently try that faith by bringing himself right to the edge of the grave.

Picture yourself dying, conceive yourself breathing out your last breath, and see whether then you can look at death without quaking, whether you can feel, "Yes, I have rested upon Jesus, I am saved, I will go through death's tremendous vale with His presence as my stay, fearing no evil."

If you have no good hope, may God give you grace at this moment to fly to Jesus, and to trust in Him, and when you have trusted in Him death will be to you a destroyed enemy. May God grant His blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 COR. 15:1-32, 50-58

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.