

THE WAY EVERLASTING

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Lead me in the way everlasting.”
Psalm 139:24.

WE must all of us have a “way.” We must be journeying, for this is not our resting place; we cannot abide in any one stay. “Forward” is the word of command. As the round earth never pauses, but perpetually revolves; as the stars never halt in their course, but traverse incessantly their ordained orbits; as the rivers evermore seek the sea; as the ocean waves unrestingly pursue each other, even so feel we the common motion, and always must we move onward, onward through this life unto the next—onward forever and ever. Since we must have a way, it is of the highest importance that our way should be a right one. Important because if it is not right, we shall not long be happy in our course since the happiness of those who follow the path of evil is fleeting as a meteor, mocking as a will-o’-the-wisp, deceptive as the mirage, frail as a bubble on the wave, and unsubstantial as a phantom of the night. Today the path of sin leads us through flowery meads and groves resounding with song of birds, but tomorrow it will wind among the desolations of many generations where souls and all their joys are withered as the green herb in the summer sun. The ways of righteousness are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. The good is growing, and the pleasure deepening where the wise in heart are walking, but nowhere else. We have need, then, to find the right way, that we may be happy pilgrims along it.

We also have need of the right way because whatever the way we pursue, others will be affected by it. Little ones who gather around our knees will think, “father’s way” must be the way for them; servants, neighbors, brothers, sisters, and if we are very young, playmates and school fellows under our influence; any or all of these will be affected for good or evil by our choices. Our following the wrong way will lead them to the wrong, and we shall become a ministry of evil unto them if we choose evil unto ourselves.

Still more important is it that we should choose the right way because of the right end. “All’s well that ends well.” But what if the way is such that it must end amiss must lead to the blackness of darkness forever; must land us “where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched”? Oh, then it will be terrible to have been found in such a way! Terrible for our souls to meet such a doom! May it be yours, my dear hearers, to be led early in life through the gate of faith in Jesus which leads into the straight and narrow way of eternal life! May it be yours to be kept in that way, your faith confirmed by following in it; may it be yours to be found in that way when the summons shall come from the Master to render up your account; may it be yours to win, through divine grace, the sure results of perseverance in the way of holiness by reaching that blessed end that has no end—the joy of the blessed in the land of the hereafter at the right hand of the Most High!

We shall take the text as a prayer, and point out to you three things in it which strike us as being somewhat remarkable. The first is *a remarkable attribute of the right way*—it is said to be “everlasting”; secondly, *a remarkable confession* implied in the language here employed; and then, thirdly, *the remarkably comprehensive prayer* contained in the words before us.

I. First, then, A REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTE OF THE RIGHT WAY—IT IS “THE WAY EVERLASTING.”

It is most certain that the way of many men cannot be everlasting. *The way of the sinful is not so.* I hope, with regard to some, that their way will last but for a very little time, for it is the way of evil; may they soon turn from it! “It is a long lane that has no turning.” May their road be so hedged up by God’s providence and grace, that they may be compelled to take another road; may their prayer be unto God,

“turn me and I shall be turned.” The way of the sinner ought not to be a way everlasting, for if it should be, it must be a way of everlasting sorrow! The sinner’s way of pleasure is far from being everlasting, for even here the wine cup of sin first yields the sweetness of intoxication, but afterwards it becomes dull with emptiness, and after that it grows bitter with remorse, and as for the dregs, what a hell burns within them! The way of pleasure in sin is but as the way of foam on the breaker, soon to disappear. The devil would gladly persuade men that their life shall always be as it is, that they shall dance on forever; forever as the merry butterflies that need not toil, and that flit away the golden hours; he would have them forget the killing frosts that will blight forever each idle wing. death and the justice of God have decreed that the way of pleasure, and the life of sin shall not be everlasting; an end must surely come to the houses of cards built on carnal merriment; their bowing walls must lie level with the dust; their tottering fences must fall down to the ground.

The way of the merely moral man is not a way everlasting. It may be that he is one who steadily pursues money, conducting his business on the best principles, commanding the fullest confidence of the mercantile community, and the admiration of all who can appreciate tact and principle. The man may manage to acquire wealth, it may grow from day to day—his account may be large at the bank, his capital may be ample and the stream of interest that flows in may, every day, be more considerable; but this will not always last; there may come disaster and loss, and that which was long in accumulation may very swiftly be swept away. At any rate, death will put an end to the filling of the money bags! Like Jesus in the temple, death will enter, and overturn the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them who sell doves—and with a voice of authority He will cry, “Take these things out!” Men will find that they cannot barter and bargain that they cannot accumulate and grow rich when the time has come to lay aside their mortal bodies, and face the Judge of all the earth! These things of time, however dear to them, those who are summoned to the land of spirits must leave; bitter the parting, but it is inevitable; naked came they forth, and naked must they return; let them have gained what they may. It may be that the man, instead of making money, finds it difficult to make ends meet, and his way is that of plodding hard and industriously to rear a family as respectably as he can. This has in it much to be commended, but even then, unsanctified by nobler ends, it is not a way everlasting, for there is a land where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, and where, consequently, there shall be no wife nor children for whom to toil, and no avocation for the worker who lived by bread alone. There will be no sphere for the mere servant of men, or master of men to occupy in heaven; the mere earth-server will be out of place—his way must come to an end! The arm must be paralyzed that earned the bread, and the fingers that drove the pen or wielded the needle must rest in long repose; and when they are reanimated at the resurrection, they cannot pursue their old toil; if they know nothing but the handicraft of earth, their way will have a wretched end! The way of the merely moral is not a way everlasting, but it might be if it were consecrated by the grace of God; these more common things might be the prelude to the everlasting service before the throne of God, but inasmuch as the life is unconsecrated, let it be spent as it may—the way is a way that comes to an end.

The way of the purposeless and dabbler is not everlasting. How many a man’s life reminds you, instead of an everlasting way, of a mere *cul-de-sac*—a blind alley, as we say—down which you wander merely to come back again! Hundreds of men’s lives are like that; like the famous king in the nursery rhyme who led his troops up a hill, and then down again; they live and they die, and that is all that you can say of many. Their way is a vain show—it passes and is gone, and we say, “Where is it?” Some remind me of those circular lanes which we have sometimes been lost in—you go around, and you come back to the same place again, and you are no more forward. As the tramp of the blind horse going round the mill, such is the way of many—from morn till eve, from year to year, they are mere pendulums swinging to and fro. Their life would be, if they could exist forever, an everlasting toil, but since they must die, it must come to an end, and their unhappy spirits must remain forever in that pathless wilderness of woe from which no traveler ever finds his way of escape.

My brothers and sisters let me remind you, also, that *the way, even of some religious people, is not the way everlasting*. I mean the path, for instance, of those who are hypocritical; they may put on the

mask and look like beauty, itself, but death will rudely dash the visor on one side, and let their face be seen. Like the veiled prophet, who wore over his leprous brow a mask of silver, such are many men; they may pass in the crowd as bright and beautiful, but when the time comes for them to be *seen* in the light of God, their loathsomeness will be discovered. The way of the Pharisee, again, who differs somewhat from the hypocrite, is not the way everlasting. He will not always dare to say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men." Not always will he be able to boast, "I fast twice in the week; I pay tithes of all that I possess." The time will come when he will see all this outside washing of the platter to have been of no service, because his inward part was full of very wickedness! What will be his dismay and despair! No, brothers and sisters, neither the way of the hypocrite, the formalist, nor the Pharisee, is the way everlasting! Neither is any way but that which is according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not tell me that if you are sincere it will little matter which way you take! You know better! If you sincerely believe that you are going to St. Paul's, or to London Bridge, when you leave this Tabernacle, and you turn to the right, you will probably find yourselves at Clapham or at Tooting, but not at St. Paul's or London Bridge, with all your sincerity of misbelief! The sincere belief that you will be saved by your good works will by no means avert your damnation if you persist in refusing to trust in Jesus Christ!

Faith in Jesus is the *only* way of salvation, and if you will not walk in that way, there is no other. Our Lord's teaching leaves us no room to hope for the salvation of unbelievers. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." But what of those who do not believe? May they not be sincerely *mistaken*? May they not be very good people, after all, and be saved in their own way? Our Lord's reply is sharp, clear, and decisive, "He who believes not shall be damned." He has nothing else for them but that! Christ is too great, and too honest to court popularity, as many do nowadays, by an affectation that right or wrong are much the same. The wicked charity of this age sickens us with its deceptive cant, as it whines out, "It will little matter what you believe; nothing, nowadays, is of very great consequence. Believe what you like, and it shall be all right in the long run." No, but according to the gospel of Jesus you must believe the truth of God, and have faith in the power of the truth, for a lie will not regenerate you! A lie will not fit you to see the face of God! A lie will not conduct you to heaven, but only that truth of God which has the stamp and seal of God, and of His Holy Spirit.

I have thus shown you that there are many ways which are not everlasting. Let us now notice that the *right* way—the way of faith in God, and of a life that flows out of faith in God—the way, indeed, which Jesus trod, the way which we tread when we follow in Jesus' footsteps, is the way everlasting, because it is *a way which was mapped out upon everlasting principles*. The truth of God will never die. The stars will grow dim; the sun will pale his glory, but the truth of God will be forever young. Integrity, uprightness, honesty, love, goodness—these are all imperishable. No grave can ever entomb these immortal principles; they have been in prison, but they have been freer than before; those who have enshrined them in their hearts have been burned at the stake, but out of their ashes other witnesses have arisen; no sea can drown, no storm can wreck, no abyss can swallow up the ever living truth of God! You cannot kill goodness and truth, and integrity and faith and holiness! The way that is consistent with these must be a way everlasting.

Holiness is a way everlasting, *because it is pursued by the possessors of a life that is everlasting*. No man enters the way of truth, righteousness, faith, love to God, and love to his neighbor but the man who has received the new birth. Now, the product of the new birth is not like the fruit of the flesh which is mortal and perishable—it is a living and incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever, so that the man who is born-again can no more die than God Himself! He has received the life of Christ *within* him, and, according to the Scriptures, because Christ lives, he shall also live. It is an everlasting way, then, because the pilgrims, who tread it, though they are mortals to all appearance, are yet, in the sight of God, immortal! They bear within them a life unquenchable, whose endurance shall be coexistent with the life of Jehovah Himself.

Godliness is a way everlasting, *because no circumstances can by any possibility necessitate any change in it*. The man who lives by policy is like a sailor on a gusty day, or who has a foul wind against him, and must tack about to reach first this point, and then the other, and makes but slow progress, after

all, in the direction which he really wishes to pursue. But the man who has the life of God, and follows the way of the truth of God is like the steamship which plows its road straight on, wind or tide notwithstanding! Why needs it to tack? It bears its force *within itself*, and is not dependent upon the extraneous circumstances of winds and waves! Happy is that man who is in this condition! If he is poor, he may cheerfully pursue the way of truth, and find his poverty a blessing! If he is rich, the same immortal principles which guided him in poverty will suffice him, now that he has come to the possession of wealth. If he were elected to a kingdom, such a man, having the law of God in his heart, would know how to walk, and to behave himself right royally. His way is everlasting because he has not to stop every morning and inquire, "How am I to behave today? What is the new rule by which I shall shape my course?" Your tricky politicians, who this day are one thing, and that the other, as they fancy the public mind may change; these had need to consult their barometer to know what kind of weather the popular will ordains, but we, if we are taught of God to do the right thing, care not about the weather or the will of man. Whether it is fair or foul—whether the sun shines or not, we would still serve our God and do the right, by His grace; and if the heavens should fall, expect to still find a shelter.

Righteousness is the way everlasting, because *such a way, even death itself, shall not terminate*. The man, who learns to live as God would have him live, will find death to be only a circumstance in his immortality. He will pass onward, with no more pause than the earth makes when the moon comes between her and the sun; as when the iron horse pursues his rapid way, he shoots through a tunnel, and is out of it again, making the darkness but an interlude in his progress; even so is death a small matter to the converted and regenerate man! The man who walks in the way of God passes through death as through a temporary gloom, but he still pursues the even tenor of his way. What he did on earth he shall do in heaven, only he shall do it better, and after a nobler sort! On earth he loved his God; in heaven he shall do the same. On earth he found his joy in a sight of Christ; in heaven he shall enjoy that sight more near and unveiled! On earth he loved the true and the right, and the good; and in heaven he shall dwell in the midst of the city that is of pure gold, and whose light is brighter than the sun, where only holiness and perfection are admitted. He shall not even change his company, for the church militant in which he fought on earth is also the church triumphant with which he shall reign forever and ever in heaven! You see, then, that the godly man's path is a way everlasting. I might have said much more, but this shall suffice.

II. Dear brothers and sisters, the next remarkable thing in the text is THE CONFESSION WHICH IS MADE.

David says, "Lead me in the way everlasting." David was a good man, a grace-taught man, a spiritual man, an eminently spiritual man, and yet he required to be led in the way—"Lead me in the way everlasting." What is more, David was a deeply *experienced* man; this Psalm is towards the end of the book, and I suppose his hair was all gray when he wrote it. He had come to threescore years and ten, probably, and there he is, dear man, able to teach others, yet pleading, "*Lead me, lead me.*" He was a ripe believer, for he had not only the years of age, but the experience of a much-trying life. In fact, David seems to have been an epitome of all men. You never had a trouble but what you could find something to suit you under it in the Psalms; and I think you never had a joy but what you discovered a verse that would help you to sing out your joy. David, somehow or other, seems to have known all the ups and downs, all the hills, and all the valleys of Christian experience, and yet for all that he cries, "Lead me, lead me." David was the man after God's own heart, despite his slips; his sin was the soldier's common sin—we must remember that. His position was an extraordinary one, such as ours can never be; he was a man after God's heart because of his deep sincerity, his child-likeness, and his warmth of soul, and yet notwithstanding that, and all his eminence in divine grace, he says, "Lead me, lead me." What does this prayer teach us? Why, that the most mature Christian, if he judges aright, feels that he needs as much to be *led* in the right way as if he were only beginning the spiritual life! The words seem to me to be almost humiliating, "Lead me." It is a little child saying, "Lead me, mother, lead me." It is more than that; it is a blind man putting out his hands, he cannot see, he cannot find his way, and he is begging—"Lead me." Such babes are we; such blind men are we, apart from the guiding grace of God! Oh, how dependent we

are, then, and what confessions ought *we* to make who are so much less than David, so much younger, the most of us, so much less experienced than he! How ought we to pray emphatically, “Lead me, Lord, for I am so little, so uninstructed, and have had such little experience. Lead me in the way everlasting.”

This remarkable confession and prayer should suggest two things—ignorance and impotence. When we say, “Lead me,” if it is a blind man, it means ignorance; he cannot see the way, and therefore he needs to be led, though he may be strong enough to walk if he only knew the way. “Lead me, Lord,” also signifies impotence if it is judged of as the child’s case; he needs to be led in another sense, because he has not strength enough in his little feet to go without the help of his mother’s hand. “Lead me in the way.” So, you see, our confession should be double—of our ignorance and of our impotence—of our need of knowledge, and of our lack of strength.

1. First, *our need of knowledge*. “‘Lead me in the way everlasting,’ for I do not know that way everlasting. Naturally I know nothing of it, nor can I, as a natural man, until You teach me—for only the spiritual man receives spiritual things, and the carnal mind cannot know the things of God, for they are spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned. O God, how dangerous is my case, and how hopeless, too, unless You teach me! I pray You, therefore, instruct me! Enlighten me; lead me in the way everlasting! O Lord, I may well confess that I need this instruction because even though I am converted, and so know something of Your way, yet it often happens that I know not which is the right way through defect of judgment. If willing to do the right, yet it may sometimes happen that I may put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; though anxious and even desirous to take the right road, yet I may come to a place where two ways meet which seem, both of them, to be the right one, and I may not know which way to choose. My judgment, Lord, is very imperfect, and apt to err. Lead me, I pray You, for he who leans to his own judgment is foolish, and he who trusts to his own heart is a fool—neither to my judgment nor to my heart would I trust, but say, ‘Lord, lead me.’”

Moreover, in addition to a deficient judgment, we ought to confess, and I hope we shall humbly do so, that we are apt to be misled by *corrupted affections*. There is a leaning in us all towards the evil way if we dare pursue it! Ah, how soon we touch the forbidden fruit! How does the heart run after vanity, even when we have resolved by divine grace that we will always close our eyes to it! That man must have well sealed his door who can keep out Satan’s temptations, but he who should have done that, and left no crack by which the old serpent could enter would find a serpent within the core of his own heart, in his own corruptions! “Alas, then, O God, since my soul leans towards evil and will go amiss if it can, lead You me, lest my depraved affections should further pervert my judgment, and I should leave the king’s Highway.”

In addition to this, all over this world there are *influences which would make us take the wrong way*, deceiving us into the notion that we are right. The air is not clear anywhere—there are mists and fog all around; the best of men often have to pause and feel the hot sweat upon their brow through trembling anxiety as to the right course. Which is right? Which is wrong? This fog of *custom*—everybody does it! This fog of *tradition*—everybody has done it these hundreds of years! The dread of being singular, the dislike of being thought to be precise, and I know not what beside—all these cast a mist about us. Oh, how easy it is when we are traveling through a thick and murky atmosphere for us to mistake the way! Lead us, then, Lord! Lead us in the way everlasting! Alas, how many have set out, as they thought, under God’s guidance on the voyage of life, but they have not really received Christ or His life within them? And so, being deluded by the false lights of wreckers, have soon come to everlasting shipwreck, believing all the while that they were sailing into the celestial haven! Dear brothers and sisters, judge not yourselves to be wise, or the Word will judge you to be foolish! But go, now, with a confession of your ignorance unto God in silent prayer, and lift up this petition, “Guide me, O You great Jehovah! I am a pilgrim through this misty land; I am foolish, You are wise—guide me with Your powerful hand, conduct me safely, let no enemy tempt me from the narrow way, but lead me in the way everlasting.”

2. But secondly, the confession also contains *an admission of lack of strength*, for it is not merely, “Show me,” which would suffice if the man were strong, but, “Lead me,” which, as I have said before, is as the child that needs its mother’s finger, or its father’s supporting hand. We not only need knowledge,

but we need *power* to run in the right way. Morally and physically men *can* do right if they will. “It is as easy,” says one, “for a man not to get drunk as it is to open his hand.” And that is a fact, for if a man, when he holds the intoxicating glass, would only open his hand, the liquor would fall to the ground and the drink would not make a beast of him. So any other sin may easily be avoided, as far as the moral and physical power are concerned; but then there is a lack of will in the man, and *that* is the point; and therefore we need to ask of God to give us will, which is the real power. Oh, how irresolute a man often is concerning a sin which he knows to be a sin, but which enchants him with its sweetness! Ah, how a man will say, “I must give it up, but I cannot!” How, like the serpent in the old story of Laocoon, sin will twist itself round and round a man, and if he tugs and pulls away one coil, yet there is another, and another, and another! Ah, how men dally with sin! When it comes to plucking off the right arm, and plucking out the right eye, you say to yourselves, “We do not like losing this arm, and besides, we have not yet found the proper knife to take it off with.” Ah, if you had the proper knife, yet you would be slow to make the gash! You would plead that it might be spared at least a little longer—that a little good work might yet be done with it! There will always be some excuse for delay in giving up sin, and if the surgeon does not interpose, and take it off, the mortification of sin will spread through the entire body before the man will be willing to lose his limb. Sin dies hard. It makes a hundred excuses for itself, and pleads, “Is it not a little one? Is it not a sweet one?” O Lord, then, give me strength of resolution, and when I know that a thing is wrong, help me to have done with it! And when I perceive an action to be right, help me to make haste, and delay not to keep Your Commandments. O my Lord, may I never try to patch up a peace between my conscience and myself by trimming and compromising. If I know a thing to be Your will, may I never parley nor question—for that is to rebel. The spirit that parleys is the essence of high treason. May I put away all questioning, and obedient to You, at once yield my will to be Yours. Lead me, Lord, lead me! Uphold me with Your hand of grace, and give me strength and resolution to be holy!

There are some who have strength and resolution enough by fits and starts, but they have not stability enough to persevere. If heaven could be won by one great leap, how soon they would have it! But if to enter into the pearly gates one must go on pilgrimage all the way, then they cannot hold out to the end. Lord, lead me! How speedily do I begin to shrink! How soon would my rebellious heart draw back from Your service! O give me persevering grace, and when I would stand aside, lead me forward! Draw, draw me, good Lord! Yes, gently tug at my laggard soul and when—

*“My heart can neither fly nor go
To reach celestial joys,”*

Then—

*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,
With all Your power divine;
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s Love,
And that shall kindle mine.”*

Lead me, Lord!

You see what is meant by the prayer, and I need not go further, though there is much room for enlargement. Need of knowledge, and lack of strength are both confessed in this remarkable verse.

III. Let us close by noticing THE REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE PRAYER before us.

I do not know many of the collects or particularly wish to know them, but I will give you my text for one, and you shall never find its superior. Let this be your constant prayer—you may use it as long as you like, and as often as you please, for if it is sincere, it will never be a vain repetition—“Lead me in the way everlasting.”

1. Now, notice this prayer very carefully. First, observe how comprehensive it is, because *of its object*. Its object is the whole man. “Lead *me*—not half of me, not part of me. Lead me in the whole way—not in some part of the way, but in the whole way, that is to say, let my thoughts be led in the way that I may not think unrighteously, that I may not believe the truth of God in *part*, but that I may be sound in the faith. Lead me that I may not believe false doctrine; Lord, lead my understanding and my intellect in the way of revelation; make me to know Your covenant truths, and the great doctrines of grace. Let me

not be satisfied to know half Your truth, and think I know it all, but lead me into all Your truth. Let there not be one doctrine that I would erase, or one precept that I would forget, or one single word in Your Book that I would blot out. Lord, lead me as to my understanding, knowledge, and thoughts—lead me in the way everlasting.”

He means *his emotions*, too, as well as his intellectual part. “*Lord, lead me in Your way, for well I know that if my head should go without my heart, yet were I all undone. Lord, help me to love not the world, nor the things that are of the world, but lead me in the way everlasting. Let my best passions boil when Christ is the fire; let my heart be in its best trim when Christ has come to see it, like a garden that is watered by His presence, and whose fruits are ripened by the sunlight of His love.*”

He refers *his tongue* to the same leading. “*Lord, grant that my tongue may not be a slanderous tongue, or a trifling tongue, or a lascivious tongue, or a tongue that talks for mere talk’s sake. But, Lord, salt my tongue for me; grant me grace so to speak that my conversation shall edify the hearer. Lead me in the way everlasting.*”

He means, indeed, *himself as to his actions*. “*I would keep Your way, O Lord, when I go to my chamber—not sinning there; and when I come down to my meals, not getting out of Your way by wrong-eating or drinking. When I go to my shop, or to my work, to the field, or to the market, to the streets, and to the Exchange let me not err in anything. Still, Lord, lead me in the way everlasting and may no path of business, no path of recreation, no path of society, no path of solitude ever take me out of Your way, but wherever I am, let the whole of me be altogether and wholly in the whole of Your way.*” You see what a full prayer it is as to its objects!

2. But it is also a great prayer, if you consider it in the matter of *its modes*. “*Lead me.*” How does God lead? Brothers and sisters, He leads us by the law. The law tells us what we ought to do. The ten commandments of the law are, as it were, ten signposts, all of them saying—“*This is the way; walk you in it.*” He leads us, better still, by the example of Christ—

*“We read our duty in Your Word,
But in His life the law appears
Drawn out in living characters.”*

The law tells us what we should do, but Jesus has done it for us, and shown us how to do it! The whole life of Christ is a leading of us in the way. He leads us in the way by His Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit enlightens the conscience, influences the will, guides the judgment, and sweetly leads the heart in the path of sanctity. Under God, the Holy Spirit, the ministry often becomes our guide in the way everlasting; some choice word from God’s servants, coming at a right time, may check us when we would do evil, may inspirit us when we would faint in the way of right. And then good books, and I know not what besides—the example of the saints, the hints of providence, the emotions of our own hearts when near to God, these are often prompts to guide and lead us in the way everlasting. So, you see, as to its modes, the prayer of the text is very comprehensive.

3. It is, dear brothers and sisters, a great prayer, if you think for a minute of its *issues*. “*Lead me in the way everlasting.*” Oh, what a word is that word “*everlasting*”! I think I see before me the gate of pearl, as though this word “*everlasting*,” were that glorious gate. With what soft radiance it beams upon my eyes at this moment! And lo, it turns upon its hinges! It stands wide open, and what do I see? Everlasting! Everlasting! Why, I see before me the sea of glass, and the harpers standing on that waveless ocean, “*where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.*” And what do I hear? I hear their songs like the sound of many waters, yet sweet as harpers harping with their harps! And what do I see as I gaze, but Jesus Christ, the sun and center of heaven’s glory? And I behold His saints who trod this way everlasting on earth, continuing still, to tread it, proceeding further into the bliss of His presence, and into the ecstasy of His love, and into the experience of His fellowship! Every day is advancing in this way that has no end, this way everlasting! Oh, what a prayer this is! I, when I say, “*Lead me in the way everlasting,*” as good as ask for a holy life, a happy death, and a heaven to crown it all! I do ask for all that is in the covenant, all that Christ came to give, all that God has laid up in store, and all that the Spirit works in men. It is a mighty prayer indeed!

4. The last remark in the prayer is most comprehensive as to *the persons* who may fitly use it. It has but one stroke and aim. It is, “*Lead me, lead me.*” But it is suitable to thousands; it is a great prayer, and it is just suitable to your lips—*yours*, my brother! *Yours*, my sister. *Yours*, whom I could not address by either of those names. *Yours*, O stranger to the grace of God. “*Lead me.*” Who is there here whom it would not suit? There are none too well grown in divine grace, and none too far gone in sin! “*Lead me.*” Is there one who is so far off from God and hope, that he or she has given herself up to despair? When your heart is overwhelmed within you, He can lead you to the rock that is higher than you are, and bring you out of the way of ruin into the way everlasting! Is there a man here whose backslidings have become so numerous, that he dares no longer look up? Friend, your prayer can still reach God’s ear! “*Lead me in the way everlasting.*” Poor prodigal, if you cannot return, if you feel yourself too vile to hope, yet *He* can come to you, even if to Him you cannot come! Breathe the prayer, “*Lead me, Lord, even me, from the depths of hell. I cry unto You like Jonah out of the whale’s belly! Out of the hell of my despair, out of the hell of my infamous sin, I venture to ask You—black-handed, black-mouthed, black-hearted as I am—lead me, O my God!*” He will hear you, sinner, through the intercession of Jesus! He will wash you in the atoning blood! He will guide you, and bring you, even *you*, into the way everlasting! Let it not, then, be omitted by any one of us to make this our prayer before we leave this house! I charge you, let not this evening’s gathering be in vain, and I know it *will* be in vain to each one present who is not led so to pray. Come! Let us pray this prayer together, and may the Lord hear us!

[Then the people bowed their heads, and worshipped, and said “Amen” after the following prayer:]

“O Lord, my God, lead me in the way everlasting! I need it! You have made me to teach others, and my example influences many; lead me in the way everlasting! And Your servants who gather around me, my beloved deacons and elders, whose example also will be potent for good if they are good, and for evil if they are evil—Lord, hear them as they say, ‘Lead us in the way everlasting.’ And the members of the church, the many hundreds, yes, the thousands who are associated in church fellowship here—who eat of Your bread, and drink of Your cup—O hear them, such of them as are now present who shall now cry unto You, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ Hear every brother in dilemma and difficulty, every sister in duty and danger, every heart that is weary, every soul that is sick who says, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ And Lord, hear the unconverted sinner as he breathes this desire towards your throne of grace. Is there one here who has left the paths of virtue, and of honesty, and do his or her lips tremblingly say, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting’? Lord, hear their supplication! Lord, hear it for Jesus’ sake. Where ever there stands or sits in this Tabernacle one old or young, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, moral or immoral—if there is such a one here who in his heart says, ‘Father, forgive me, and lead me in the way everlasting’—O do You answer that prayer speedily, for Your dear Son’s sake. And now, once more, for Jesus’ sake we do each of us beseech You, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ Amen.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 139.

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