

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR GOD

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”
Amos 4:12.

GOD had in the days of Amos by different ways rebuked the sin of His people Israel; He had wasted them with famine and sword; He had withheld the rain; He had sent forth the pestilence after the manner of Egypt; He had smitten their fields and gardens with blast and mildew, and He had overthrown some of them, as Sodom and Gomorrah. But they still persevered in their rebellion, and therefore He declares that He will send them no more of His messengers, and shoot no more of His far-reaching arrows, but will come Himself, in His own person, to deal with them. God's way of dealing with rebellious humanity is at first to upbraid and persuade with words—soft, gentle, tender words; these He repeats many times, accompanying them with tokens of tenderness and grace, but by-and-by He exchanges these words of tenderness for words of mingled threat—He begins to argue with them—why will they drive Him to this? Why will they die? Why will they bring ruin upon themselves? Then if words are of no effect upon them, He turns to blows—but His strokes fall softly at first; yet if these avail not, His strokes gather strength till at last He smites them with the blows of a cruel one, and wounds them sorely. If even after this the sinners remain obstinate, the Lord's long-suffering turns to wrath, and He asks, “Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more; already your whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint; what shall I do unto you? What shall I do unto you?” Things have come to a dreadful pass when at last the Lord puts aside the rod, when He puts aside afflictions which He has sent as chastisements, and comes forth Himself to end the strife, crying, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies.” Such was the position of Israel in the text. They had scorned all the milder dealings of God, and now He says to them, “Prepare to meet Me, even God Himself, in all the terror of Justice.” The prophet may be understood as in irony challenging the proud rebels to meet in arms the God whom they have despised; let them prepare to fight it out with Him whom they have made to be their enemy, and against whose laws they have so continually revolted. “Prepare,” says the prophet, “O you potsherd, to strive with your Maker; you worms, to battle with omnipotence!” As it stands, the text is an awful challenge of almighty wrath when at last long-suffering vacates the throne, and Justice bares its two-edged sword; woe, woe, woe to boastful scoffers in that great and terrible day!

We shall not, however, dwell upon the particular position of the text, nor confine ourselves to the meaning of the words as the prophet used them. We shall, however, hope as fully as possible to illustrate the natural sense of the text in the hope that such earnest and solemn words may awaken in some hearts tenderness towards God, and the desire to be prepared to meet Him. “Prepare to meet your God.” We have before us a most important call, and we shall consider first *the many tones in which it may be uttered*; secondly, *the heavy tidings conveyed by it to the ungodly*; and thirdly, *the weighty admonition given there*.

I. First then, let us think of these words in THEIR DIFFERENT TONES, they vary from grave to gay, from dread to delight—“Prepare to meet your God.”

Why, I think there are no more joyous words under heaven than these under some aspects, certainly none more solemn out of hell under others! “Prepare to meet your God.” These words may have sounded through the green alleys of paradise, and have caused no discord there; blending with the sweet song of new-created birds, these notes would have but given emphasis to the harmony. Often from the mossy

couch whereon he reclined in the happy life of his innocence and bliss, the great sire of men would be awakened by this holy summons. When the sun first scattered the shades of darkness and began to gild the tops of the snow-clad hills with morning light, Adam was awakened by the birds amid the groves of Eden, whose earliest song his heart interpreted as meaning, "Awake, O wondrous man, and prepare to meet your God." Then climbing some verdant hill from where he looked down upon the landscape, all aglow with glory and with God, Adam would in holy rapture meet his God; and in lowly reverence would speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend. Then too, at eventide, the dewdrops, as they fell, each one would say to that blessed man, "Prepare to meet your God." The lengthened shadows would silently give forth the same message, and perhaps it is no imagination that angels would alight upon lawns adorned with lilies, and pause where Adam stood pruning the growth of some too luxuriant vine, and would with courteous speech remind him that the day's work was over, for the sun was descending to the western sea, and it was time for the favored creature to have audience with his God. The faintest intimation would suffice for our first parent, for the crown of paradise to him was the presence of the Lord God! And Eden's rivers, though they flowed over sands of gold, had no river in them equal to the stream whereby the spirit of Adam was gladdened when he had communion with the Most High, for then he drank from that river of the water of life which flows from underneath the throne of the Great Supreme! Unfallen man had no greater joy than walking with God; it was heaven on earth to meet in tender and sublime converse with the great Father of Spirits; no marriage bells ever rang out a sweeter or more joyous melody than these glad words as they were heard amid the myrtle bowers and palm groves of Eden by our first parents in the heyday of their innocence, "Prepare to meet your God." Then, when Jehovah walked in the garden in the cool of the day, He had no need to say aloud, "Adam, where are you," for His happy creature whom He had made to have dominion over all the works of His hands was waiting for Him as a child waits for his father when the day's work is done—watching to hear his father's footsteps, and to see his father's face. Oh, yes! Those were words in fullest harmony with Eden's joys, "Prepare to meet your God."

But, brothers and sisters weep not over those withered glories as those who are without hope, for the words have something of a heavenly sound to those who have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We, though fallen and sinful, and therefore naturally averse to God have, many of us, been renewed in the spirit of our minds, and now oftentimes to us the welcome message comes, "Prepare to meet your God," in a sense most delightful, and most entrancing. It is our summons to devotion; it is morning, and as we put on our garments before we go forth to the battle of life, the angel of the Lord whispers to us, "Prepare to meet your God." And on our knees we seek our Father's face, and pray that we may be under His guardian care throughout the day. Think not that the holy voice is silent until nightfall; oh no, oftentimes as business gives us pauses, and as our avocations may allow us leisure, we hear the inner life, or what if I say the indwelling Holy Spirit, softly saying to our heart, "Prepare to meet your God"; and we in spirit take our shoes off, and feel that the place whereon we stand is holy ground! We may be in a poor workshop, but our spirit makes it a cathedral as it has communion with the Most High! Our study may be littered over with our books, and papers, and letters, but all of a sudden it becomes a sacred oratory, and all things fall into order as the voice is heard and obeyed. Perhaps we may be in the cornfield, or on the barley mow, but if the voice says, "Prepare to meet your God," the true heart stands as a priest before the altar, and worships in spirit and in truth! Even the streets of busy London may become a silent temple when the heart is solemnly absorbed in worship, for preparation to meet our God means no change of vestments, nor even the washing of the hands; there is a cleansing of the heart, and a putting on of the white linen, which in the righteousness of saints is performed in a moment, and the soul stands before her God in happy fellowship.

Then, my dear brothers and sisters, there are set times with us when we prepare to meet our God, as for instance, on the eve of the Lord's-Day. It always seems to me to be so pleasant at the family altar to make mention of the coming Sunday, and to ask the Lord that we may lay aside our cares; ask Him that we may be rid of every earthly impediment, and may sit in the heavenly places on the day of rest with

our Father and our God! I know how late some of you have to keep your shops open on Saturday nights, and how it almost runs into the Sunday before you can be done with your business; but still I hope you do before you come here make a point of preparing for this meeting place with God by meeting Him first at home. I would not have you come here unprepared, as though the mere coming into the assembly would be enough; I anxiously desire to see you come with prepared hearts, with longing appetites, with holy aspirations. Bring your harps with you already tuned! Make ready for the holy convocation! Lay by in store your offering, prepare your song, and lift up your heart! Yes, and besides the Sundays, there are certain other times with us when we are especially called to meet our God; we keep no holy days by the almanac, but we have holy days apportioned us by providence, and by the Holy Spirit. I mean that there are seasons hallowed by holy memories or by present circumstances when sorrow and joy, earth and heaven, all without and within, bear to us a call both loud and sweet, "Prepare to meet your God." Then we set apart a special time; the hour is consecrated to secret communion; God has claimed His portion of the day, and we sacredly guard it by entering into our closet, and shutting the door. Inward motions of the Holy Spirit frequently calls us away to loneliness—let us not be slow to follow the blessed bidding. The voice of the beloved invites us to His banquet of wine; He allures us to the secret chambers where divine love is revealed; He bids us stand in the cleft of the rock, while the glory of Godhead passes by. On such happy seasons, and I hope they are not infrequent with us, the silver trumpets of Jubilee ring through our souls the notes, "Prepare to meet your God," and then our motto is, "Up and away, to the beds of spices, to the garden of pomegranates, where the beloved will reveal Himself, and give us an audience with the King."

Once again, these words, "Prepare to meet your God," have no gloomy significance to some of my dear brothers and sisters here present, even though we attach to them the sense of the believer's meeting God in a disembodied state. Christians, especially when they grow aged, must often hear the angel whisper, "Prepare to meet your God" from the inevitable process of decay which takes place in the body; from the failure of eyesight, the tottering of the limbs, and the gray hairs; there must come subdued and tender voices, all saying, "Prepare to meet your God." The tent is being taken down, the cord is loosed, the tent pin no longer holds to the earth! Soon must the canvas be rolled up and put away; but you have a House not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! Look up, then, and prepare to dwell there! Prepare your spirit not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon with your house which is from heaven! My aged brothers and sisters, I can imagine how it is with you; the dear friends, who have been the companions of your childhood, and your manhood departs before you, and as they wing their happy flight to the land of the living, they look back and say, "Prepare to follow us." Nor are you at all grieved at such an invitation; rather do you sometimes feel impatient for the gladsome time when you may join that cloud of doves which flock to those everlasting windows, and find their resting places with the Well-Beloved. Friends gathering in the upper sanctuary beckon to you whose years are threescore and ten, and you feel the attractions of their blessed society on happy Sundays when the atmosphere of your souls is clear, and the Sun of Righteousness shines forth with His power! You dwell in the land Beulah, and behold so vividly the New Jerusalem and its royal Lord, that, as though an angel spoke, you hear the sound, "Prepare to meet your God." Often when the hymn is swelling up to heaven, you feel as if you could mount upon it, and pass through the gate of pearl! At the holy supper table how loud is the call to come up higher into the excellent glory! Young as I am, and earthbound; to me, even to me, the communion table has made me unloose my cable, spread my sails, and long for that last voyage which shall make this world a foreign shore, and the glory land the harbor of our spirits! Surely, my aged brethren brothers and sisters, it must be far more so with you who have so many friends across the water, so many of your best beloved on the other side of Jordan! Your strength of experience and your weakness of body must both tend to give frequency to the message, "Prepare to meet your God." To you the tidings are happy! You are exiles, and you long for home; you are children at school, and you pine for your Father's house.

But now I must pass on to notice that those words have not always that sweet ring of the silver bells about them; they are words of caution to the vast majority of men. "Prepare to meet your God." Alas, how many of you to whom I now speak are unprepared! It pains me to think of it; as I sat last night about eight o'clock, revolving in my mind a subject for this hour's discourse, there came a knock at my door, and I was earnestly entreated by a father to hasten to the deathbed of his dear girl. I wanted much my time for preparation, but as the dear one was in such a case, and had long been a constant hearer of the word in this tabernacle, I felt it my duty to go whether I could prepare a sermon or not. Glad I was to hear that sick one's testimony! She told me with what I fear was her dying breath, that she was not fully assured of her interest in Christ, but she left me no room to doubt when, between spasms and convulsions, she said, "I know I love Jesus; and that is all I know." Yes, and I thought it is all I need to know; if any one of us always knows that he loves the Savior, what more does he require of testimony as to his state?

But my mind was sorely oppressed then as it is now with the thought that so many of you are not prepared to die at all! I often see my sermons in sick rooms, and I come to think of preaching sermons in a different light from what many do. I will try to preach sermons which will suit your most solemn hours and most serious circumstances; I would gladly deliver sermons which shall haunt your sickbeds, and accuse you unless you yield to their persuasions and believe in Jesus! When you lie on the borders of the spirit world, you will count all religious trifling to be cruel mockery; so let me say it affectionately, but very earnestly to you, "Prepare to meet your God," for I am afraid many of you are quite unprepared! You have seen others die; they preach to you from their graves, and they say, "So to the dust must *you* also come, my friend; be you ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man will call for you." You have had sicknesses in your own body; you are not now the strong man you once were; you have already passed through many perils. What are all these but voices from the God of mercy saying, "Consider your ways"? You are not such a simpleton as to think that you shall never die; you know you will! Neither are you so insane as to think that when you die, your death will be that of a horse or a dog; you know there is a hereafter, and a state of being in which men shall be judged according to the deeds that they have done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil; and so I therefore press upon your earnest recollection and your intense consideration at this present moment, the exhortation of the text, "Prepare to meet your God!"

Once more, let me say that this sound, as I have now put it, has little melody in it. It will by-and-by be heard in ungodly ears as a peremptory summons—and then there shall be no music in it, but a horrid clang that shall drive away all hope—"Prepare to meet your God!" That summons will come to each one of you unconverted people, and when it comes, it will admit of no postponement! Call in the wisest surgeon, or the most accomplished physician, and he cannot put off for an hour the execution of God's death-warrant. "Prepare to meet your God," will mean that at such a time, and such an hour, and at such a moment, the spirit must return to God who gave it! There will be no evasion of that summons; there will be no possibility then of a substitute dying in your place. "Prepare to meet your God" will come to you, my hearer, beyond all doubt! Oh, how I wish that you were prepared for it! You must assuredly meet your God whom you have forgotten all these years; your Creator, whose rights you have ignored; your Preserver, to whom you have rendered no kind of recompense; your King, whose name it may be you have blasphemed. You have denied His existence, but you will meet Him; you have lived in open revolt against His righteous laws, but you will certainly meet Him; no exemption will be possible! Before His judgment seat you will stand! Prepared or unprepared at the sound of the resurrection trumpet, you must appear at His bar! No words of mine, however terrible they may be, can by any possibility equal the horror which the judgment to come, and God's wrath to be measured out will cause to the unregenerate heart! We are sometimes accused, my brothers and sisters, of using language too harsh, too ghastly, too alarming with regard to the world to come; but we shall not soon change our note, for we solemnly believe that if we could speak thunderbolts, and our every look were a lightning flash; and if our eyes dropped blood instead of tears—no tones, words, gestures, or likenesses of dread could exag-

gerate the awful condition of a soul which has refused the gospel, and is delivered over to Justice! “He who despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that has said, Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, says the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Remember His own words, “Consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psa 50:22). Certain prophets of smooth things rise up among us, deluding the people with thoughts that the Judgment to come will not be terrible, but will end in eternal sleep. Into their secret my soul comes not; I must speak the Master’s truth, and the Master’s words; O you ungodly, your punishment will not end, for He has said it, “These shall go away into *everlasting punishment*”; your miseries shall have no cessation, for He who cannot lie, declares, “The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever.” From the lips of Jesus at the Day of Judgment you shall receive the sentence of everlasting blessedness or everlasting punishment, and no other! May God grant that you may not dare to sin under the notion that your sin is a mere trifle, for both you and it will soon cease to be; nature itself teaches you that your soul will exist forever! O make it not forever a ruin! Bring not upon yourself everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power!

Thus have you rung the changes on the tones of these words, and I leave them with you.

II. Secondly, and very briefly. There are HEAVY TIDINGS in these words, heavy tidings for the ungodly, for thus they run—“Prepare to meet your God.”

I wish I could take hold of every unbeliever here, of every man and woman whose heart is not right with God, and personally speak to them just as of old the prophet spoke to Jeroboam’s wife, and said, “I have heavy tidings from the Lord for you.” So would I speak to them, “I have heavy tidings, unconverted friends, from the Lord for you”; and the tidings are these, “You will before long have to meet your God! Listen to the words, ‘meet your God.’ You have by some means passed through this world without meeting Him; He is everywhere, but you have managed not to see Him; He has fed you, and in Him you have lived and moved, and had your being; but you have contrived so to cripple yourself that you have never yet perceived Him! You will perceive Him soon; when the flesh shall fall off from your spirit, your disembodied soul will see without these eyes far more clearly than it now does—for you will begin to see the *spiritual* world which is now hidden from you; and chief and foremost you will meet your God. Now you say in your heart ‘no God,’ because the thought of God is objectionable to you; you would not sin as you do if you remembered that the all-seeing eye is in the chamber, no, is in your heart itself! Remember you soon will not be able to shake off the thought of God, for you will meet Him face to face; not the thought of God only, but the actual being of God will confront you in your dying hour; you will be compelled to meet Him! It will be a close meeting, not as though He looked upon you from afar, or you surveyed Him from a distance, but you will so meet Him that all the glory of His majesty will operate upon you like the fire which devours the stubble—for our God is a consuming fire. His holiness will become wrath against your sin, not wrath treasured up and removed far away, but wrath that shall come near to you to consume you! It will be an inevitable meeting, from which you will not be able to escape; from your fellow creature whom you do not wish to see, you readily withdraw yourself, but you cannot escape from God! The rays of the morning’s sun could not carry you as fast as the Lord’s right hand can move; the uttermost parts of the sea cannot conceal you; the night shall be light about you; neither the heights of heaven, nor the depths of hell can conceal you from Him. You must meet face to face with your God; and it must be a personal meeting; God and you will meet as if alone; God alone, and you alone. What if there are angels? What if there are ten thousand times ten thousands of your kindred sinners? To you, virtually, it shall be solitude itself; you must meet your God! You, YOU!” O my dear hearer, it is a sad thing that this should be heavy tidings to you, for if you were what you should be, it would be joy to you to think that you shall be near your God, and dwell in His embrace; but

unconverted as you are, no tidings can have more of horror in them than these—that you, do as you will, and steel your heart as you may, must by-and-by confront your God.

Think awhile upon whom it is that you have to meet! You must meet your God—your God! That is, offended justice you must meet whose laws you have broken, whose penalties you have ridiculed; Justice righteously indignant with its sword drawn you must confront. You must meet your God. That is, you must be examined, by *unblinded omniscience*; He who has seen your heart, and read your thoughts, and jotted down your affections, and remembered your idle words; you must meet Him. And *infinite discernment* you must meet—those eyes that never yet were duped; the God who will see through the veils of hypocrisy and all the concealments of formality. There will be no making yourself out to be better than you are before Him. You must meet Him who will read you as a man reads a book open before his eyes. You must meet with *unsullied holiness*. You have not always found yourself happy on earth when you have been with holy men—you could not act out your natural impulses in their presence, they were a check upon you; but the infinitely holy God, what must it be to meet Him? It will be such an interview for a sinner to meet with the thrice holy God as for dross to meet with the refiner's fire or stubble with the flame. You will have, moreover, to meet with *insulted mercy*, and perhaps this will be the most dreadful meeting of the whole—when your conscience will remind you that you were invited to repent, that you were urged to lay hold of Christ, that you were honestly bid to be saved, but you hardened your neck, and would not be persuaded. O sinner, by so much as God is patient with you now; by so much will He be angry with you then! They who slight the warnings of His divine grace shall feel the terrors of His wrath. To none shall it be so hard to meet God in justice as to those who would not meet Him in grace—vengeance takes the place of slighted mercy. God grant you may never know what it is to meet insulted love, rejected mercy, and tenderness turned to wrath! O sinner, if you have to meet your God as you now are, you will find Him *everlasting truth*, fulfilling every threatening word of His law and gospel; every black word that is in this book shall be fulfilled over your head, and every dreadful syllable be verified in your loins and in your heart! Remember too that you will meet with Him who has *omnipotent power*; against whom you can no more contend than the smoke against the wind, or the fuel against the furnace; you shall then know how God can punish, and you will find Him not a weak and trembling God, but an omnipotent God, putting forth His power to destroy His adversaries who have dared to assail against His majesty.

Thus have I put a few thoughts together, in very feeble language, I confess, but they ought of themselves, apart from mere words, to have power with you. I pray God the Holy Spirit that you, dear hearer, may prepare to meet your God. You see who it is you have to meet, and what it will be to meet Him. May God make you to be prepared for what must occur.

III. The last point is this. Here is A WEIGHTY PRECEPT—prepare to meet God.

How can a man be prepared to meet God? In the text there is an allusion to preparing for battle, but none of you would wish to contend with God in the hereafter. Who is he that thinks that with a thousand he can meet one that comes against him with a countless host of ten thousand times ten thousand? O rebel, the warfare is hopeless, ground your arms; it were worse than madness to dream of contending with God; submit, for resistance is vain! Better far is it to prepare to meet God as sinners. We are today like prisoners who are waiting for our court date, and the news has come that the judge is ready, and we the prisoners are to prepare to meet him. Sooner or later it must be the lot of us all to come before the Judge. Now, brothers and sisters, what is the right way to prepare to meet a judge? If any of you can plead “Not guilty,” your preparation is made; but there is not man among us who dares think of that. We have sinned, great God, and we confess the sin; what preparation then, can we make? Suppose we sit down and investigate our case. Can we plead extenuations? Can we urge excuses or mitigations, or hope to escape by promises of future improvement? Let us give up the attempt, my brethren! We have gone astray willfully and wickedly; and we shall do it again, for it is of no use for us to set up any kind of defense that is grounded upon ourselves. How then, can we be prepared to meet our God? Listen! There is an Advocate, and it is written, “If any man sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

Righteous.” Let us send for Him! We poor prisoners, lying waiting in the cells, send for Jesus, the Son of God, to be our Intercessor and Advocate! Will He undertake our cause? O that He would plead the cause of our souls, and be our Daysman to speak with God on our behalf! Yes! He will accept the office, and be our Advocate, for He has said, “Him who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Then let us apply to Him, and say, “Jesus, undertake our case.” Will you not do this? Oh, I pray God you may! Sitting in these pews, you may engage the services of the great Advocate. Cry in your hearts, “Son of David, undertake for me; undertake my case.” Well now, supposing we have put it all into His hands, and He who is called Wonderful is received as our Counselor to plead for us, what is next to be done? First He bids us prepare to meet our God by at once taking up our true position as sinners. Let us plead guilty; let us make a full and penitent confession; we cannot be saved by Christ unless we will do as He bids us; faith is only *real* as it is *obedient*. One of the first gospel exhortations which Jesus gives us is this, that we confess our sins. O that we may honestly plead guilty, for our iniquity stares us in the face, and we ought heartily to make acknowledgment of it, for it is an evil and a bitter thing, and has worked us woe-ful damage! O great Counselor, if You bid us plead guilty, we do so with many tears and with broken hearts; we do confess that all our hope must lie in divine mercy, for we have no merit; lost and undone, we cry, “Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!” And what is next? Why then, the great Counselor will enter a plea for us, which will bar all further action against us; though we have confessed that we are guilty, He knows how at the great judgment seat to plead a legal argument for the removal of all punishment! What does He plead? Here is His argument, “My Father,” He says, “I stood of old in the place of these who have committed their case to My hands, and who plead guilty at Your judgment seat. I suffered for their sins; I bore, that they might never bear Your righteous ire; I satisfied Your law on their behalf; I claim, My Father, that they go free.” The infinite Majesty admits the plea. O brothers and sisters, if your case is in the hands of Christ, and you confess your guilt, do you not see how He sets you free so that you may be prepared to meet your God? Because you can plead the blood of Jesus, the atonement of the great Substitute for sinners, and covered with that substitution, you can stand accepted in the beloved! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

But you have not heard the Counselor through yet, for as He goes on to speak before the infinite Majesty, He pleads, “My Father, I obeyed the law on their behalf; I kept it in its very jots and tittles; I made it honorable, and now the righteousness which I achieved, I have made over unto them, for all that I am is theirs. My righteousness is their righteousness, and they shall stand accepted in the beloved.” The great Judge of all admits the fact, and He receives into His bosom, and into His glory poor souls who had sinned and pleaded guilty, but who now have imputed to them the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and are justified by faith which is in Him; all their iniquities are blotted out! O don’t you see, dear friends, what it is to be prepared to meet God? Now we have a good case; now we are not afraid of the last court session; our case is in the hands of a blessed Advocate whose pleading must prevail; all that you and I have now to do is to prove by our actions that we really have believed in Christ. Let us go on to justify our faith if indeed, our faith has justified us; let us prove the sincerity of our confidence in Christ by the holiness of our lives, by the devotedness of those lives to His honor and glory; let us wake up all our powers and passions that we may become His servants to the highest extent and manhood’s energy—living, laboring, working for Christ, because He has undertaken our case, and will save us at the last.

Thus have I set before you what it is to be prepared to meet God, in the hope that many here will make ready to meet Him; and now let me remind you that the subject on which I have spoken this morning may have a much nearer interest to some of you than you imagine. It has a very near interest to every one of us; it is but a matter of time, and all of us must appear at the divine tribunal—but there are some to whom it may have a peculiarly close bearing. As I just told you, I did not select this subject; I had no idea of preaching from it—the subject selected me! I was dragged into this present line of thought! I am

a pressed man in this service! That sick young woman's necessities forced me to this subject. Why this special arrangement? I believe the reason is because there are some here this morning who are now receiving the last warning they will ever have; I am solemnly persuaded that I have among my hearers and readers some to whom this feeble word of mine is no other than an arrow from the bow of the Almighty God; to others it is a final message of His mercy, and if this does not strike them, wound them, and drive them to Christ, nothing ever will! From this day forth they shall feel no more stirrings of conscience, or strivings of the Holy Spirit; perhaps before another Sunday's bell shall ring, some of you now listening to my voice will be in the land of spirits, and have passed the solemn test—weighed in the balances and found wanting! If it is so, and it were hard for any man here to prophesy that it shall not be so, for where several thousands are met together, the very chances of mortality, as men call it, go to make us fear it. The fact of this subject being thrust upon me makes me feel as though a prophetic impulse were in it. Then, if it is so, you and I, whoever you may be, fated for death this week, stand in a peculiar relationship to each other. I may be gazing straight into those eyes which shall never look upon me again till we meet at the judgment bar; and if I am not faithful to your soul, you may rise up amidst that throng and say, "I strayed into that Tabernacle, and I listened to you, but you played with your theme; you were not earnest, and so I was lost." So then I will be earnest! I evoke you by the living God, escape from the wrath to come! As the Lord lives, there is but a step between you and death! Flee for your life! Look not behind you! Turn your whole soul to Jesus! A crucified Savior waits for a lost sinner, willing to receive him, willing to receive him now! Now you cannot look me in the face in the next world, and say I did not speak to you earnestly. O that the glance which we exchange at this moment may be succeeded in that tremendous day by a glance of recognition in which there shall be the soft emotions of gratitude and affection, as you and I shall say to each other there, "Blessed be God that we met on that hallowed Sunday, for now we shall meet forever before the throne of Him who lives and was dead, and is alive forever more, and has the keys of hell and of death." God bless you, every one of you, richly, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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