

THE PROFIT OF GODLINESS IN THE LIFE TO COME

NO. 946

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1870,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise
of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”
1 Timothy 4:8.*

WE endeavored, this morning, to prove the profitableness of godliness as to the life which now is, and to discriminate as to what the promise of this life really is. We tried to prove that “the promise” of the life that now is, its real and highest beauty and excellence, consists in peace of mind, peace with God, contentment, and happiness of spirit, and while we pointed out that godliness did not ensure wealth, or health, or even a good name—for all these even to godly men might not be granted—yet we showed that the great end of our being, that for which we live and were created, that which will best make it worth while to have existed, shall certainly be ours if we are godly. We did not think it an unimportant matter to expound the bearing of true religion upon this present state, but I trust we did not exaggerate that view so as to keep those in countenance who dream that this world is the main consideration, and that the wisest man is he who makes it the be-all and the end-all of his existence.

Beloved friends, there is another life beyond this fleeting existence. This fact was dimly guessed by heathens. Strange as their mythology might be, and singular as were their speculations as to the regions of bliss and woe, even barbarous nations have had some glimmering light concerning a region beyond the river of death. Hardly yet have we been able to discover a people with no idea of an after-state. Man has scarcely ever been befooled into the belief that death is the finis of the volume of his existence. Few, indeed have been so lost to natural light as to have forgotten that man is something more than the dog which follows at his heel.

That which was dimly guessed by the heathen was more fully worked out by the bolder and clearer minds among philosophers. They saw something about man that made him more than either ox or horse. They marked the moral government of God in the world, and as they saw the wicked prosper, and the righteous afflicted, they said, “There must be another state in which the GREAT AND JUST ONE will rectify all these wrongs—reward the righteous, and condemn the wicked.” They thought it proved that there would be another life, they could not, however, speak with confidence, for reason, however right her inferences, does not content the heart, or give “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen.” That is reserved for faith.

The best light of heathens was but twilight, yet was there so much light in their obscurity that they looked beyond the stream of death, and thought they saw shades as of creatures that had once been here, and could not die. What was thus surmised and suspected by the great thinkers of antiquity has been brought to light in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has declared to us that we shall live again, that there will be a judgment and a resurrection both of the righteous and of the wicked, and that there will be awarded to the righteous a reward that shall know no end, while the wicked shall be driven into a banishment to which there shall be no close. We are not left to speculate nor to rely upon unaided reason. We have been told upon the authority of God, sometimes by the lips of prophets, at other times by the lips of His own dear Son, or by His inspired apostles, that there is a world to come, a world of terrors to the ungodly, but a world of promised blessing to the righteous.

My dear hearer, if it be so, what will the world to come be to you? Will you inherit its *promise*? You may easily answer that question by another—Have you godliness? If you have, you have the promise of

the life that is to come. Are you ungodly? Do you live without God? Are you without faith in God, without love to God, without reverence to God? Are you without the pardon which God presents to believers in Christ Jesus? Then are you without hope, and the world to come has nothing for you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation which will devour you.

I. GODLINESS CONCERNING THE LIFE TO COME POSSESSES A PROMISE UNIQUE AND UNRIVALLED.

I say a unique promise, for, observe, *infidelity makes no promise of a life to come*. It is the express business of infidelity to deny that there is such a life, and to blot out all the comfort which can be promised concerning it. Man is like a prisoner shut up in his cell, a cell all dark and cheerless save that there is a window through which he can gaze upon a glorious landscape. Infidelity comes like a demon into the cell, and with desperate hands blocks up the window, that man may sit forever in the dark, or at best may have the boasted light of a farthing rushlight called free-thinking. All that infidelity can tell him is that he will die like a dog. Fine prospect for a man who feels eternity pulsing within his spirit! I know I shall not die like the beast that perishes, and let who will propound the theory, my soul sickens and turns with disgust from it, nor would it be possible by the most specious arguments so to pervert the instincts of my nature as to convince me that I shall thus die, and that my soul, like the flame of an out-burnt candle, shall be quenched in utter annihilation.

My inmost heart revolts at this degrading slander, she feels an innate nobility that will not allow her to be numbered with the beasts of the field, to die as they must do without a hope. Oh, miserable prospect! How can men be so earnest in proclaiming their own wretchedness? Enthusiasts for annihilation! Why not fanatics for hell itself? Godliness has promise of the life that is to come, but infidelity can do nothing better than deny the ennobling revelation of the great Father, and bid us be content with the dark prospect of being exterminated and put out of being. Aspiring, thoughtful, rational men, can you really be content with the howling wildernesses and dreary voids of infidelity? Leave them, I pray you, for the goodly land of the Gospel which flows with milk and honey, abandon extinction for immortality, renounce perishing for paradise.

Again, let me remark that this hope is unique because *poperly in any of its forms cannot promise us the life which is to come*. I know that it speaks as positively as Christianity does about the fact that there will be another life, but it gives us no promise of it, for what is the expectation of the Romanist, even of the best Romanist? Have I not aforetime remarked to you that we have heard—and therefore it is no slander for us to say it—of masses being said for the repose of the souls of the most eminent Romanists? Cardinals distinguished for their learning, confessors and priests distinguished for their zeal, and even Popes reputed to be remarkable for holiness and even infallibility, have when they died gone somewhere, I know not where, but somewhere where they have needed that the faithful should pray for the repose of their souls.

That is a very poor look-out for ordinary people like ourselves, for if these superlatively good people are still uneasy in their souls after they die, and have in fact, according to their own statements, gone to purgatorial fires or to purgatorial chills, to be tossed, as certain of their prophets have informed us, from icebergs into furnaces, and then back again, until by some means, mechanical, spiritual, or otherwise, sin shall be burnt out, or evaporated from them, if that be their expectation, I think I should be inclined, as the Irishman said, to become a Protestant heretic, and go to heaven at once, if there be so sorry a prospect for the Catholic.

Godliness has the promise of the life which is to come, but it is altogether unique in possessing such a promise. No voice from the Vatican sounds one-half so sweetly as that from Patmos, which we unabashedly accept, “I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” Our sorrow for the departed is not embittered by the absence of hope, for we believe that “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” Neither superstition on the one hand, nor unbelief on the other, so much as dares to offer a promise as to the life to come.

No system based upon human merit ever gives its votaries a promise of the life to come, which they can really grasp and be assured of. No self-righteous man will venture to speak of the assurance of faith, in fact, he denounces it as presumption. He feels that his own basis is insecure, and therefore he suspects the confidence of others to be as hollow as his own. He lives between hope and fear, a joyless, unsatisfied life, while the believer in Jesus, knowing that there is no condemnation to him, awaits the hour of his entrance into heaven with joyful expectancy. What is never promised to man's fancied righteousness is secured to all who possess the righteousness of Christ Jesus. "Come, you blessed," is their assured welcome, to be with Jesus, their everlasting portion.

Godliness has a monopoly of heavenly promise as to the blessed future. There is nothing else beneath high heaven to which any such promise has ever been given by God, or of which any such promise can be supposed. Look at *vice*, for instance, with its pretended pleasures—what does it offer you? It offers pleasure in the life that now is, but as it speaks, you detect the lie upon its face, for even in the life that now is vice gives but a hasty intoxication, to be followed by woe and redness of the eyes.

'Tis true it satiates with sweets, but in all its tables there is vomit, satiety follows its gluttony, dissatisfaction comes with discontent, loathing, remorse, and misery, like hounds at its heels. Vice dares not say, it never has had the effrontery yet to say, "Do evil and live in sin, and eternal life will come out of it." No, the theater at its door does not proffer you eternal life, it invites you to the pit. The house of evil communications, the drunkard's settle, the gathering place of scorners, the chamber of the strange woman—none of these has yet dared to advertise a promise of eternal life as among the boons that may tempt its votaries. At best sin gives you but bubbles, and feeds you upon air. The pleasure vanishes, and the misery is left. Even this side the tomb the hollowness of sinful mirth is clear to all but the most superficial, and he said truly who sang concerning merry worldlings—

*"They grin; but wherefore? And how long the laugh?
Half ignorance, their mirth; and half a lie;
To cheat the world, and cheat themselves, they smile.
Hard either task! The most abandoned own
That others, if abandoned, are undone:
Then, for themselves, the moment reason wakes,
Oh, how laborious is their gaiety!
They scarce can swallow their ebullient spleen,
Scarce muster patience to support the farce,
And pump sad laughter till the curtain falls.
Scarce did I say? Some cannot sit it out;
Oft their own daring hand the curtain draws,
And show us what their joy by their despair."*

If such is the failure of the mirth of fools this side of eternity, of what little benefit can it prove hereafter?

So with other things not sinful in themselves—there is no promise of the life that is to come appended to them. For instance, *birth*. What would not some men give if they could but somehow trace their pedigree up to a distinguished Crusader, or up to a Norman knight reported of in the battle-roll of Hastings? yet, nowhere in the world is there a promise of eternal life to blood and birth. "For when he dies he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him. Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise you, when you do well to yourself. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light."

Genealogies and pedigrees are poor things; trace us all up far enough, and we are all descended from that naked sinner who tried to cover his shame with fig leaves, and owed his first true garment to the charity of offended heaven. Let the pedigree run through the loins of kings, yea, and of mighty kings, and let every one of our forefathers have been distinguished for his valor, yet no man shall pretend,

because of this that eternal life will be secured thereby. Ah! no, the king rots like a slave and the hero is devoured by the worm as though he had been but a swineherd all his days, yea, and the flame unquenchable kindles an earl, and duke, and millionaire, as well as on serf and peasant.

And it is equally certain that no promise of the life that is to come is given to *wealth*. Men hoard it, and gather it, and keep it, and seal it down by bonds and settlements, as if they thought they could carry something with them, but when they have gained their utmost, they do not find that wealth has the promise even of this life, for it yields small contentment to the man who possesses it. "Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations, they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honor abides not."

As for the life to come, is there any supposable connection between the millions of the miser's wealth and the glory that is to be revealed hereafter? Nay, but by so much more as the man lives for this world, by so much the more shall he be accursed. He said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater," but God calls him a fool, and a fool he is, for when his soul is required of him, whose shall these things be which he had prepared? Nay, you may grasp the Indies if you will, you may seek to compass within your estates all the lands that you can see far and wide, but you shall be none the nearer to heaven when you have reached the climax of your avarice. There is no promise of the life that is to come in the pursuits of usury and covetousness.

Nor is there any such promise to *personal accomplishments and beauty*. How many live for that poor bodily form of theirs which so soon must molder back to the dust! To dress, to adorn themselves, to catch the glance of the admirer's eye, to satisfy public taste, to follow fashion! Surely an objective in life more frivolous never engrossed an immortal soul. It seems as strange as if an angel should be gathering daisies or blowing soap bubbles. An immortal spirit living to dress the body! To paint, to dye, to display a ribbon, to dispose a pin, is this the pursuit of an immortal? Yet tens of thousands live for little else.

But ah! there is no promise of the life to come appended to the noblest beauty that ever fascinated the eye. Far deeper than the skin is the beauty which is admired in heaven. As for earth's comeliness, how do time, and death, and the worm together, make havoc of it! Take up yonder skull, just upturned by the sexton's careless spade, "and get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, though she paint an inch thick, to this complexion she must come at last," all her dressing shall end in a shroud, and all her washings and her dainty ornaments shall only make her but the sweeter morsel for the worm. There is no promise of the life to come to these frivolities, wherefore then waste you your time and degrade your souls with them?

Nor even to *higher accomplishments than these* is there given any promise of the life to come. For instance, the attainment of learning, or the possession of that which often stands men in as good stead as learning, namely, cleverness, brings therewith no promise of future bliss. If a man be clever, if he can write interesting stories, if he can sketch the current fashions, if he can produce poetry that will survive among his fellow men—it matters not though his pen never wrote a line for Christ, and though he never uttered a sentence that might have led a sinner to the cross, though his work had no aim beyond this life, and paid no homage to the God of the Gospel, yet even professed Christians will fall at the man's feet, and when he dies will canonize him as a saint, and almost worship him as a demigod.

I reckon the humblest Christian that loved his God, though he could only speak stammeringly the profession of his faith, is nobler far than he who possessed the genius of a Byron or the greatness of a Shakespeare, and yet only used his ten talents for himself, and for his fellow men, but never consecrated them to the great Master to whom the interest of them altogether belonged.

No, there is no promise of the life that is to come to the philosopher, or to the statesman, or to the poet, or to the literary man, as such. They have no preference before the Lord, not gifts but grace must save them. Humbly, penitently, and believingly they must find the promise of eternal life in godliness, and if they have not godliness, they shall find it nowhere. Godliness has that promise, I say, and none besides. I saw in Italy standing at the corner of a road, as you may frequently see in Italy, a large cross, and on it were these words, which I had not often seen on a cross before, "*Spes unica*"—the only hope,

the one unique hope, the one only hope of mankind. So would I tell you that on Christ's cross there is written this day, "*Spes unica*"—the one hope of men. "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," but to nothing else anywhere, search for it high or low, on earth or sea, to nothing else is the promise given save to godliness alone.

II. I pass on to notice, in the second place, that THE PROMISE GIVEN TO GODLINESS IS AS COMPREHENSIVE AS IT IS UNIQUE.

I have not time on this occasion to go into all the promises of the life that is to come which belong to godliness, who shall give an inventory where the treasure is boundless, or map out a land which has no limit? It will suffice if I give you the heads of this great theme. That promise is something of this kind. The godly man, unless Christ shall come, will die as others die, as to the matter of outward fact, but his death will be very different in its essence and meaning. He will pass gently out of this world into the world to come, and then, he will begin to realize the promise which godliness gave him, for he will enter then, nay, he has entered now, upon an eternal life far other than that which belongs to other men.

The Christian's life shall never be destroyed, "Because I live, you shall live also," says Christ. There is no fear of the Christian's ever growing aged in heaven, or of his powers failing him. Eternal youth shall be to those who wear the unfading crown of life. Yon sun shall become black as a coal, yon moon shall fail until her pale beams shall never more be seen, the stars shall fall like withered figs, even this earth which we call stable, terming it *terra firma*, shall with yonder heavens be rolled up like a vestment that is worn out, and shall be laid aside among the things that were, but are not. Everything which can be seen is but a fruit with a worm at the core, a flower doomed to fade. But the believer shall live forever, his life shall be coeval with the years of the Most High. God lives ever, ever, ever, and so shall every godly soul. Christ, having given him eternal life, he is one with Jesus, and as Jesus lives forever, even so shall he.

In the moment of death the Christian will begin to enjoy this eternal life in the form of wonderful felicity in the company of Christ, in the presence of God, in the society of disembodied spirits and holy angels. I say in a moment, for from the case of the dying thief we learn that there is no halt upon the road from earth to heaven—

*"One gentle sigh the fetter breaks:
We scarce can say, 'He's gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Its mansion near the throne."*

How does Paul put it? "Absent from the body," but you have hardly said that word, when he adds, "present with the Lord." The eyes are closed on earth and opened again in heaven. They loose their anchor, and immediately they come to the desired haven. How long that state of disembodied happiness shall last it is not for us to know, but by and by, when the fullness of time shall come, the Lord Jesus shall consummate all things by the resurrection of these bodies. The trumpet shall sound, and as Jesus Christ's body rose from the dead as the firstfruits, so shall we arise, every man in his own order. Raised up by divine power, our very bodies shall be reunited with our souls to live with Christ, raised however, not as they shall be put into the grave to slumber, but in a nobler image.

They were sown like the shriveled seed, they shall come up like the fair flowers which decorate your summer gardens. Planted as a dull unattractive bulb, to develop into a glory like that of a lovely lily with snowy cup and petals of gold. Sown like the shriveled barley or wheat, to come up as a fair green blade, or to become the golden ear. "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Come, my soul, what a promise is given you in God's Word of the life that is to come! A promise for my soul, did I say? A promise for my body too. These aches and pains shall be repaid, this weariness and these sicknesses shall all be recompensed. The body shall be remarried to the soul, from which it parted with so much grief, and the marriage shall be the more

joyous because there never shall be another divorce. Then, in body and in soul made perfect, the fullness of our bliss shall have arrived.

But will there not be a judgment? Yes, a judgment certainly, and if not in set ceremonial a judgment for the righteous, as some think, yet in spirit certainly. We shall gather at the great white throne, gather with the goats or gather with the sheep. But there is this promise to you who are godly, that you shall have nothing to fear in that day of judgment, you shall go to it with the blood-bought pardon in your bosom, to be shown before the judgment seat. You shall go to that judgment to have it proclaimed to men, to angels, and to devils, that “there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” none being able to lay anything to the charge of those for whom Jesus Christ has died, and whom the Father justifies.

You need not fear the judgment, you need not fear the conflagration of the world, or whatever else of terror shall be attendant upon the coming of Christ as a thief in the night. You have the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Listen to me. You have the promise that you shall enjoy forever the high dignity of being priests and kings unto God. You sons of toil, you daughters of poverty, you shall be peers in heaven, you shall be courtiers of the Prince Imperial, yourselves being princes of the blood-royal. Your heads shall wear crowns, your hands shall wave palms of triumph. And as you shall have glorious rank, so shall you have companions suitable to your condition.

The worldling’s haunt, the synagogue of Satan, shall be far away from you. No more shall you sojourn in Mesech and dwell in the tents of Kedar. No idle talk shall vex you, no blasphemies shall inflict themselves upon your ears. You shall hear the songs of angels, and as they charm you, you shall also charm them by making known unto them the manifold wisdom of God. The holiest and best of men, redeemed by Jesus’ precious blood, shall commune with you, and best of all—

*“He that on the throne doth reign
You for evermore shall feed;
With the tree of life sustain,
To the living fountain lead.”*

You shall have unbroken fellowship with God and with His Christ. What ravishing joy this will be we shall better be able to experience than to imagine. Communion with Jesus here below uplifts us far above the world, but what its delights are in the unclouded skies of face-to-face fellowship, has not yet entered into the heart of man.

Hearken yet more, beloved. You shall have suitable occupation. I know not what you may have to do in heaven, but I do know it is written, “They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads, and his servants shall serve him.” They serve Him day and night in His temple. You would not be happy without an occupation. Minds made like yours could not find rest except upon the wing, delightful and honorable employment shall be allotted you, suitable to your perfected capabilities.

But, mark you, you shall have rest as well as service. No wave of trouble shall roll over your peaceful bosoms. You shall forever bathe your souls in seas of blissful rest—no care, no fear, no unsatisfied desire, for all desires shall be consummated, all expectations be fulfilled. God shall be your portion, the infinite Spirit your friend, and the ever-blessed Christ your elder brother. Into the joy of heaven, which knows no bounds, shall you enter, according to His words, “Enter you into the joy of your Lord.”

And all this, and infinitely more than my tongue can tell you, shall be yours forever and forever, without fear of ever losing it, or dread of dying in the midst of it. “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love him, but he has revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” All the kingdom which the Father has prepared, and the place which the Son has prepared, are yours, O believer, by the promise of the Lord, for “whom he justified, them he also glorified.” The promise goes with godliness, and if you have godliness, there is nothing in

heaven of joy, there is nothing there of honor, there is nothing there of rest and peace, which is not yours, for godliness has the promise of it, and God's promise never fails—

*“Lo! I see the fair immortals,
Enter to the blissful seats;
Glory opes her waiting portals,
And the Savior's train admits.*

*All the chosen of the Father,
All for whom the Lamb was slain,
All the church appear together,
Wash'd from every sinful stain.*

*His dear smile the place enlightens
More than thousand suns could do;
All around, His presence brightens,
Changeless, yet forever new.*

*Blessed state! beyond conception!
Who its vast delights can tell?
May it be my blissful portion,
With my Savior there to dwell.”*

Perhaps within the next ten minutes we may be there! Who knows? I had half said, “God grant it to me!” No doubt, many anxious spirits would be glad to end so soon life's weary journey, and rest in the Father's home.

III. Now, very briefly, consider another point. I have shown you that the promise appended to godliness is unique and comprehensive, and now observe that IT IS SURE.

“Godliness has promise,” that is to say, *it has God's promise*. Now, God's promise is firmer than the hills. He is God, and cannot lie. He will never retract the promise, nor will He leave it unfulfilled. He was too wise to give a rash promise, He is too powerful to be unable to fulfill it. “Has he said, and shall he not do it?” Already tens of thousands to whom the promise was made have obtained a measure of this bliss in the glorification of their perfect spirits. We are on the road to the same happy state. Some of us are on the river's brink. Perhaps the Lord may come suddenly, and we shall be changed, and so perfected without dying. Be that as the Lord wills, it is not a question which disturbs us. Our faith is strong and firm. We are sure that we, too, shall enter into the rest which remains, and with all the blood-washed multitude shall in wonder and surprise adore the God before whose throne we shall cast our crowns!

IV. But I shall not tarry upon that, for there comes a fourth thought. This promise is A PRESENT PROMISE.

You should notice the participle, “*having* promise.” It does not say that godliness after awhile will get the promise, but godliness has promise now at this very moment. My dear hearer, if you are godly, that is, if you have submitted to God's way of salvation, if you trust God, love God, serve God, if you are, in fact, a converted man, you have now the promise of the life that is to come.

When we get a man's promise in whom we trust, we feel quite easy about the matter under concern. A note of hand from many a firm in the city of London would pass current for gold any day in the week, and surely when God gives the promise, it is safe and right for us to accept it as if it were the fulfillment itself, for it is quite as sure. We have the promise, let us begin to sing about it, what is more, we have a part of the fulfillment of it, for, “I give unto my sheep eternal life,” says Christ, shall we not sing concerning that? Believe in Jesus, you have eternal life now.

There will be no new life given to you after death. You have even now, O Christian, the germ within you which will develop into the glory-life above. Grace is glory in the bud. You have the earnest of the Spirit, you have already a portion of the promise which is given to godliness. Now, what you should do is to live *now* in the enjoyment of the promise. You cannot enjoy heaven, for you are not there, but you can enjoy the promise of it. Many a dear child, if it has a promise of a treat in a week's time, will go skipping among its little companions as merry as a lark about it. It has not the treat yet, but it expects it, and I have known in our Sunday schools our little boys and girls months before the time came for them to go into the country, as happy as the days were long, in prospect of that little pleasure. Surely you and I ought to be childlike enough to begin to rejoice in the heaven that is so soon to be ours. I know tomorrow some of you will be working very hard, but you may sing—

*“This is not my place of resting,
Mine’s a city yet to come;
Onward to it I am hastening—
On to my eternal home.”*

Perhaps you will have to fight the world's battles, and you will find them very stern. Oh! but you can sing even now of the palm branch, and of the victory that awaits you, and as your faith looks at the crown that Christ has prepared for it, you will be much rested even in the heat of the battle. When a traveler who has been long an exile returns home, it may be after walking many miles, he at last gets to the brow of the hill, where he can see the church of the little town, and get a bird's-eye view of the parish. He gazes awhile, and as he looks again and again, says to himself, “Yes, that is the High Street there, and yonder is the turning by the old inn, and there—yes, there I can see the gable of the dear old house at home.” Though his feet may be blistered, the way may have been long, and the sweat may be pouring from his face, yet he plucks up courage at the sight of home. The last mile down hill is soon over, for he has seen his long-loved home. Christians, you may see it, you may see the goodly land from Nebo even now—

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

When the crusaders first came in sight of Jerusalem, though they had a hard battle before them ere they could win it, yet they fell down in ecstasy at the sight of the holy city. And do not you and I say—“Soldiers of the cross, my fellow crusaders in the holy war of righteousness, will you not in prospect of the coming glory sing—

*“O my sweet home, Jerusalem,
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see!”*

When the brave soldiers, of whom Xenophon tells us, came at last in sight of the sea, from which they had been so long separated, they cried out, “Thallassé! Thallassé!”—“The sea! The sea!” And we, though death appears between us and the better land, can yet look beyond it and see the—

*“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood
Arrayed in living green,”*

and bless God that a sight of what is to be revealed renders the burdens of the way light as we march towards glory. Oh! live, live in the foretaste of heaven. Let worldlings see that—

“The thought of such amazing bliss

Doth constant joys create."

V. Last of all. This promise which is appended to godliness is A VERY NECESSARY ONE.

It is a very necessary one, for ah! *if I have no promise of the life that is to come, where am I? where am I? and where shall I be? where shall I be?* I live, I know, I die, I know I must, and if it all is true as this old Book, my mother's Book, tells me, that there is a hereafter, if I have no godliness, then woe worth the day to me! Oh! how much I want the promise of the life to come, for if I have not that *I have a curse for the life to come*. I cannot die, God has made my soul immortal. Even God Himself will never annihilate me, for He has been pleased to create me an immortal spirit, and on I must live forever. There be some who say, and I think the doctrine is full of unnumbered perils to the souls of men, that God made man naturally mortal, and the soul can become extinct, and they go on to teach that sinners are made to live after death on purpose to be tormented for a longer or shorter time, and then at last are annihilated. What a God must He be to give them a life they need not have, on purpose that He might torment them!

I know no such God. But HE, whom I adore, in His unbounded goodness, gave to mankind what was in itself a wondrous blessing—immortality, and if you, my hearer, choose to turn it into a curse forever, it is you that are to be blamed for it, not God who gave you the immortality which, if you believe in the appointed Savior, will be to you an eternity of bliss. You are now past all recall an immortal being, and if you die without hope in Christ there will remain only this for you, to go on sinning in another state as you have gone on sinning here, but you will get no pleasure from it as you think you do sometimes here—on the contrary, to be tortured with remorse concerning it, and vexed with angry passions to think that you cannot have your will, passions that will make you struggle yet worse against your God, and make your misery consequently the greater.

The worm that never dies will be your own furious hatred of God. The fire that never shall be quenched is probably the flames of your own insatiate lust after evil. I say not that there will not be bodily pains, but the natural results of sin are the deepest hell to the soul. Sin has made you unhappy now. It will ripen, it will increase, when everything that checks it shall be taken off, your true character will be developed, and with that development will come enlarging wretchedness. Separated from the company of the righteous, and placed among the wicked, you will go on to be worse and worse, and every step in the increase of sin necessitates an increase of misery.

It is not true that God will punish you in mere caprice. He has ordained, and right enough was He to ordain it, that sin should punish itself, that sin should be its own misery, and its own anguish. Sin will be to you a never-ending death. O wherefore will you die? Wherefore will you die? Wherefore will you by the love of sin bring upon yourselves an eternity of sin, an eternity of suffering? Turn you to Christ. I pray His Spirit to turn you. Come you now, come you now, and lay hold on eternal life!

I have been thinking while I have been preaching to you this evening, of my own self awhile, and I shall turn my thoughts to myself and any others who are preachers or teachers, and who try to do good to others. Years ago Hamburgh was nearly half of it burned down, and among the incidents that happened, there was this one. A large house had connected with it a yard in which there was a great black dog, and this black dog in the middle of the night barked and howled most furiously. It was only by his barking that the family was awakened just in time to escape from the flames, and their lives were spared, but the poor dog was chained to his kennel, and though he barked and thus saved the lives of others, he was burned himself. Oh! do not you who work for God in this church, perish in that fashion. Do not permit your sins to enchain you, so that while you warn others you become lost yourselves. Do see that you have the godliness which has the promise of the life that is to come.

And now, you who really desire to find godliness, remember, it is to be had in Christ, and only in Christ. I was in Windermere some three weeks ago, on a hot, dusty day, and I saw a little gushing stream of water, and a chain with a ladle to it for the passerby to drink. I wanted to drink, and I went to it, but the ladle was cracked quite through, was very rusty, and would not hold a drop of water, neither was the

water, if it had been held in it, fit to drink. There are ways of salvation chosen by some that are equally as deceptive. They mock the traveler. But oh! my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, is a river of mercy, deep and broad. You have but to stoop and drink, and you may drink as much as you will, and none shall say you nay. Have you not His word for it, “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”?

God grant you may with your heart believe the Gospel of Jesus, for Christ’s sake.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 25:31-46.

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