

PRIDE THE DESTROYER

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A SERMON

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“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.”

Habakkuk 2:4.

HABAKKUK had to prophesy to the people that God would eventually deliver them out of the hand of the Chaldeans, and send them better times; but he warned them that, although the vision would come, and, as far as God was concerned, it would not really tarry, yet they would grow impatient under their suffering, and they would say that the vision did tarry. And so, indeed, it would seem to do while they were suffering; and the prophet here hints at the reason why God's merciful deliverances may sometimes be delayed. The Lord is willing to give mercy directly, for He delights not in judgment. If it were according to wisdom, we would have nothing from God's hand but that which is pleasant and sweet, for He would not cause any one of His creatures a needless pang, and He is full of gentleness and tenderness and mercy.

The reason why the vision tarried in Habakkuk's day, and the mercy was slow in coming, was that the trials of the people might act as a test of their character. In order to separate the precious from the vile, God used the winnowing fan of affliction, that the chaff might be blown away, and the pure wheat remain. Often, in national trials, the furnace is heated exceedingly hot, and the fire is blown upon with a fierce blast, in order that the gold may be divided from the dross. It is always God's purpose to put a division between Israel and Egypt, between him that fears the Lord, and him that fears Him not. You and I cannot make that division. In this world, it is very dangerous work to try to pull up the tares, for we are very apt to pull up the wheat also. When, at last, we shall haul our big net to shore, then may we begin to separate the contents, and put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away. But now, if we were to try to sort the contents of the drag net, we would probably throw away as many of the good as of the bad, and save as many of the bad as of the good. We cannot do the separating work, but God is constantly doing it; and often, in times of trouble, trial becomes a very searching test of men. Those who looked like true believers, while all was smooth and bright, have given up their confidence in God when trial has been fierce and long-protracted. This is the patience of the saints; but, alas! This is often the impatience of mere professors, and God thus makes men see what they really are. They perceive what is in their hearts when they are exposed to long-continued and severe affliction. See, then, one reason why troubles come upon both the righteous and the wicked—that men's true character may be discovered, and that the secrets of their hearts may be revealed.

It happened in this case, and it happens in a great many other instances, that the fierce heat of the furnace of trouble separates men into two classes. One class is composed of men who are high and lifted up in heart. Our text says, “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” Then there is another class, namely, the just; and of these the text says, “The just shall live by his faith.” My dear friends, when trial comes on us—as it surely will—may you and I be able to bear it! May we prove to be men who can endure it; and if it is so, we shall live by faith; that will be our distinguishing mark. But if any of us are proud, and have lofty ideas concerning ourselves, “the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts.” Let us bear this great truth in mind as we come to the direct consideration of our text.

I. I shall speak first upon these words of the Lord to Habakkuk as REVEALING A GREAT SIN: “His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.” The great sin is the sin of pride, the lifting up of the soul in rebellion against the Lord.

This sin of pride is often forgotten; and many persons do not even think it is a sin at all. Here is a man who says that he is absolutely perfect. Does he know what the sin of pride really is? What prouder being can there be than one who talks like that? “Oh, but!” he says, “I am humble.” Is there any soul living that is as proud as he is who says he is humble? Is not that the acme and climax of pride? Another says, “I hate flattery.” Did not one say to Julius Caesar that he hated flatterers, “being then,” as the world’s poet says, “most flattered”? Yes, assuredly, that soft silken voice that says, “You never give way to pride, you are of a lowly spirit, you are never lifted up; in fact, you hardly appreciate yourself highly enough, and nobody else does so, you are so humble;”—why, that is the worst kind of pride, only it has put on the sheepskin instead of coming out in its true wolfish garb.

Pride, to begin with, I am afraid, may be set down as *the sin of human nature*. If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search among the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar’s rags as in a prince’s robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk? If anyone held up his hand, and said, “I am one,” I would answer, “That is Number One in the widest street of the whole city of Self-conceit;” for, when we fancy that we have clean escaped from pride, it is only because we have lost the sense of its weight through being surrounded with it. A man who bears a bowl of water feels its weight, but if he goes right into the water, it will be all over him, and yet he will not notice the burden of it. He who lives in pride up to the neck—no, he who is over head and heels in pride, is the most likely to imagine that he is not proud at all.

Pride takes all manner of shapes. You and I, I daresay, have very different forms of pride. Perhaps my pride does not hold any relationship to your pride; and your pride—of course it is a very right sort of pride. “It is what I call a proper pride,” says one. Yes, that is your sort of pride. Mine, I own, is a very improper one; I frankly make that confession, I cannot and dare not think that it has any propriety about it at all; it is a miserable, wretched affair. So is yours, I think; and you would agree with me if you could but see it as it really is. But pride takes all manner of shapes. Have you never seen it in the man of property? He is a very important individual. It may be that his property is not very large; but, still, considering the village in which he lives, he is quite a big man—and on the vestry—why, he is as big as an emperor! You and I do not, perhaps, think much of him; but that does not matter to him, for in his own estimation he is a very great man. Then there is a London merchant; if he has succeeded in life, what a great man he is, how proud, how exclusive! How he looks down upon his fellow men! How could you, being of an inferior grade, venture into his pew, and sit side by side with him? He carries his pride even into the house of God; we have seen it there, and mourned over it, but it is easy enough for a man to become proud of his possessions. Another man, with no possessions, is proud of his bodily strength; he is very strong, let anybody wrestle with him, and he shall see what a Samson he is. And, oh! How vain-glorious he grows, and how proud—proud of his strength of muscle and sinew and bone! Another man is proud of his talent. If he has not acquired any wealth by it, yet he ought to have done so. If the world has not yet recognized him as a genius, he has recognized himself most distinctly. He is a very first-class man in his own line of things; hear how he boasts of what he has learned! We have known others boast of their character. When we have explained what “a sinner” means, they have been kind enough to say, in a complimentary sort of way, “Yes, we are all sinners;” but they did not mean that they had really sinned at all. No, not they; they had a fine, splendid, unworn righteousness that was “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” You know the good people I mean, always able to glory that they have kept the law from their youth up, and have done what they ought to have done; that is a form that pride takes very frequently.

Even in people who know the Lord, see what relics of pride there will often be. Remember what Mr. Bunyan said on one occasion. After he had done preaching, a brother came to him, and said, “You have preached an admirable sermon.” “Ah!” said Bunyan, “you are too late; the devil told me that before I got

down the pulpit stairs.” A good brother prayed at the prayer meeting very sweetly, very devoutly; and when he had finished, there came a soft whisper in his ear, “You have quite recovered that prayer meeting from its dullness; what a wonderful man you are!” And when we have not ventured to do anything of the sort in public, if we get five minutes’ communion with God in secret prayer, then, up comes Satan again, and says, “Oh, you are growing in grace! You are a wonderful Christian.” If you cannot realize your Lord’s presence, and you are humbled and bowed to the dust because you have not that enjoyment of God which you used to have, then Satan comes, and says, “How tender of conscience you are! How jealous of yourself! How watchful you have been!” And up go your top-gallant sails, and all your flags of pride are flying in the breeze as you think what a fine saint you are. So, you see, it is as I said, pride takes many shapes.

Now, in all cases, *pride is most unreasonable*. There is never in a poor sinner any reason why he should be proud. Suppose a man is wealthy; well, who gave that wealth to him? And having it now, how much of it can he carry away with him? And is wealth always a testimonial to the character of its possessor? Is it not sometimes given to the very basest of mankind? And though it is, in some cases, the reward of integrity, and of industry, and of perseverance and self-denial, yet even then it does not always bring comfort to a man’s heart, and we can ask him, “What have you that you have not received?” Of all forms of pride, this pride of wealth is one of the basest. Suppose a man boasts of his talent, for what has he to pride himself in that? Did he make his own talent? Suppose that his skull happens to be a little bigger than his neighbor’s, and that there are certain organs there more fully developed than in others; did he create his own brain? Did he give himself his own capacities? There is a great deal in our descent and in our birth gifts; but, being gifts, these are not things for us to pride ourselves upon, for them we must give all the glory to God, for certainly they come from Him. And what if a man has a spotless character? Yet he who is most honest to himself knows that there are even within him secret things opposed to his God, and things to be repented of. And what if we have grace? O my brothers, the worst thing in the world would be to be proud of our grace, or of our graces, because these come to us as a bare act of charity. Shall the beggar be proud because he is a bigger beggar than others? Will a man who is very deeply in debt say, “I have reason to be more proud than you because I owe ten times as much as you do”? Yet that is just the condition of every man who has any grace; he owes it all to God, and he who has the most grace is the most in debt to his Lord. I think that, the more God’s glories strike our eyes, the humbler we shall lie; and the more grace we receive, the more we shall be like Peter when his boat was full of fish, and it began to sink, and he cried, under a sense of his own unworthiness, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Yes, as we get weighed down with mercy, we shall begin to sink in our own esteem; but there can never be any reasonableness in our dreaming that there is in us any cause for pride.

And to close this part of my discourse, let me remind you that, *wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God*. Why, pride is even hateful to men! Men cannot bear a proud man; and therefore it is that a proud man, who has any sense left, often sees that it is so, and he therefore tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble, when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot bear pride; it is a part of His daily business to put down the proud. When He lifts up His hands, it is either to bless the humble or else to abase the proud. “He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he has sent empty away.” He intends that the pride of all human glory shall be stopped, so He lifts His great battle-ax, and crashes through the shield of the mighty. He fits His arrow to the bow, and finds out the joints of the harness of the proud, and they fall before Him. God cannot endure them, for pride is a stab at Deity; it is an attack upon the undivided glory of God. “My glory will I not give to another.” He would as soon give it to graven images as to men, and He will not let either false gods or proud men have it. It is to Himself, and to Himself alone, that all praise and honor and glory must come.

Thus much, then, about the great sin revealed in our text. Let us pause a moment or two for silent prayer before we pass on to the next part of our subject.

II. Now let us think how THIS GREAT SIN BETRAYS A SAD EVIL: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him.”

If he is a proud man, he is not an upright man. If he thinks highly of himself, there is something out of the perpendicular. If a man says, "I do not need to make confession of sin, I do not need to come to Christ as a guilty sinner," then, friend, I must tell you that *you do not know the truth*. If you knew certain things truly, you would change your tune. For instance, a man who says, "I have kept the law," does not know what the law means. Perhaps he supposes that those ten great commandments only refuse him certain outward things; but he does not know that they are all spiritual—that, for instance, if the commandment says, "You shall not commit adultery," it is not merely the act of adultery that is forbidden, but every sin of the kind—every tendency to lewdness—every unchaste word or thought, for so Christ explains it: "I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." This makes the law look very different from the mere casual reading of it that many give. If it says, "You shall not covet," any thought of a desire to gain that which is my neighbor's, by unlawful means, in discontent with God's providence, comes under that law. So is it with all the commands; they are spiritual, they are far-reaching, and when a man understands their true character, he cries, "O my God, I have indeed broken Your holy law; how could I have kept it? From the first moment when I sinned, my fallen nature has incapacitated me from ever keeping this thrice-holy law of Yours."

If a man really knows the true character of the law, it may be that he does not know the truth about himself—does not know that he is foolish—does not know that the very springs of his nature are corrupt—does not know that out of the polluted fountain of his unregenerate heart there can only come corrupt streams. When he begins really to know himself as he is in the sight of God, then he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" but not till then. Hence, our text says, "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;" that is, it is not according to the truth, he does not know the truth, he does not judge according to the truth, but he judges according to a false standard.

This expression may also mean that *he does not seek the light*. You can often notice that if a man has a high conceit of himself that he is extremely good and excellent, and does not need to be saved by grace, he does not want to be told too much about himself. He likes to go to a place of worship where they prophesy very smooth things; and if he ever strays in where there is very plain talk, he says that the preacher is too personal. The Hindu thinks it is wicked to kill an insect, or to take life of any kind, and that he will surely not enter into his happy paradise if he does. When the missionary showed a Hindu, by means of a microscope, how many living creatures there were in a single drop of the water which was in a glass on the table, in order to convince him of the impossibility of avoiding the destruction of life if he drank the water, what did the Hindu do? Why, he smashed up the microscope! That was his way of answering it; and so, sometimes, if the truth is put very plainly so that men cannot escape from the force of it, they do not wish to know the uncomfortable truth; so they turn upon their heel, and find fault with the preacher, and refuse to hear any more from him. Now, he that does not want to know all the truth is not upright, for, as our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." But he that is upright in heart courts the light; he invites the inspection even of God Himself, for he dreads above all things the possibility of being self-deceived. O, dear friends, this pride, if we have it, betrays its dire evil by a lack of uprightness in not desiring the light!

And, yet further, there is another form of this lack of uprightness. A man whose soul is lifted up with pride has *his whole religion warped so that there is nothing upright about him*. Have you never heard him pray? "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are." This is the sum and substance of his prayer, for pride has warped it. If he praises God, it is not as a sinner saved by grace; he sings something about what he has done, and what he has become; and always the first point in his conversation is, "See what I am! See what I am!" Pride warps him everywhere, so that he cannot do a single action that is not affected by it. If he gives alms to the poor, he has his penny in one hand, but his other hand is holding to his mouth a trumpet, so that he may blow it at the corner of the street that everybody may know how generous he is. He spoils all that he does because his soul is lifted up with pride, which warps his whole life.

I believe, dear friends, that *a heart of this kind will never stand the test of the coming days*. Have you ever noticed that, when Paul quotes this verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he makes a very significant

addition to it? He says, “The just shall live by faith: but if any man draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” That is a kind of hint to us that, when the heart of a man is lifted up with pride, in due time he will draw back. I will tell you, dear friends, what I have seen many times. I have seen men, members of Christian churches, undoubtedly very earnest, very generous, indeed, all that you could wish them to be; they have prospered in worldly affairs, but where are they now? One of the severest tests that can be applied to any man is to let him be made wealthy; well might our Savior say, as the rich young man turned away from Him, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.” The true children of God can bear even this test, but there are many professors who cannot; wealth is a refining pot that tests the sincerity of their profession. This is how it acts. The man has grown too respectable to worship where he used to meet with a few poor godly people; he must go to some place where there is a higher class of society. It is true that there is no gospel preaching where he goes, and that there is all the hypocrisy of semi-Romanism; but the *elite* of the neighborhood go there, and so must he. If he happens to meet any of his old friends with whom he seemed to be so glad to have communion in years past, he scarcely recognizes them, he does not know them in the Lord; he has gone clean away from them. Is not that often the case? And why is it so? Because the gentleman always was a person of importance; and now, having grown wealthy, he is still more important; so he goes away from those who would be his best friends. That is because his soul is not upright in him.

I have also seen just the opposite of this man. I have seen persons grow very poor after being in circumstances of comparative comfort. Before they were poor, they seemed to be very earnest Christians; but, after a while, when poverty had overtaken them, they did not like to come among their old friends because their clothes were not quite as new, and their house was not on quite as good a street, and they were going down in the world. Instead of clinging to Christ all the more; instead of following after the Lord, and making sure of a heavenly inheritance when the world was slipping away from them, they have turned back, and have renounced whatever semblance of faith they ever possessed; and the reason is, because their soul was lifted up with pride, and was not upright. They never were truly brought low and humbled before God; and so, when the testing time came, away they went. Now, dear friends, such a test as this will be applied to all of you. You will either go up or go down; or else, if you remain in the same station of life, the test in your case will be time. You will grow weary in the ways of God, you will want some fresh thing unless the Lord has truly humbled you, and brought you to live by faith in Him. But if the Lord has worked in you effectually by His grace, then He may make you as rich as He likes, or as poor as He likes, or let you live as long as Methuselah if He likes, but you will stand fast to your profession because the root of the matter is in you. God grant that it may be so!

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, PRIDE OF HEART DISCOVERS IN MEN A SERIOUS OPPOSITION. Let me read the whole of our text: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but—*but* the just shall live by his faith.” And the *but* here seems to imply that, as long as a man’s soul is lifted up with pride, he will never truly know anything about faith, and never come to live by faith.

For, first, the gentleman is *too great to live by faith*. He will not even give himself time to consider what faith means. He is so busy in the City; he has to look after such a number of things; he is so important a person, that he cannot trouble his head about faith. Teach a Sunday school child, teach a servant girl, teach an old woman, teach a laborer if you please; but as for himself—well, to tell the whole truth, he does not care about religion. He says that he cannot bring his mind down to such a thing as that; his notion is that he is altogether too great a man to give himself to the consideration of this matter. Now, these are the people that destroy their own souls because they will not be candid enough to inquire and learn what the way of salvation is—

*“Were I so tall to reach the pole,
And grasp the ocean with a span,”—*

I would wish to know what God has to say to me; and if I could grow as holy as the archangel, I would still delight to sit at Jesus’ feet, and hear what He has to reveal to me. But there are some who are too big for that kind of thing; they will never believe in Christ, for they are too great even to consider what faith is.

And, next, there are some who are *too wise to ever believe*. They read certain “high-class modern literature,” and their minds have grown very expansive, and they know how to sort out that which is

philosophical and that which is not. They can judge their Creator, they are more infallible than the Holy Spirit, they sit in trial upon prophets and apostles, and upon the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and they pick and choose what they will believe, and what they will reject. Such people do not believe to the saving of the soul; of course, they do not, for it is essential to faith that you become as a little child; and until you do so, you cannot have true faith in Christ.

There are some who are not so much burdened with worldly wisdom, but *they fancy that they are too good to be saved*. I know that the notion with some people is that salvation is only for very wicked people—for those who have been to prison, those who have egregiously sinned against the rules of society. Do you not know, my dear hearer, that there is the same way of salvation for you who have been amiable and excellent and moral, as there is for the drunk and the thief? Do you not know that there is only one gate to heaven for the murderer, if he is saved, and for you who have kept the commandments from your youth up? “You must be born-again,” is a necessity for the children of saints as well as for the children of sinners. “You must be washed in the precious blood,” is as true for the very best of fallen humanity as for the very worst. By these stern truths, the axe is laid to the very root of the tree of self-righteousness. Oh that, men did but think of this! But they are so good—so very good—that they cannot imagine that they are to be saved like the very chief of sinners, and so they reject the only way of salvation.

And I have known some, too, who are *too “advanced” now to continue to live by faith*. They do not want to come to Christ just as they did at first; they are so “advanced” now that they stand on a different footing from what they did. Well, I can only say to such that I believe that this is nothing but pride of heart; as for myself, I will, by God’s grace, never go one inch beyond the position of Jack the Hucker—

*“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all.”*

This is the only ground upon which I dare set my feet; they always begin to slip and slide beneath me when I get beyond that. Christ for me, first and last, Alpha and Omega, the Beginner and Finisher of faith! I believe that every other ground of standing is a quicksand that will swallow a man up. “The just shall live by his faith;” and if any are getting so proud that they are living by their feelings, or living on their old experiences, I think that we may stand in doubt of them, and they have reason to stand in doubt of themselves. There was one who used to say that he was not half so much afraid of his sins as he was of what he conceived to be his good works, for his sins had humbled him full often, but what he thought were his good works had puffed him up, and done him much more mischief. I am more afraid of a lofty pride of self than of anything else under heaven. He that is down need fear no fall, but he that rises very high in his own esteem is not far from destruction. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

IV. I close my discourse with this last point. Our text, after having spoken against pride, DIRECTS US TO A VERY PLEASING CONTRAST: “The just shall live by his faith.”

There is a man with an upright heart, an honest tongue, a careful hand, an obedient walk. *He is a really just man*. Are there such? There are none that are perfectly just, but there are many who may be called just in the Scriptural sense of the term. They walk before God, and are perfect, even as was said of Job, “That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” Blessed be God, there are tens of thousands of His people that are just men whom He has taught to serve Him, to do as they would be done by, seeking to do to others as they would have others do to them; there are plenty of such. It is a beautiful sight to see a really just man. May we live in such company! May we die in such company!

Now, whenever you come to talk with these just men, you will find that *they are truly humble*. They do not live upon their works. The more holy a man is, generally the more he depreciates himself. You do not hear a just man saying, “I am living before God by my alms, by my prayers, by my repentance, by my fasting, by my church attendance, by my chapel attendance.” You never hear anything of the sort; a just man disclaims his own righteousness, thinks nothing of it, and wraps himself up in the righteousness of Christ, and says that he is “accepted in the Beloved.”

Our text says that this man “shall live by his faith.” That is to say, when trial comes, and the proud man dies, *the just man lives on*. Where is the man who had such a lofty idea of himself? Ah, where is he? He is gone; but this man of faith lives on. You know the story of the two martyrs; they had both witnessed a good confession, and at last they were laid by the heels in prison to wait for a few days and then to be burnt. One of them said to his fellow, “I am so afraid lest, when I come to the stake, the sharp pain should make a coward of me, and I should turn away, and deny my Savior.” “Oh!” replied the other, “I have no fears about that; my faith in God is so firm that I am sure He will help me through. I am confident in what I have believed. I shall die like a man; I am not at all afraid of the fire.” “Ah!” said the first, “I lie awake at night, for fire is a dreadful thing, and I wonder how I shall act when I begin to burn. I do love the Lord, I know; and I do trust Him; and if I turn aside, it will be an awful thing; but I am so afraid, for my flesh is very weak.” The other answered, “I cannot bear to hear you talk like that; here am I, full of confidence, and full of faith; I never have any such feelings as you have. You are very imperfect; I have gone far beyond you.” When they came to the stake, our poor tempted friend burned splendidly, blessing and praising and magnifying the Lord; and the great, self-confident boaster recanted, and saved his wretched life. His soul, which was lifted up, was not upright in him; but the just man lived, in the very best sense, by his faith, and triumphed even amidst the flames. I shall not wonder if many who have their topsails up are blown out of the water, and into the water, and wrecked, when the great winds of temptation are out; while many who are creeping along, afraid of the tempest, with nothing but bare poles, will outlive the storm.

It is not the man who is so great in his own sight that is great in the sight of God; but it is he that is broken and contrite, little and weak and trembling, and yet who believes in Jesus, and casts himself upon the great love of God in Christ, who shall live; yes, and he shall so live that, when he comes to die, *he shall die full of life, and he shall enter into life eternal*. I know that I am addressing some who say that they are afraid to die, and they think that they cannot be God’s people because of that fear. Do not distress yourself in that way, my dear friend; perhaps you are not called to die just yet, and you have therefore not yet had dying grace given to you; but you will have it when the time comes. A dear friend of mine had been for many years in great bondage because he thought that he was afraid to die, and God brought him out of that bondage in rather a singular manner. He happened to be in a London printing office, one day, and, next door, a wholesale chemist’s took fire. There were a great many explosions, and the place was burning furiously. He was upstairs, and others began running down to make their escape. My old friend was as cool as possible; he walked downstairs, he was in no hurry; and, though there was great danger, and everybody thought that the whole place and all that were in it would be burnt, he was quite calm. He said that when he reached the street, he stood and looked at the fire, and said to himself, “Now, when I seem to be in danger of death, I am perfectly calm and happy; so, when I really come to die, that is how I shall be; I am sure that I shall, for I have tested and proved it.” And you timid, nervous people, have you not found out for yourselves that, if ever you get into an accident, you are often the bravest people there? You feeble trembling ones seem strengthened up at the moment, and so shall it be when you come to die, if you are believers in Jesus Christ. He that loved you will not leave you in your last minutes. Would you leave your wife, would you leave your child, would you leave your husband, if you saw any of these dear ones in the agonies of death? No, if you were a thousand miles away, you would come home to them to wipe the death sweat from their brows, and moisten their parched lips, and do you think that our blessed God will be out of the way when we come to die? No. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” He will be there; and Jesus will be there; and the Holy Spirit will be there; and so we who believe in Jesus shall die in peace.

Remember how rapidly our lives are passing away. One after another, from this congregation, goes into eternity every week. Do not go into eternity without Christ, I beseech you. “When shall I go?” you ask. Ah! That I cannot tell. You know how, all through the year, our friends keep on going. There is not a week passes without it being said to me, “So-and-So is gone.” I ask, “Did I know him? Whereabouts did he sit?” I look at the spot, and I remember—“Yes, it was that grey-headed old man in that seat over yonder;” or, “that young man with a wife and three or four children.” Yes, they are gone; and if they were not saved, they are gone where hope can never reach them, where they are past all invitation,

where they must forever wring their hands in anguish because they would not have heaven and Christ on free-grace terms.

“Well, dear sir, we are going to think about these things.” Are you? Will you tell me when you are going to think about them? I would rather that you stated a time, even if it were a year to come. It would be a dangerous thing to put it off so long, would it not? But, oh! If you keep your promise, I would rather that you said “a year to come” than that you should keep on, year after year, postponing your decision. Recollect that you who are unsaved need three things. First, you need the pardon of sin; and it is scarcely necessary for me to repeat in your ears that you can only get it by coming to Christ. You desire also to be heard in prayer, your very heart sighs after that favor; and you know there is but one throne of grace, and only one Being who can present your petitions so that they shall be granted. And you also long to have a sight of God, a comforting sight of Him as your reconciled Father; and that you can never have except through Jesus Christ. These three things are to be found in Christ, and they are not to be found anywhere else. If there is anyone here who wants Christ, I am so glad if he knows who Christ is, and what are the treasures that are stored up in Him. It is a great thing to have this knowledge; but, oh It will be a terrible thing, bringing far greater responsibilities, and involving sevenfold guilt, if you know where these things are, and what they are, and yet do not seek to possess them yourselves. I leave with you the last words of my text, praying that they may describe you: “The just shall live by his faith.”

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