

GOOD NEWS
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“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”
Proverbs 25:25.

THIS is a text for summertime rather than for a winter’s evening. It is only on one of our hottest summer days that we could fully appreciate the illustration here employed. We need to be parched with thirst to be able to feel the value of cold waters to quench our thirst. At the same time, I think that we can, without any very great stretch of imagination, put ourselves into the position of some to whom cold waters have been almost like life from the dead. Look at Hagar in the wilderness with her child, whom she has cast under one of the shrubs that she may not see him die. The water in the bottle is spent and she longs for a cooling draught that might save the young lad’s life. Then the Lord opened her eyes so that she saw a well of water in the desert and, as she filled her bottle from it, she understood what cold waters are to a thirsty soul. Think also of the whole nation of Israel in the wilderness crying out in agony because there was no water for them to drink. Then they began to murmur against the Lord and against Moses—but how joyful they were when the smitten Rock poured forth its cooling stream and they rushed to it and drank to the full.

If you want another personal example of the blessing of cold water to a thirsty soul, think of Samson. Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass he has slain a thousand men! But the dust of the conflict, the heat and the exhaustion had caused such an intense thirst to come upon him that he is ready to die. Then he lifts up his voice to the Lord and the same God who had made the jawbone to be so mighty a weapon against the Philistines, opens for him a spring of water in that very jawbone—and he drinks and is refreshed—and magnifies the name of the Lord. So, you see, there are occasions when cold waters are inexpressibly precious to thirsty souls. And Solomon, who seems to have known something of their value, says that good news from a far country is equally pleasant, refreshing and reviving.

This proverb is true in its most literal interpretation. When we are in a far country, separate from those we love, there is no greater pleasure than that of receiving letters with tidings of their welfare from them. Even the little details about household affairs—the minor events which we would scarcely have noticed if we had been there—become exceedingly interesting to us and the longer we have been away from home, the more dear everything becomes to us when we hear of it in the far country where, for a while, our lot has been cast. I suppose that merchants who have costly ventures in distant parts, also long for good news from the far country which is still their home wherever they may be. Solomon had sent his ships to various foreign countries and when the news came from Joppa that the vessels were in sight which had come back from India, or from the Pillars of Hercules, bringing all manner of precious things, the merchant prince was highly pleased and felt that, “as cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” And this, which is a literal fact, may become an illustration of the spiritual Truth of God—and I am going to use it in that way as God, the Holy Spirit, may guide me.

First, *good news from God for sinners* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. Secondly, *good news from Heaven for saints* is like cold waters to a thirsty soul. And, thirdly, *good news in Heaven from earth*—the good news which reaches that far country every now and then—is to angels and glorified saints as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

I. First, then, (and may God bless this first head very richly!) GOOD NEWS FROM GOD FOR SINNERS is like cold water to the thirsty.

Sin has led the sinner into a far country. That part of the description of the prodigal son who gathered all and went into a far country aptly describes the condition of the whole human race. Man, before the Fall, was near to God. He communed with Him. But when Adam and Eve “heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,” after they had *disobeyed* Him, they “hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” Practically, by his sin, Adam set out on a long journey away from his happy home and, soon, he was so far off that when God came where He had formerly communed with him, He had to cry to him, “Adam, where are you?” In like manner, we are alienated from God by wicked works, far off from Him in character, for He is Light and we are darkness. He is Truth and we are falsehood. He is Love and we are just the opposite. We are also far off from God in our aims and objectives, for we aim not at the good of others, nor at His Glory, but we seek earthly things. We are, by nature, far off from God in the whole bent and current of our life which no longer runs in a parallel line with the life of God as first imparted to man, but runs rather according to the fashion of the life of Satan—so that we yield ourselves up to the evil influence of that foul spirit who works in the children of disobedience.

When a sinner is awakened by the Holy Spirit, he becomes conscious of this distance and he feels, in a measure, like the lost spirits in Hell who realize that there is a great gulf fixed between them and God. At first the convicted sinner fancies that gulf can never be passed and the longer he looks into its awful depths—the longer his eyes try to gaze across it to the other side—the more he discovers that he is far off from his God and that there is, indeed, a vast, yawning chasm between him and his Maker. If any of you, dear Friends, are conscious of being thus at a distance from God, I have come as a messenger from Him bringing to you His words of mercy and Grace which should be to you as good news from a far country!

And the first piece of good news that I have to give you is that *God has not forgotten you*. You are a lost sheep and you have almost forgotten your Shepherd. Perhaps you have altogether forgotten Him—but your Shepherd has been counting over the number of His sheep and He finds that there is one missing, for there are only 99 where there should be a hundred and He is deeply concerned about the one that has gone astray!

God has not only remembered that there is such a person as you but *he remembers you with pity*. It is wonderful to notice how He speaks. Sometimes He cries, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?” Like as a father pities his children, so is it with our God—He pities those who wander away from Him. “As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” God takes no delight in your sin and no delight in the shame and sorrow which your sin will bring upon you unless you turn from it—but He will take delight in you if you return to Him! He still cries to you, “Return you, now, everyone from his evil way!” And He still remembers you in pity and compassion. Notwithstanding your forgetfulness of Him and your willful rebellion against Him, He does remember you, for God is Love and there is love in His heart even towards sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins. That, surely, is good news to you! And if God thus thinks of you in pity, should not you think of God with deep, heartfelt penitence and contrition?

But there is even better news from God for you than this, namely, that *He has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him*. Do you ask, “How can that be, for there is a wall of partition between us? How can I ever get to God? Surely, the justice of God, on account of my sin, raises an impassable barrier between us. That justice stands like the cherubim with a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the Tree of Life, lest, haply, I should attempt to return to my God.” That is quite true, yet listen to this, poor, guilty Sinner. God must be just, that is certain and, being just, He must punish your sin. But have you not heard that He has given His only-begotten Son that He might stand in the sinner’s place and bear the punishment that was due on account of the sinner’s guilt? That cherub’s flaming sword has been quenched in Jesus’ precious blood! That middle wall of partition Christ has broken down, even as the veil of the Temple was torn in two, from the top to the bottom! Oh, what a mighty rip was that! Not a little slit, part of the way down, but from the top to the bottom!

So has Jesus Christ demolished the barrier which stood between a justly angry God and a guilty but repenting sinner—and now there is a way of approach for the very worst of men and women—right up to the Throne of the Most High! By the blood of Jesus, once shed for many for the remission of sins, the guiltiest foot of man may come. Yes, by that blood-besprinkled way, the most condemned sinner may come without fear of being repulsed! The chasm has been filled, the gulf bridged over and if you truly believe in Jesus Christ, you may, in His name, and for His sake, come back to your

Heavenly Father! That wise resolve within your heart which says, “I will arise and go to my Father,” should be at once carried into effect, for your Father has prepared the way by which you may come back to Him and, to encourage you, He has sprinkled it with the blood of His dear Son—the surest sign and token of His love to sinners that even God, Himself, could give! Here, then, is good news from a far country. Your Father thinks of you, poor prodigal, and He has paved the way for you to come back to His own house and heart!

Is there any more good news for you? Yes, that there is, far more than I can tell you! This is another piece of it—*God has sent you His Word and sent you His servants to invite you to come back to Him.* It is very gracious for God to prepare the way, but it is even more gracious for Him to invite you to make use of that way. There are, sometimes, cases of necessity when a man thrusts himself upon the notice of another and seeks his aid in some great emergency. It is a dark and stormy night and the wanderer, who has lost his way, knocks at the first door he sees and asks for shelter. But that is not your case. You, also, are a wanderer and you need shelter, but Mercy’s door stands wide open and God has sent His messengers to invite you to come in! If the door had been closed, it would have been a wise action on your part to knock and ask for admission, or even to cause the Kingdom of Heaven to suffer violence and to take the blessing by force. But that is not necessary.

Think, then, of the goodness of God who invites, entreats, exhorts and persuades sinners to come to Him. No, more, there is a text—a blessed text, I think—which says, “Compel them to come in.” The great King bids His servants to seize them by the mighty force of Love and to draw them in with tears and entreaties again and again repeated, until they yield! “Compel them to come in,” He says, “that My house may be filled.” This is good news indeed! Such gracious invitations as these make up still more good news—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins: for I have redeemed you.” “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Is not this good news for poor sinners? O my Master, bless You, Your own Words of Grace and mercy to all who hear or read them—and make them to be like cold waters to a thirsty soul!

There is still more good news beyond all this and I will tell you some of it. It is good news that *many have already returned to their Father and have been welcomed.* Some of these are your own friends and relatives—your brother, your sister, your father, your mother. This good news does not relate to anything which is merely a matter of experiment. The experiment has been made so often—the blessed experiment of proving whether God will receive repenting sinners or no—that it is now a matter of certainty! Why, you even know one who used to be your companion in every kind of folly and sin—and he has sought and found the Savior! Did he not tell you so the other day? And there was one who seemed to be even worse than you—at least he went further in open sin than you have ever done—yet he sought the Lord and he was not rejected! Now, when I see so many come to Christ and find that He never casts out one of them, what ought I to infer from that? Why, that, He will not cast me out if I come to Him!

If from my Master’s door I saw a stream of sinners coming back with sad countenances and all shaking their heads, and saying, “We have been denied admittance. We were too guilty to go in.” Or, “We were not fit,” or, “We were not sensitive enough,” or something of that kind, then I think I should not dare to go. But if the footprints of sinners all run towards Christ and never is there a single footprint of a penitent sinner turned back by Him—if I see Him drawing men unto Himself according to His word, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”—and if I never see Him repelling or repulsing one sinner, however black or crimson he may be, I may well say, “Come, my poor guilty Soul, why should you not have acceptance, too?” At any rate—

*“I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try—*

*For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.
And if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died'—*

for no sinner ever did seek Jesus Christ by faith in vain! That, surely, is good news from a far country!

And, once again, we have to bring *this* good news—that the Lord has not only made a way for His poor wandering children to come back to Him, but *He has provided all the means needed to bring them back*. You remember that when Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, to come to him in Egypt, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was still alive. The news that he was, under Pharaoh, ruler over all Egypt, seemed too good to be true! But when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent, then his spirit revived. “Wagons” is the word in our translation, but I expect that Joseph also sent some of the best chariots that Egypt could produce to carry poor old Jacob and all his family down into Egypt. And I do not wonder that the spirit of the Patriarch revived when he saw those wagons or chariots! There is many a poor sinner who says, “Yes, I know that there is a way of salvation, but, then, my feet are lame, so how can I run along that way? I know that there is saving Truth of God in the Bible, and blessed be God for that, but how shall I ever learn that Truth? I know that Christ is Himself the Truth, but how can that Truth be mine? I know that there is eternal life and that Christ is the Life as well as the Truth and the Way, but I am spiritually dead—can I ever have that life?”

Yes, you can, for our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely the Way, but He is also the *power* by which we run in that way! He is not only the Truth, but He gives us the illuminating Spirit to lead us into the Truth! And He is not only the Life, but He puts that Life into us and sustains and perfects it! You have nothing to do, Sinner, but to give yourself up to the leading, guiding, directing, assisting, quickening of the blessed Spirit of God! It is true that you must believe, but He will give you the Grace of faith. It is true that you must repent, but it is also true that He works repentance in us. There must and there will be a change of life in all true converts but it is the Holy Spirit who converts you and turns you completely around. There must be sanctification in genuine Believers, but it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. There is nothing asked of you in the Gospel but what the Gospel itself *gives* you! Those things which, in one part of Scripture, are put as precepts, are, in other parts of Scripture, among the promises! What the Lord bids the sinner do, He enables the sinner to do, just as when Jesus said to the man that was paralyzed, “Take up your bed and walk”—with the command He gave the power to obey it! And when He said to another man, “Stretch out your hand, withered though it is,” the miraculous power that gave the nerves and muscles force, again, went with the mandate from the lips of Jesus! In like manner, trust the Lord to give you the power to lay hold on the Gospel. The very eye with which to look at the bronze serpent is His gift—and that gift He is prepared to bestow upon all who come to Him for it. Is not this good news from a far country?

And this, too, is good news—that *you may come to Christ at once*. If, at this moment, you are enabled to trust the Lord Jesus, He is yours! The way home looks very far, but the good news I have to bring you is that you can be there in a moment. That is to say, far off as you are from God, if you believe in Jesus, you are brought to God that very instant. As soon as the Holy Spirit enables you to trust in Jesus, you are brought near to God at once. What said our Savior to the dying thief? “This day shall you be with Me in paradise.” You perhaps will not have an immediate entrance into the paradise above, but may live a little longer here, but, as soon as you do believe in Jesus, you shall be reconciled to God by the death of His Son—you shall have instantaneous forgiveness and, at the same time, it shall be as permanent as it is instantaneous, and as complete as it is immediate. This is the good news which comes to you by the Gospel.

And what you have to do with it is this—believe the Father’s Word and trust yourself wholly to what Christ has done for sinners. May the Divine Spirit take you off from all other ways of salvation and bring you to trust to this alone, and make you abhor and loathe even to detestation anything like confidence in your prayers, or your tears, your doings, your suffering, your preparation, your repenting—or anything else—for it is none but Jesus who can bring a sinner near to God! All that you spin, you will have to unravel. All that you build, will have to come down. All that you can bring to God, you will have to take back. You must come to Him empty-handed, with nothing of your own, and simply rest where God Himself rests—in the blessed Person and the finished work of the Lord Jesus who is All in All!

Now, if you are spiritually thirsty, this good news will be to you as a draught of cold water. But if you are not thirsty, you will not partake of it. It is little use to praise cold water to a man who is already drunk with the world's intoxicating draughts, or to those who have no thirst and who will despise it. If there is anyone here who does not feel that he is a sinner, or who thinks that he has no great guilt and who has no true sorrow of heart on account of his sin—I might as well walk into St. Paul's Cathedral and talk to the statues there, or into Westminster Abbey and preach to the dust beneath my feet, as preach to you! Cold waters are for the thirsty and the good news of mercy and salvation is for the guilty. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make you feel your deep need and give you intense spiritual thirst, for, then, Jesus Christ and the good news from the far country would be precious to you!

II. Now I turn to the second part of our subject which is, GOOD NEWS FROM HEAVEN FOR SAINTS. That also is as cold waters to a thirsty soul.

Does someone ask, "Is there any news from Heaven?" Yes, there is, and that shall be my first remark in this part of my theme—*that news does still come from Heaven*. There is an invisible telegraph between us and the Glory Land. We are not cut off from communication with those who are there. Jacob dreamed of a ladder reaching to Heaven, but it was not merely a dream. Never was there anything more real than that vision of the night, for there is a blessed means of communication between this far-off land and the goodly land beyond the river. Our prayers and sighs and tears, our praises and thanksgivings get there all right—they are not lost *en route*. They reach the great heart of God and messages come down to us from Him in response to them. How do they come? Well, they come by the Holy Spirit sealing home to the soul the promises of the Word. Do you know, experimentally, what I mean by that?

Every now and then some blessed portion of Scripture seems as if it were set on fire and, as you read it, it blazes out before your eyes just as, sometimes, we see the lamps that are being prepared for an illumination. There is some grand device and, before it is lit up, it is little more than an array of pipes—but how different it looks after they have lit it all! So, there is many a text of Scripture which is like that design—you can see something of what it means, but you should see it when it is lit up! How very different it is then! You sometimes get a promise from the Word whispered into your ear and it is just as new to you as if it had never been written down 1,800 or three or four thousand years ago! It is as fresh to you as if the eternal pen had written it today and written it for you, alone. Some of us—I hope many of us—know how the Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us—leads us into the very heart and soul of the precious blessings of the Covenant of Grace. This is as good news from a far country, and is as cold waters to a thirsty soul!

And often, too, *the Lord Jesus Christ sends us news concerning the fellowship which He intends us to enjoy with Him*. Still do godly men walk with God as Enoch did. Do not imagine that God has gone away and that no longer may we speak to Him as a man speaks with his friend. No, for, "truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Still does Jesus lay bare His heart to His beloved. Still may we say with the spouse and have the prayer answered, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." There is still sweet communion and blessed love passages between Christ and His chosen, of which the world knows not, but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant." Yes, there is good news from a far country for the saints of God!

And, dear Friends, *it should be our earnest aim to keep unbroken our communion with Heaven*, for it is the most refreshing thing beneath the sun. This world is like an arid desert where there is no water except as we maintain our communion with Christ. So long as I can say that the Lord is mine, all things here below are of small account. But if I once get a doubt about that matter and if I cease to walk with God, then what is there here below that can content my immortal spirit? Without Christ, this world is to us as thorns without the roses and as bitters without the sweets of life. But You, O Lord, make earth to be a Heaven to Your saints even when they lie in dungeons when Your Presence cheers them. But were they translated to the palaces of kings and thereby lost Your blessed company, those palaces would be worse than prison to them. It is most important that you who are obliged to mingle with the world, should maintain your communion with Christ, for that is the only way to keep yourself clear from its corruptions. And you who have much to do in the Church, must keep up your communion with Christ, for that is the only way of preserving your service from becoming mechanical and of preventing you from doing good works as a mere matter of routine. You, too, who have much to suffer or even much to enjoy, must keep up this holy communion or else your soul will soon be like a thirsty land where there is no water.

It may be that I am addressing some *who have not had much news lately from the far country of Heaven*. You are going there, one day, and—

*“There your best friends, your kindred, dwell.
There God your Savior reigns”—*

but you have had no news from there lately. If it is so with you, I hope you feel as some of us did a little while ago, when we were in the South of France. “No letters?” we asked, as the time came for our usual post. When the next day came and there were still no letters, we enquired, “What is the matter?” And they said, “There is deep snow on the railway, the trains cannot travel, so the mails cannot be brought in.” Another day passed and as the snow was not gone, we had no letters. When the letters did come, they were very sweet—and all the sweeter because we had had to wait for them. And there were more of them than usual, for those that had been delayed came tumbling in two or three at a time. I hope it may be so with you and your good news from Heaven! If there have been any snow-drifts between your soul and Christ—and that does happen sometimes in this cold world—if there is, between you and the Savior, a chilly air and a frozen mass of unbelief so that the trains cannot travel to and fro—oh, cry mightily to the Lord to melt the snows and clear them away! And, I guarantee you, if you do so, when you get communication restored and fellowship renewed, it will be exceedingly sweet.

I hope you will often feel that you cannot have too much of it and seek to have more and more. Say, as the spouse did in the Song, “It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go.” Let this dark season of interrupted fellowship into which you have passed only make you the more desperately in earnest to get out of it, so that when that fellowship is restored, you may be able to say, “I held Him, and would not let Him go.” Get such a firm grip of Him, again, such a grip as you had when first you knew Him—when the love of your espousals was upon you—when you were newly married to the blessed Bridegroom and say again, “I held Him, and would not let Him go.” God grant to you that there may be no more lukewarmness, no more of being neither cold nor hot—and may the cold atmosphere through which you have passed in His absence make your heart grow all the warmer towards Him now that you have Him again! May you now cling to Him with an intensity of affection that you have never reached before!

What is this good news of which I have been speaking? Well, dear Friends, I think that this good news may be summed up thus. God is working in Providence and making all things work together for your good if you belong to Him. Your heart is heavy just now and your harp is hanging on the willows. Yet God is permitting that to happen for your good. The bitter medicines you have to take are nauseous to you, but they are to work together with other things for your good—therefore, be of good cheer!

The next piece of good news is that Jesus is pleading for you. Remember how He said to Peter, “Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” Jesus has your name upon His breastplate—yes, “engraved on the palms of His hands.” You are not forgotten of Him! Is not that good news? When somebody comes to you in a foreign land, you like to hear him say, “When I was at your home, they were all talking about you and they all sent loving messages to you. I saw your portrait in a locket and I could tell that you were not forgotten.” You are glad to hear that—and Jesus has your names engraved on the palms of His hands and He is pleading for you before the Mercy Seat—you are not forgotten up there!

Another piece of good news is that He is coming here again—coming here for you—coming to be admired by you and the rest of His redeemed family when He comes to take His people up to their eternal home. The message which He has sent is, “Behold, I come quickly.” What is your answer to that? I think I hear you say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” It will not be very long before you will be with Him, or else He will be with you! In a short time you will have ended your pilgrimage here. The days of your banishment from Home will be over. Wait a little longer—only a few more tears and, then—

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast.”*

Is not that good news?

There is another piece of news which you have often heard before—that is, that a great many of the saints have got Home already. There is good news from the Fair Havens! Many have entered there—thousands, millions—who have had

as stormy a sea to traverse as you, yourself, have had, but their Pilot has brought them to their desired haven. Many, whom we loved on earth, have gone Home to be “forever with the Lord.” They are all right. All is well with them. The sheep are getting Home to the fold! The children are going Home to their Father’s house above!

I have another piece of good news and that is, beloved Brother or Sister, that there is a house there for you! Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it ready for you. There is a crown there which nobody’s head but yours can ever wear. There is a seat in which none but yourself can sit. There is a harp that will be silent till your fingers strike its strings. There is a robe, made for you, which no one else can wear. And let me also tell you that they are needing you up there. “Oh,” you say, “they are so happy and so perfect that they surely do not need *me*.” But they do. What does Paul say in the Epistle to the Hebrews? “They without us should not be made perfect.” Nor can they—there cannot be a perfect body till all the members are there! It cannot be a perfect Heaven till all the saints are there! Jesus Christ has not all the jewels of His crown, yet, and He will have a perfect crown. So they are looking for you and waiting and watching for you—and all is ready for your reception. You shall go Home soon, therefore live in hope and having this hope within you, purify yourselves, come out from the world more and more. “Our conversation is in Heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” There is good news for you! Is it not like cold waters to a thirsty soul?

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly. SOMETIMES, IN HEAVEN, THEY GET GOOD NEWS FROM EARTH.

Our text may be applied to the angels and to the spirits of just men made perfect—“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.” We do not know how they receive news about us and it is no use speculating concerning the matter, but there is one thing that we are sure of—that is, *in Heaven they know when a sinner repents*, for our Lord Jesus Christ has told us that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” That is, to them, good news from a far country! The angels all know about Jesus having died. And every time they see a repenting sinner washed in the blood of the Atonement, they must rejoice for Jesus’ sake because He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

I believe, too, Brothers and Sisters, that they get good news from a far country *when you who are running the Christian race run well*. For how does Paul put it in the 12th of Hebrews? Does he not tell us that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses? And who are these witnesses? Why, those he had been speaking of—those brave men and women who had performed such valorous deeds by the power of faith—whose names he had inscribed on the triumphal arch of the 11th Chapter of his Epistle. These are they who gaze upon us from their lofty seats and they see us as we run the race and note how we do it. And they clap their hands, as the spectators were known to do in the old Roman foot races, and rejoice over the Grace that is manifested in us—and it is as cold water to their souls when they see what God does for His struggling, suffering people.

And, moreover, there is another piece of good news that reaches the far country. That is *when the Church of God is being built up and the Gospel is spreading in the earth*. When the world was created, did not the morning stars sing together and shout for joy? And do you not think that as this new spiritual world is being fashioned by the pierced hands, the spirits above are looking down and watching the wondrous process? I am sure they do. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His Glory and appear, not only to those who are watching here below, who are workers together with Him, but also to those who have gone above, who rejoice together with Him in His gracious work below!

And I believe it is also good news from a far country *when the saints, one by one, finish their course*. They get tidings up there when another saint is crossing the Jordan of death. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,” and it must be precious, also, in the sight of the angels and the redeemed from among men. John Bunyan pictures the shining ones as coming down to the river’s brink and I can easily conceive that it is so. I can well imagine their glad welcome to the spirit as, disencumbered of this poor body, it comes forth from the stream of death and taking it up to the pearly gates of the celestial city. Then that is good news from a far country!

I sometimes like to send a message Home by some whose hands I grasp as they are in the last article of death. Rowland Hill, when he was very old, said to one aged Christian who was dying, “I hope they have not forgotten to send for old Rowley.” And then he added, “Take my love up to the three glorious Johns, the Apostle John, John Bunyan and John Newton.” I have sometimes felt inclined to do the same. Surely, a spirit there will not forget anything that was

good here below and pass, in utter unconsciousness, into the next world. It will have enough to do to think of Christ and to behold His Glory, but, perhaps the mind will be so expanded as to be able to think of other things besides. This, however, I do not know. But this I am sure of—that as one by one they for whom the Savior died, come Home, there must be joy. As they rejoice over repenting sinners, so do they rejoice over perfected saints who are without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing and who come up cleansed and delivered from anything like sin through the precious blood of the Lamb. Then is there good news for them from the far country!

I cannot help feeling that I am addressing some who know nothing about the good news of which I have been speaking. For their benefit, let me tell you a story I have heard concerning one of our English pilots. A vessel was off the coast of Kent, gently sailing, as the seamen thought, towards their desired haven. A pilot who was watching them, observing the extreme danger in which they were, went at his utmost speed to warn them of their peril. He was hardly aboard before he shouted to the captain, “The Goodwins! The Goodwins!” They were almost on to those fatal sands and they did not know it. At once the course of the vessel was changed and all possible sail was set—and they were saved as by the skin of their teeth!

So, I come to you thoughtless, careless ones, and I cry to you, “Hell lies right ahead of you—eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the glory of His power! Steer your helm hard aport, up with such sail as you have and may God send the breath of His Eternal Spirit to blow you off these breakers which already seem booming with the certainty of your eternal doom!” O God, almighty and ever-merciful, save them by Your Grace! Save them by the precious blood of Jesus, for His dear name’s sake! Amen and Amen.

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