

THE EARNEST OF HEAVEN

NO. 358

A SERMON
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 AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

*“That Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.”
 Ephesians 1:13, 14.*

SO then, heaven, with all its glories, is an *inheritance!* Now, an inheritance is not a thing which is bought with money, earned by labor, or won by conquest; if any man has an inheritance, in the proper sense of that term, it came to him by birth; it was not because of any special merit in him, but simply because he was his father's son, that he received the property of which he is now possessed. So is it with heaven. The man who shall receive this glorious heritage will not obtain it by the works of the law, nor by the efforts of the flesh; it will be given to him as a matter of most gracious right, because he has been “begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” and has thus become an heir of heaven by blood and birth. They who come unto glory are sons. Is it not written, “The captain of our salvation brings many sons unto glory”? They come not there as servants; no servant has any right to the inheritance of his master; let him be ever so faithful, yet he is not his master's heir. But, because you are *sons*—sons by God's adoption, sons by the Spirit's regeneration—because by supernatural energy you have been born-again—you become inheritors of eternal life, and you enter into the many mansions of our Father's house above! Let us always understand, then, when we think of heaven, that it is a place which is to be ours, and a state which we are to enjoy as the result of *birth*—not as the result of *work*. “Except a man is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”—that kingdom being an inheritance, but until he has the *new birth*, he can have no claim to enter it. But, is it possible for us, provided that heaven is our inheritance, and we are God's children—is it possible for us to know anything whatever of that land beyond the flood? Is there power in human intellect to fly into the land of the hereafter, and reach those islands of the happy, where God's people rest eternally in the bosom of their God? We are met at the outset with a rebuff which staggers us—“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them who love Him.”

If we paused here, we might give up all idea of beholding from our houses of clay that goodly land and Lebanon; but we do not pause, for like the apostle, we go on with the text and we add, “But He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit.” It is possible to look within the veil! God's Spirit *can* turn it aside for a moment, and bid us take a glimpse—though it is but a distant one—at that unutterable glory! There are Pisgahs even now on the surface of the earth, from the top of which the celestial Canaan can be beheld; there are hallowed hours in which the mists and clouds are swept away, and the sun shines in its strength and our eyes, being freed from their natural dimness, behold something of that land which is very far off, and glimpse a little of the joy and blessedness which is reserved for the people of God hereafter! Our text tells us that the Holy Spirit is the *earnest* of the inheritance, by which I understand that He is not only the pledge, for a pledge is given for security, but when the thing pledged is *given*, then the pledge itself is restored—but He is an *earnest*, which is a pledge and something more. An earnest is a part of the thing itself—it is not only a pledge of the thing for security—but it is a foretaste of it for present enjoyment. The word in the Greek has a stronger force than our word, “pledge.” Again I repeat it—if I promise to pay a man something, I may give him land or property in *pledge*; but if I pay him a *part of the sum* which I have promised, that is more than a pledge—it is an *earnest*, because it is a part of the thing itself. So, the Holy Spirit is a pledge to God's people. Inasmuch as God has given them the graces of the Spirit, He will give them the glory that results from there. But He is more—He is a foretaste—He is a sweet ante past of heaven, so that they who possess the Spirit of God, possess the first tastes of

heaven; they have reaped the first fruits of the eternal harvest! The first drops of a shower of glory have fallen upon them; they have beheld the first beams of the rising sun of eternal bliss; they have not merely a pledge for security—they have an *earnest*—which is security and foretaste combined! Understand, then, for this is what I am about to speak of this morning; by the Holy Spirit there is given to the people of God even now, experiences, joys and feelings which prove that they shall be in heaven—which do more, which *bring heaven down to them, and make them already able to guess in some measure what heaven must be!* When I have enlarged upon that theme, I shall take the black side of the picture, and remark that *it is possible for men on earth to have both a pledge and an earnest of those eternal pains which are reserved for the impenitent*—a dark subject—but, may God grant it may be for our profit and awakening.

I. First, then, THERE ARE SOME WORKS OF THE SPIRIT WHICH ARE PECULIARLY AN EARNEST TO THE CHILD OF GOD, OF THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN.

1. And first, *heaven is a state of rest.* It may be because I am constitutionally idle, that I look upon heaven in the aspect of rest with greater delight than under any other view of it, with but one exception. To let the head which is so continually exercised, for once lie still—to have no care, no trouble, no need to labor, to strain the intellect, or vex the limbs! I know that many of you, the sons of poverty and of toil, look forward to the Sabbath, because of the enjoyments of the sanctuary, and because of the rest which it affords you. You look for heaven as Watts did in his song—

*“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest!
And not a wave of trouble will roll
Across my peaceful breast.”*

“There remains therefore a rest to the people of God.” ‘Tis not a rest of sleep, but yet a rest as perfect as though they slept; it is a rest which puts from them all care, all remorse, all thoughts of tomorrow, all straining after a something which they have not as yet. They are runners no more—they have reached the goal! They are warriors no more—they have achieved the victory! They are laborers no more—they have reaped the harvest! “They rest,” says the Spirit, “they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.”

My beloved, did you ever enjoy on certain high days of your experience a state of perfect rest? You could say you had not a wish in the entire world ungratified. You knew yourself to be pardoned, you felt yourself to be an heir of heaven, and Christ was precious to you. You knew that you walked in the light of your Father’s countenance; you had cast all your worldly care on Him, for He cared for you; you felt at that hour, that if death could take away your dearest friends, or if calamity should remove the most valuable part of your possessions on earth, yet you could say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” Your spirit floated along the stream of divine grace without a struggle; you were not as the swimmer, who breasts the billows, and tugs and toils for life; your soul was made to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters; you were passive in God’s hands; you knew no will but His. Oh, that sweet day—

*“That heavenly calm within the breast,
Was the sure pledge of glorious rest,
Which for the Church of God remains,
The end of cares, the end of pains.”*

No, it was more than a pledge; it was a part of the rest itself. It was a morsel taken from the loaf of delights. It was a sip out of the wine vats of immortal joy! It was silver spray from the waves of glory! So, then, whenever we are quiet and at peace—“For we who have believed do enter into rest,” and have ceased from our own works, as God did from His—when we can say, “O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise”—when our spirit is full of love within us, and our peace is like a river, and our righteousness like the wave of the sea—then we already know in some degree what heaven is! We have but to make that peace deeper and yet more profound—lasting and more continual; we have but to multiply it eternally, and we have obtained a noble idea of the rest which remains for the people of God!

2. But, secondly, there is a passage in the book of Revelation which may sometimes puzzle the uninstructed reader, where it is said concerning the angels, that “They rest not day and night.” As we are to be as the angels of God, it must undoubtedly be true in heaven that in a certain sense, they rest not day or night. They always rest, so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; they never rest, in the sense of indolence or inactivity. In heaven, spirits are always on the wing; their lips are always singing the eternal *hallelujahs* unto the great *Jehovah* that sits upon the throne. Their fingers are never divorced from the strings of their golden harps; their feet never cease to run in obedience to the eternal will—they rest, but they rest on the wing. As the poet pictured the angel as he flew—not needing to move his wings but resting, and yet darting swiftly through the ether, as though he were a flash shot from the eyes of God. So shall it be with the people of God eternally; always singing—never hoarse with music; always serving—never wearied with their service. “They rest not day and night.” Have there ever been times with you, when you have had both the pledge and the earnest of this kind of heaven? Yes, when we have preached once, and again, and again, and again in one day, and some have said to me, “But the constitution will be destroyed, the mind will be weakened; such toil as this will bring the man low.” But we have been able to reply, “We do not feel it; for the more toil has been cast upon us, the more strength has been given.” Have you ever known what it is to have the pastor’s work in revival times, when he has to sit hour after hour, seeing convert after convert—when the time for one meal is past, and he has forgotten it? When the time for another meal has come and gone, and he has forgotten that—for he has been so busy, and so happy with his feast of ingatherings, that he has been like his Master, and has forgotten to eat bread and positively did not hunger and did not thirst—because the joy of the service had taken away all fatigue? Just at this hour, our missionaries are engaged throughout Jamaica in a sweltering sun, preaching the Word. Perhaps there has never been a more glorious revival than that which God has sent to that island—an island which has often been blessed, but which now seems to have received a seven-fold portion! One missionary, in writing home, says that he had not been in bed one night for a week, and he had been preaching all day and all night long. And I do not doubt but his testimony to you would be, that at least, during the first part of the labor it seemed not to be labor; he could sleep on the wing; he could rest while he worked! The joy of success took away from him the feeling of weariness; the blessed prospect of seeing so many added to the Church of God had made him forget even to eat bread! Well, then, at such a time as that, he had a foretaste of the rest and the service, too, which remains for the people of God! Oh, do not doubt, if you find comfort in serving God—and such comfort that you grow not weary in His service—do not doubt, I say, but that you shall soon join that hallowed throng, who “day without night circle His throne rejoicing;” who rest not, but serve Him day and night in His temple! These feelings are foretastes, and they are pledges, too. They give some inklings of what heaven must be, and they make your title to heaven clear.

3. But let us pass on. Heaven is a place of *communion* with all the people of God. I am sure that in heaven they know each other. I could not, perhaps, just now prove it in so many words, but I feel that a heaven of people who did not know each other, and had no fellowship, could not be heaven! God has so constituted the human heart that it loves society, and especially the renewed heart is so made that it cannot help communing with all the people of God. I always say to my Strict Baptist brothers and sisters who think it a dreadful thing for baptized believers to commune with the unbaptized, “But you cannot help it; if you are the people of God, you must commune with all saints, baptized or not! You may deny them the outward and visible sign, but you cannot keep from them the inward and spiritual grace.” If a man is a child of God, I do not care what I may think about him—if I am a child of God I *do* commune with him, and I must! We are all parts of the same body, all knit to Christ, and it is not possible that one part of Christ’s body should ever be in any state but that of communion with all the rest of the body! Well, in glory I feel I may say, we know we shall converse with each other. We shall talk of our trials on the way there—talk most of all of Him who by His faithful love and His potent arm has brought us safely through. We shall not sing solos, but in *chorus* shall we praise our King! We shall not look upon our fellows there like men in the iron mask, whose name and character we do not know—for there we shall know even as we are known! You shall talk with the prophets; you shall have conversation with the martyrs; you shall sit again at the feet of the great reformers, and all your brothers and sisters in faith who

have fallen before you, or who have rather entered into rest before you. These shall be your companions on the other side the grave! How sweet must that be! How blessed—that holy converse, that happy union, that general assembly, and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven! Have we anything on earth like this? Yes, that we have in miniature; we have the pledge of this; for if we love the people of God, we may know that we shall surely be with them in heaven! We have the *earnest* of it, for how often has it been our privilege to hold the highest and sweetest fellowship with our fellow Christians? Why, you and I have often said, “Did not our hearts burn within us while we talked together by the way, and Christ was with us both?” When we have been together, and the doors have been shut, has not the Master said, “Peace be unto you”? When love has gone from heart to heart, and we have all felt knit together as one man; when party names were all forgotten; when all jealousies and bickering were driven out of doors, and we felt that we were one family, and did all bear the same one name—having “one Lord, one faith and one baptism”? Then it was that we had the earnest, the foretaste, the first drink of that well of Bethlehem which is on the other side the pearly gate of the Celestial City!

4. I have to be brief on each of these points, for there are so many to mention. Part of the bliss of heaven will consist *in joy over sinners saved*. The angels look down from the battlements of the city which has foundations, and when they see prodigals return, they sing! Jesus calls together His friends and His neighbors, and He says unto them, “Rejoice with Me, for I have found the sheep which was lost.” The angels begin the theme; the sacred fire runs through the host, and all the saints above take up the strain! Listen how they sing before the throne, for it has just been whispered there of some Saul, “Behold, he prays.” Listen how their songs get a new inspiration—how their eternal Sabbath seems to be Sabbatized afresh, and “the rest” becomes more joyous while they sing of new-born sons added to the family, and new names written in the register of the Church below! Part of the joy of heaven, and no mean part of it, will be to watch the fight on earth, to see the Conqueror as He marches on, and to behold the trophies of His grace and the spoils which His hands shall win. Is there anything like this on earth? Yes, there is when the Spirit of God gives to *us joy over sinners saved*! The other evening, when some of us sat in our Church meeting, what joy was there, when one after another, those who had been plucked from the deepest hell of sin made avowal of their faith in Christ! Some of us look back upon those Church meetings as the best nights we ever spent; when first one, and then another has said, “I have been plucked as a brand from the burning,” and the tale of divine grace has been told. And a third has stood up and said, “And I, too, was once a stranger wandering far from God, and Jesus sought me.” Why, we have, some of us, gone home and felt that it was heaven below to have been there! We have felt more joy over the conversion of others, we have sometimes thought, than even over our own! It has been such bliss while we have taken the hand of the convert, and the tears have been in both eyes—when the word of gratitude has been spoken, and Jesus Christ has been magnified by lips that once blasphemed Him! My brothers and sisters, though the whole world should censure me, I cannot help it, I must tell it to the praise of God’s free grace and boundless love! There are hundreds here who are the most wonderful trophies of grace that ever lived on earth! My heart has been gladdened, and your hearts have been gladdened, too. I must not keep it back! I *will* not! It was my Master’s work! It is to His honor! It is to His praise! We will tell *that* on earth which we will sing in heaven! They *have* washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! And, I do believe, that the joy we felt when sinners have been converted, has been an earnest and a pledge that we shall be partakers of the same joy in heaven!

5. But to proceed. Here is another earnest of heaven, which is rather a personal matter than one which is drawn from others. Did you ever get a knotty passage in Scripture which repeated itself in your mind so many times that you could not get rid of it? You borrowed some commentaries—you opened them, and you found that you might inquire within, but get no information whatever upon the particular subject you wished most to be informed about. Commentaries generally are books which are written to explain those parts of Scripture which everybody understands, and to make those that are dark more mysterious than they were before! At any rate, if that was the aim of the different authors, they have, most of them, admirably succeeded. I do not believe in great commentaries upon the whole Bible—no one man can write such a book so that all of it shall be valuable. When a man gives his whole life to

some one book, that one is worth reading; when a man has taken up, as some have done, the Epistle to the Romans, or the Book of Genesis, and gone on year after year toiling through it, then such a book has been a monument of labor, and has been valuable to the Christian student; but generally, large commentaries give little information where most it is needed. Well, disappointed, you have gone back to your Bible and have said, "I must not meddle with this text; it is above me." But it has repeated itself in your ears. You could not make it out. It has followed you—dogged your steps—it would not go away from you! At last you thought, "There was a message from God in that text." You prayed over it. While you were praying, some one word in the text seemed to lift itself right out of the connection, and shone upon you like a star! And in the light of that one word you could see the meaning of all the words that preceded and followed, and you rose up from your knees feeling that you knew the mind of the Spirit there, and had got a step forward in Scriptural knowledge. You remember the day, some of you, when you first learned the doctrines of grace. When we were first converted, we did not know much about them. We did not know whether God had converted us, or we had converted ourselves; but we heard a discourse one day in which some sentences were used, which gave us the clue to the whole system, and we began at once to see how God the Father planned, and God the Son carried out, and God the Holy Spirit applied! And we found ourselves, all of a sudden brought into the midst of a system of truths which we might perhaps have believed before—but which we could not have clearly stated, and did not understand! The joy of that advance in knowledge, by God's grace, was exceedingly great. I know it was to me. I can remember well the day and hour when first I received those truths in my own soul—when they were burnt into me, as John Bunyan says—burnt as with a hot iron into my soul. And I can remember how I felt I had grown all of a sudden from a baby into a man—that I had made progress in Scriptural knowledge, from having got a hold, once and for all, of the clue to the truth of God! Well, now, in that moment when God the Holy Spirit increased your knowledge, and opened the eyes of your understanding, you had the *earnest* that you shall one day see—not through a glass darkly—but face to face, and by-and-by you shall know the whole truth, even as you are known!

6. But further than this—to put two or three thoughts into one, for brevity's sake—whenever, Christian, you have achieved a victory over your lusts—whenever after hard struggling, you have had a temptation dead at your feet—you have had in that day and hour a foretaste of the joy that awaits you, when the Lord shall shortly tread Satan under your feet! That victory in the first skirmish is the pledge and the earnest of the triumph in the last decisive battle. If you have overcome *one* foe, you shall overthrow them all; if the walls of Jericho have been dismantled, so shall every fort be carried, and you shall go up a conqueror over the ruins thereof. And when, believer, you have known your security in Christ—when you have been able to say, "I *know* that my Redeemer lives, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him"—when you have felt sure that earth and heaven might die, but *His love* could never pass away—when you have sung out the strong lines of Toplady—

*"My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase!
Impressed on His heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace";*

when you have put your foot upon the rock and feel that you stood securely, knowing that you were safe in Him and because He lived, you must live also—in that hour you had the pledge and the foretaste of that glorious security which is yours, when you are beyond gunshot of the infernal fiend—beyond even the howling of the infernal dog! O Christian, there are many windows to heaven through which God looks down on you; and there are some windows through which you may look up to Him. Let these *past* enjoyments be guarantees of your future bliss! Let them be to you as the grapes of Eshcol were to the Jews in the wilderness—they were the fruit of the land—and when they tasted them, they said, "It *is* a land that flows with milk and honey." These enjoyments are the products of Canaan; they are handfuls of heavenly flowers thrown over the wall; they are bunches of heaven's spices, brought to you by angel hands across the stream. Heaven is full of joys like these. You have but a few of them; heaven is full with them. There your golden joys are but as stones, and your most precious jewels are as common as the pebbles of the brook! *Now* you drink drops, and they are so sweet that your palate does not soon for-

get them; but *there* you shall put your lips to the cup and drink and never drain it dry. There you shall sit at the wellhead and drink as much as you can draw, and draw as much as you can desire. Now you see the glimmerings of heaven, as a star twinkling from leagues of distance; follow that glimmering, and you shall see heaven no more as a star, but as the sun which shines in its strength!

7. Permit me to remark yet once more, there is one foretaste of heaven which the Spirit gives, which it were very wrong for us to omit. And now, I shall seem, I dare say, to those who understand not spiritual mysteries, to be as one who dreams. There are moments when the child of God has real fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what fellowship between man and man means. There is as real a fellowship between the Christian and Christ. Our eyes can look on *Him*. I say not that these human optics can behold the very flesh of Christ, but I say that the eyes of the soul can here, on earth, more truly see Christ, after a spiritual sort, than ever eyes of man saw Him when He was in the flesh on earth! Today your head may lean upon the Savior's bosom; today He may be your sweet companion, and with the spouse you may say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for His love is better than wine." I pray you, think not that I rave! I speak what I know and testify what I have seen, and what many of you have seen and known, too. There are moments with the believer, when, whether in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell—God knows—but this he knows—that Christ's left hand is under his head, and His right hand does embrace him. Christ has shown to him His hands and His side. He could say, with Thomas, "My Lord, and My God," but he could not say much more. The world recedes, it disappears; the things of time are covered with a pall of darkness. Christ only stands out before the believer's view! I have known that some believers, when they have been in this state, could say with the spouse, "Stay me with apples, comfort me with flagons, for I am love sick." Their love of Christ, and Christ's love to them, had overcome them. Their soul was something in the state of John, whom we described last Lord's-Day morning—"When I saw *Him*, I fell at His feet as dead." A sacred faintness overcomes my soul; I die—I die to prove the fullness of *m* redeeming love, the love of Christ to me! Oh, these seasons! Talk not of feasts, you son of mirth! Tell us not of music, you who delight in melodious sound! Tell us not of wealth and rank, and honor, and the joys of victory. One hour with Christ is worth an eternity of all earth's joys! May I but see *Him*; may I but see *His* face; but behold *His* beauties—come winds, blow away all earthly joys I have—this joy shall well content my soul! Let the hot sun of tribulation dry up all the brooks; this fresh spring shall fill my cup full to the brim—yes, it shall make a river of delight, wherein my soul shall bathe! To be with Christ on earth is the best, the surest, the most ecstatic foretaste and earnest of the joys of heaven! Do not forget this, Christian! If you have ever known Christ, heaven is yours; and when you have enjoyed Christ, you have learned a little of what the bliss of futurity shall be!

8. I do not doubt, also, that on dying beds men get foretastes of heaven which they never had in health. When Death begins to pull down the old clay house, he knocks away much of the plaster, and then the light of God shines through the chinks. When he comes to deal with our rough garment of clay, he pulls it to rags, first, and then it is we begin to get a better view of the robes of righteousness, the fair white linen of the saints with which we are always covered, though we know it not. The nearer to death, the nearer to heaven, says the believer! The more sick, the nearer he is to health; the darkest part of his night is, indeed, the dawning of the day—just when he shall think he dies—he shall begin to live! And when his flesh drops from him, then is he prepared to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven! Children of God in dying have said wonderful things which it would be scarcely lawful for us to utter here. It needs the stillness of the robin—the solemn silence of the last hour—the failing eyes, the chinked utterances, the pale thin hands, to put a soul into their utterances. I remember when a Christian brother, who had often preached the gospel with me, was sorely sick and dying. He was suddenly smitten with blindness, which was a first monition of the approach of death, and he said to me—

*"And when you see my eye strings break,
How sweet my moments roll;
A mortal paleness on my cheek,
But glory in my soul!"*

He said it with such emphasis, as a man who, but two or three minutes after, stood before his God, that I can never read those lines without feeling how well the poet must have foreseen a death like his! Yes, there are mystic syllables that have dropped from the lips of dying men that have been priceless pearls! There have been sights of heaven seen in the midst of Jordan which these eyes cannot see until this breast shall be chilled in the dread and cold stream! All these things that we have mentioned are the fruits of “that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

II. A few minutes only—and, O God! Help us! With all solemnity, I utter a few sentences upon THE BLACK REVERSE OF THE JOYOUS PICTURE I HAVE PRESENTED TO YOU.

There is another world, for the *wicked*, as well as for the righteous. They who believe *not* in Christ are no more annihilated than those who do believe in Him. Immortality awaits us all. We die, but we die not. We live *forever*. And if we fear not God, that immortality is the most frightful curse that ever fell on creature—

*“To linger in eternal death,
Yet death forever fly.”*

Can we tell what that *world of woe* is? In vain do we talk to you about the pit of hell that is *bottomless*, and the fire that never can be quenched, and the worm that dies not. These are but images, and images which are used so often, that we fear they are almost threadbare in your estimation, and you will scarcely give an ear to them! Listen, then, if you are this day without God, and without Christ in the world. You have in yourself a few sparks of that eternal fire; you have already been singed by the vehement heat of that furnace which to some men has been so hot that even when they have passed it on earth, like Nebuchadnezzar’s mighty men, they have fallen down, smitten by the heat thereof before they came within its flames! Ungodly, unconverted men have an uneasiness of spirit. They are never content; they need something. If they have that, they will need something more. They do not feel happy; they see through the amusements which the world presents to them; they are wise enough to see that they are hollow. They understand that the fair cheek is *painted*; they know that its beauty is but mere pretense. They are not befouled—God has awakened them! They are sensible enough to know that this world cannot fill a man’s heart; they know that an immortal spirit is never to be satisfied with mortal joys. They are uneasy; they wish to kill time—it hangs heavy on their hands. They wish they could sleep 23 hours out of the four and twenty, or drink half the day. They try, if they cannot find some pleasure that may wake up their energies—some new device, some novelty, even though it were novelty of sin—which might give a little excitement to a palate that has lost all power to be pleased. Now, when a man gets into that uneasy state, he may make a guess of what hell will be. It will be that uneasiness intensified, magnified to the extreme—to wander through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none, always thirsting, but never having a drop of water to cool that thirst. Hungering, but feeding upon wind and hungering still; longing, yearning, groaning sighing, conscious of misery, sensible of emptiness, feeling poverty but never getting anything whereby that poverty may be made rich, or that hunger may be stayed! Ah, you uneasy ones, may your uneasiness bring you to Christ!

But unconverted men without Christ have another curse which is a sure foretaste to them of hell. They are uneasy about death! I have my mind now upon a person who trembles like an aspen leaf during a thunderstorm; and I know another man who could bear a storm very well, but if there is the slightest thing the matter with him—if he has a cough, he fears his lungs are affected—if he feels a little hoarse, he is sure he will have bronchitis and die! And that thought of dying, he cannot bear; he will hear you talk about it and crack a joke over it merely for the sake of covering up his own dismay. He fancies you cannot see through him, but you can plainly discover that he is as afraid of dying as ever he can be. I know at this moment a family where the governess was instructed, when she took the job, to never mention the subject of death to the children, or else she would be instantly discharged. Oh that fear of dying which haunts some men! Not when their blood boils, and they are excited—then they could rush to the cannon’s mouth, but when they are cool and steady, and look at it—when it is not the sword’s point, and glory, but dying, mere dying—then they shiver! Oh, how these strong men start and how they quail! Full many an infidel has recanted his infidelity then—given it all up when he has come to deal with the awful

mysteries of death! But those already of death are but the foreshadows of that darker gloom which must gather round your spirit, unless you believe in Christ! With some men it has even gone further than this. When a man has long resisted the invitations of the gospel, long gone from bad to worse, from sin to sin—a horror, an unspeakable horror—will seize hold upon him at times, especially if he is a man who is given to intoxication. Then a delirium will come upon him, mingled with a remorse, which will make his life intolerable! It has been my unhappy lot to see one or two such cases of persons who have been ill and have been vexed with fears—fears of a most hideous cast which I could not remove. You speak to them about Christ; they say, “What have I to do with Him? I have cursed Him hundreds of times.” You speak to them about faith in Christ; “Faith in Christ,” they say, “what is the use of that to me? I am past hope; I am given up and I do not care about it, either.” And then they collapse—go back again into that dull despair which is the sure advance guard of damnation itself! With these men one may pray; they bid you pray *for* them, and then they say. “Get up, sir; it is of no use; God will never hear you for me.” They will ask you to go home and pray; but assure you that it will be useless to do so. You read the Bible to them. “Don’t read the Scriptures,” they say, “every text cuts me to the quick, for I have neglected the Word of God, and all my time now is past.” You tell them that—

*“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.”*

No, no, *they* cannot! You may tell them that there is hope—that Jesus Christ calls many at the eleventh hour—you picture to them the thief on the cross. No, no—they put far from them all hope and choose their own delusions—and perish.

Now such men give the gravest picture of what hell must be in these forebodings of the wrath to come. I saw one man, now in eternity, and where he is, God knows. I could not describe to you what I saw that day of him. He said he would not die—and walked up and down as long as there was life in him, under the notion, as he said, that if he could walk about, he knew he should not die. He would not die, he said. He would live, he *must* live. “I cannot die,” he said, “for I must be damned if I die. I feel I must.” And that poor wretch, sometimes giving ear to your admonitions, then cursing you to your face, bidding you pray and then blaspheming—dying with hell commenced, with all the horrors of perdition just beginning—a sort of infant perdition strangling to be born within him! Oh, may God deliver you from ever knowing this vilest premonition of destruction! And how shall you be delivered, but by this? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, for he who believes and is baptized shall be saved”—so says the Scripture—“He who believes not shall be damned.” Trust Christ and you are saved, be you whom you may! Come to the foot of the Cross and cast yourself where His blood is dropping, and you are saved! Give your heart to Him; believe in Him; repose your confidence in Him! May the Spirit of God enable you to do this! May He help you to repent of sin, and having repented, may He bring you to Christ, as the sin propitiator! And may you go away this day, saying, “I *do* believe in Christ. My soul rests *in Him!*” And if you can say that, the joy and peace in believing, which must follow a simple faith in Christ, shall be to you the work of “the Holy Spirit of promise, and the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

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