

WHAT AND WHENCE ARE THESE?

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A SERMON

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“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Revelation 7:13-14

TOWARDS some subjects even the best of men need that their attention should be drawn. Certain themes need an introduction to our contemplations. We often see and yet do not see, we see that which upon the surface attracts the eye, but we fail to penetrate into the inner and more precious truth. Even in heaven, it would seem that the mind needs directing, and wants a friend to suggest inquiry. He who sees the white-robed host may yet need to be led to the consideration of who and what they are.

It is very gracious on the part of our heavenly Father that He condescends to send us messengers of different kinds to awaken our attention, to guide our inquiry, and to lead us to search deeper than we might otherwise have done. John looked at the long ranks of triumphant spirits and admired their glory, but his thoughts had not penetrated deep enough, and therefore an elder was sent to speak with him. That personage asked him a question, and this he did that John might confess his ignorance, might feel a desire to know more, and might be led to inquire upon the point which it was most needful for him to consider.

While we are dwellers here below our minds are very apt to be engrossed with the things which surround us, and we want someone to direct our thoughts to the upper world, and in the same way the mind of a person dwelling above would naturally be most occupied with the things around it in the glory land, and it might be needful to bid him remember facts concerning the lower world.

We generally take that view of a matter which is most consistent with our own present circumstances, whereas to see a thing completely we need to view it from many angles. Hence the elder suggests to John that he should see these glorified spirits from another point than that which naturally suggested itself to him. He was led to consider them, not as they then were, but as they had been.

The question was therefore suggested to him, “Who are these, whence came they? What was their earthly character? What manner of men were they in the days of their pilgrimage? Were they cherubim, or children of men? Did they come here on wings of fire, or came they here as do the sons of Adam? Who are these that now have attained to such dignity and bliss, as to be now wearing the white robe of innocence, and waving the palm of victory?” To that inquiry I hope to lead your attention this morning, may it be as profitable to you as doubtless it was to John.

We are frequently tempted to think that our Lord Jesus was not in very truth a man like ourselves. His actual and proper humanity is believed among us, but not fully realized. We are apt to fancy that His was another flesh and manhood from our own, whereas He was in all things made like unto His brethren, and was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is, therefore, needful again and again and again to set out the true brotherhood and kinship of Christ.

The same spirit of error leads us into the feeling that those holy men who have attained to felicity must have been something different from ourselves. We set the apostles up in twelve niches, and look upon them as very superior beings. We can hardly imagine that they were partakers of our flesh and blood, and as we see the whole white-robed host, we imagine in our hearts that they must have been far

different from ourselves. They did well and valiantly we admit, and we rejoice that they have attained to a blessed reward, but we dream that we ourselves cannot do as well, nor win as great a recompense.

Without exactly defining the feeling, we in some way persuade ourselves that something in their persons or in their circumstances entirely separated the glorified saints from us, and gave them an advantage over us, and therefore we despair of ever achieving their triumphs. Now, this error must be overcome, because it furnishes convenient excuses for indolence, and represses those holy ardors which are the life of elevated piety.

Brethren, the point to which the elder drew John's attention is the one we are now driving at, he would have him note that those were glorified in heaven who were once tried and tempted as we are, they were, in fact, men of like passions with us.

I grant you it would be very delightful for us to contemplate the present condition of joy and immortality possessed by yonder bright spirits, but for the moment it will be more practically useful for us to consider what they were and how they came to be what they now are, so that finding that they were of old what we now are, we may follow in their track, and may obtain to the same blessed rank as that which they now enjoy.

Our sermon on this occasion will consist of an answer to these two questions—"Whence come they?" for though that was the second question asked, it was the first answered, and secondly, "Who are these?" Our third point shall be, "What of all this?"

I. Concerning the bright spirits in heaven—WHENCE CAME THEY?

These bearing the palms—whence came they? Reason itself suggests that they came from battle. It is not according to the wont of God to use emblems without a meaning. The palm, the ensign of triumph, indicates most certainly a conflict and conquest. As on earth the palm would not be given if not won, we may conclude that the Lord would not have distributed the prize unless there had been a preceding warfare and victory.

A conflict for a temporal crown is severe, how much more for an unfading palm in heaven. The winners of these palms must have passed through a battle of battles, an agony of agonies, a great tribulation. Palms which may be waved even before the throne of the august majesty of heaven are not easily come by. From the very fact that the glorified carry palms, we may infer that they did not come from beds of sloth, or gardens of pleasure, or palaces of peace, but that they endured hardness, and were men trained for war.

The inference is well warranted, for it is even so, and the answer to the question, "Whence came they?" is this, "These are they which came out of great tribulation."

1. They were then like ourselves, for, in the first place, *they were tried like others*. They came out of great tribulation. Note, then, that *the saints now glorified were not screened from sorrow*.

I saw today a number of lovely flowers, they were as delightful in this month of February as they would have been in the midst of summer, but I did not ask, "Whence came they?" I know very well that they were the products of the conservatory, they had not been raised amid the frosts of this chill season, else they had not bloomed as yet.

But when I look upon God's flowers blooming in heaven, I understand from the voice of inspiration that they enjoyed no immunity from the chill breath of grief. They were made to bloom by the master hand of the Chief Husbandman, in all their glory, amid the afflictions, and adversities, and catastrophes which are common to men.

God's elect are not pampered like spoiled children, neither are they like "the tender and delicate woman who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness." They are, it is true, secured from all fatal injury, but they are not protected from the rough winds and rolling billows which toss every barque which bears a son of Adam. Turn over the roll of the worthies of the Lord from the first hero of faith to the last, and you shall not meet with a sorrowless name. Great are their privileges, but immunity from trouble is not among them.

Was Adam God's elect? We hope he was, but certainly in the sweat of his face he ate his bread, and through his tears he saw the mangled body of his second son. Did God honor Abraham, and call him His friend? He was not without family afflictions, among the chief of which was the call to take his son, his only son, and offer him up for a sacrifice. Moses was king in Jeshurun, but his yoke, as a servant of the Lord, was a very heavy one, for all the day long he was vexed with the rebellions of a wayward people. Was David, the man after God's own heart? You know how deep called unto deep, while all God's waves and billows went over him.

Speak ye of the prophets, which of them escaped without trial? Come ye to the apostles, which of these enjoyed a life of ease? Did they not all of them but one pass through the gates of death wearing the martyr's crown? And he who died of old age, had not he been an exile in Patmos?

Where, from their day down to this, among the elect of heaven do you find a single child of God unchastened, a solitary branch of the heavenly vine unpruned, or one ingot of precious gold untried with fire? Through the flood, and through the fire, lies the pathway of the chosen. Through troops we must cut our way, and over walls we must leap, for to none is there a luxurious path to heaven. We must fight if we would reign.

True, God's people have been found in all ranks, but in every position they have had their sorrows. You find Esther, a queen beloved of God, but what were the tremblings of her heart when, with her life in her hand, she went in unto the king to plead against that wicked Haman? Lazarus was in the opposite stage of human circumstance, but he lay suffering at the gate of his ungenerous neighbor, and the dogs came and licked his sores.

In palace or in cottage the rod is the sure portion of all the heirs of salvation. Each state to the believer produces bitter herbs peculiar to itself, he shall never need to search far for the appointed accompaniments to the paschal lamb.

I have heard that a great statesman once stopped his horse on a plain to speak with a shepherd who was resting in the midst of his flock. Thinking of his own heavy anxieties, he expressed his envy of the shepherd, because his life was so free from vexation.

"Sir," said the shepherd, "I may not be troubled exactly as you are, but I have my own worries. Do you see that black ewe there?" "Yes." "If she were dead," continued the shepherd, "I might be a perfectly happy man, but she is a plague to me, for every now and then she takes to going astray, and all the rest are sure to follow her."

Rest assured that there is a black ewe in every flock. Man is born to trouble. All the sons of God in heaven passed by "weeping-cross." Such burdens as we are now carrying on earth once pressed the shoulders of those now in glory. Our crosses are reproductions of the old yoke of Christ. Under our personal and relative griefs the glorified have smarted, and our sinking of heart and fears of soul they have experienced. "Through much tribulation" they have inherited the kingdom.

Note next, that they were *not even screened from temptation*. To the child of God, temptation to sin is a greater grievance than the suffering of pain. The saint has often said, "I could endure adversity, but it is misery to be day after day solicited to evil, to have the bait perpetually dangling before me, and to feel something in my soul which half consents to sin, and would altogether surrender were it not for watchful grace."

Brethren, temptation to the pure mind is very grievous, to be sifted in Satan's sieve is a sore trial. Storms on any sea are to be dreaded, but a whirlwind raised by Satan on the black sea of corruption is horrible beyond conception. Yet do not say you cannot enter heaven because you are tempted, for all those snow-white bands attained their glorious standing through much temptation, as well as through much affliction. They, like their Master, were tempted in all points as you are.

Let me take you again to the old records, and ask you whether you find a single saint untempted? Oh, ye young men, who lament that you are so often allured to evil, have ye forgotten Joseph in Potiphar's house? You who dread the persecutor's frown, have ye forgotten Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? Ye of riper years, who feel your feet almost gone, do ye not remember David, and how he

was tempted. Ay, and worse, how he fell, and with broken bones had to limp his way to heaven? Which of the saints has been un-assailed by the fiery darts of the wicked one? Has not the fowler spread his nets to entangle every one of them? Has he not laid snares for every faithful soul?

Review all the ranks of the white-robed squadrons, and inquire of every glorified spirit. Say to each one, “And thou? wert thou also tempted? Did the world seek alternately to fascinate and frighten *thee*? Hadst thou a body of sin and death to drag thee down? Hadst thou foes among thine own household? Didst thou also cry, ‘Woe is me, for I dwell in Meshach’?”

To such questions each one of the perfected saints would reply that their perils were such as ours, and had it not been for Almighty grace, they would have utterly perished from the way. The shields of the mighty, which are now so highly exalted, were once battered by the blows of temptation, even as ours are at this hour.

We may add to all this, again, that *they were men who as keenly felt trial and temptation as we do*. Too frequently, when we are forced to admit that the trials of the saints were similar to our own, we persuade ourselves that their natures were less tender, their feelings less sensitive, their spirits less vulnerable than our own. We imagine that these ancient heroes wore some secret armor, or had their hearts steeled within, or wore a charmed life, and yet we know right well that all flesh of man has the same power to suffer, that a wound in another man’s body bleeds even as it would in our own, and that reproach is as bitter to one spirit as to another.

As face answereth to face in water, so the heart of man to man. Good men, because they are good, are not the less sorrowful when their beloved ones are taken from them. Gracious men are not by grace petrified so as to despise the chastening of the Lord.

Jacob mourned for Rachel, and David for Jonathan. You do not find the saints less troubled than other men when friendship turned to treachery, and love to hate. Tears flowed as readily from holy eyes as from the eyes of the ungodly. They were sons of men, born of women as we are, and subject to the same passions and emotions. Oh, no, they were not Stoics, nor men of iron, but made of the same earth as ourselves, their hearts palpitated to the same tune.

Daughter of grief, do you say, “I wish I were as the holy women of old, that in my trouble I might not be so cast down”? Read you the history of Hannah, and mark how her adversary “vexed her sore to make her fret.” She too, was a woman of a sorrowful spirit. That story in the commencement of the First Book of Samuel I am sure must often have cheered the daughters of affliction when they have prayed in the bitterness of their souls, for they have said, here was a woman, tempted like as we are, and smarting as we do under unkind remarks and slanderous reports and ungenerous treatment, and yet she rejoiced in God’s salvation.

If your spirit is constitutionally sorrowful, and its wounds are often wantonly opened by those about you, read the story of Jeremiah, and his plaintive notes in the Lamentations will both help you to express your woes and furnish you with sympathy in them.

Read too, the sorrowful bemoanings of Job. That grand old patriarch of Uz is very stout, and plays the man right gloriously. He is no puling child, whining and wincing at a gentle touch of the rod. But patient as he is and a very king among men, yet how bitterly he curses the day of his birth, and how heavily he complains.

Nor were New Testament saints less tender, for Mary and Martha wept, Magdalene was bowed down with sorrow at her Lord’s death, and the heart of the Virgin was pierced as with a sword. Peter wept bitterly, and Paul had continued heaviness. Tribulations abounded and afflictions were multiplied to the first disciples, and we wrong both themselves and us if we dream that it was easier for them to suffer than for us.

I grant you that they possessed a secret something which enabled them to endure, but that something was not home-born in their nature any more than it is in ours. They were fortified by a secret strength which they found at the throne of God in prayer, a patience which the Holy Ghost wrought in them, and which He is equally ready to work in us.

But perhaps it may be thought by some that those holy men who now wave the palm branch were spared some of the keener and more refined tribulations, to which I reply, it certainly was not so.

David especially appears to have compassed the whole round of affliction. He could say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." From all quarters his trials arose, and from his youth to his death they assailed him. Let me remind you of that special grief which came upon him when his darling son excited rebellion against him, and his own chosen friend and counselor, Ahithophel, betrayed him, and to this add the scene when that same darling son was slain in red-handed rebellion against his father, and David cried aloud, "O Absalom, my son, my son! would God I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

I should not feel that I had ventured too far if I said that there is no trouble known to any person in this audience which would not find its parallel in the case of the afflicted writer of the psalms.

But perhaps you tell me that yours is a spiritual grief, and that such a wound is the deepest of all. Turn then, to the life of the apostle Paul, and as far as he unveils his experience, you shall find him to be the subject of internal strifes and spiritual contentions of the sharpest kind. Remember, especially, when with the thorn in his flesh he prayed thrice to God to have it taken away, but it was not removed. Sufficient grace was given him, but he had to bear the inward smart, for, through much tribulation even of that kind must the chief of the apostles follow his Lord.

What need of multiplying words? It is plain to every man that understandeth, that the children of God have been tried like others, and they who have won the victory fought a real battle, armed only as we may be, and assailed neither more nor less as we are, by the same enemies and the same weapons. As the church militant we claim indisputable kinship with the church triumphant. We are their companions in tribulation.

2. Next, we believe that *the saints who are now in heaven needed trials like others*. The word used in our translation is "tribulation," and you know that the word *tribulatio* is used by the Romans to signify a threshing instrument. When they beat out the corn from the straw, they called it *tribulatio*, and so tribulation is sent to us to separate our chaff from our wheat.

Since the same tribulation happened to those who are now in heaven, we infer that they needed it as much as ourselves. To what end do men need tribulation? We reply, they often require it to arouse them, and yonder saints who serve God day and night in His temple, once slept as others do, and needed to be bestirred. Were they not apostles who slept in Gethsemane? Yea, were they not three of the chief of the apostles who slumbered within a stone's cast of their Master in His agony? The best of men are prone to slumber, and need to be awakened by the buffetings of sorrow. They needed trial to chasten them.

What son has God ever had, save His firstborn and Well-beloved that did not need chastening? Inasmuch as we are all sinners, we have need in our Father's house to suffer from the rod. They wanted tribulation as we do to loosen them from the earth, else they would have struck their roots into this poor soil, and tried to live as if this world were their portion.

Affliction was also necessary to develop their graces, even as spices need bruising to bring forth their smell, and rose leaves require distilling to draw forth their sweetest perfume. They required adversity to educate them into complete manhood, for they too were once babes in grace. It is in the gymnasium of affliction that men are modelled and fashioned in the beauty of holiness, and all their spiritual powers are trained for harmonious action.

It was meet also that they should suffer, in order to complete their service. Like their Lord, they had to be made perfect through suffering, and if they had not suffered they had not finished the work which He had given them to do. They needed tribulation, moreover, that they might be made like their Savior, for a *saint* untroubled, how can he be like the man who wore the thorn crown? Never smitten, never slandered, never despised, never mocked at, never crucified, then how could we be like our Head? Shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?

They who are in heaven passed through tribulation, and they needed it as much as we do. Let us think of all this, for it may encourage us to press forward. They were knights of the same order as ourselves, and by the selfsame methods obtained the honors which they wear.

3. Again, the children of God who are in heaven in their trials *had no other support than that which is still afforded to all the saints*. A miracle was here and there wrought I grant you. But then there are other things to be said on our side, for the Spirit of God was not given then as fully as we possess Him now, and Christ had not then brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. So that what little advantage they had in miracle is far outweighed by the advantage we have in the Gospel dispensation.

What was it that upheld the saints of old who are now before the throne? Their faith was sustained by the promise of God, but we have the promise too. They rested on God's faithful word, that word is faithful still. We have more promises by far than most of them received. They had but here and there a word of inspiration, we have the whole volume of consolation. Yea, we have a double portion, for we have two books full of choice and gracious words. We have, therefore, more to cheer us than they had.

They had the Spirit of God, you say, but I reply, so have we. They had Him *with* them, we have Him *in* us. He visited them occasionally, He dwelleth in us, He never removeth from His people but abideth in them forever.

You will tell me that God worked with them, God works with us. Providence was on their side, and is not providence on our side also? All things worked together for their good, they work together for our good in the same manner. The Lord who was at the helm of their vessel when storms assaulted it, still stands at the helm for us and holds the tiller with a strong hand. He who walked the waves of Gennesaret, and came to the rescue of the storm-tossed disciples, still saith to us, "It is I; be not afraid."

I see no point in which they had superior resorts to those which are open to ourselves, for the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Their rest lay where our rest still lies, their peace and comfort were the same as our own.

The Prince of Wurtemberg on one occasion in the midst of certain kings and great men heard them boasting, one bragged of the mines which enriched his dominions, another of his forests, another of his vineyards. Now the Prince of Wurtemberg was poor, but he said, "I have a jewel in my country which I would not exchange for all your wealth," and when they questioned him, he said, "If I were lost in any forest of my territory, or could not find my way along a lonesome road, if I said to the first peasant that I met that I was his king, I could lean my head upon him and lie down to sleep, and sleep securely there, feeling certain that he would watch over his king as he would over his child."

So we feel, and so the saints of old felt a delightful security anywhere beneath the blue heavens of God. If we have not riches, if we have not honor, if we have nothing that flesh could desire, we can lie down anywhere and feel that we are perfectly safe in the divine keeping. The angels watch over us and protect us, for we are the children of God, all things work for our good, the beasts of the field are our friends, and stones of the field are in league for our defense. This was the portion of those who are now above, and it is our portion still.

4. Very hurriedly I must notice, before I leave this first point, that *if there was any difference between those saints and ourselves, it lay in their enduring superior tribulations*, for "These are they that came out of *great* tribulation." If, I say, we must distinguish them from ourselves at all, it lies in this, that some of them were martyred as we are not, resisted unto blood as we have not, and were put to death by cruel torments as probably we shall not be. Theirs was the battle's brunt. For them the furnace was heated seven times hotter.

My brethren, if their faith sustained them and won them the palm branch, why should not ours do the same for us? The text says, "These are they that came out of *the* great tribulation," for so it is in the original. It may mean some peculiarly severe tribulation which has befallen, or is about to befall the church, and if so, it is consoling to observe that the saints shall come out of it unscathed. But I rather take it to mean the one long tribulation of God's Saints in all ages. It is all one, it is all a part of the sufferings of the body of Christ, the saints in glory have had their share in the great tribulation, and if

anything, a greater share than we. We feel persuaded then, that as they were men like ourselves, who suffered as we suffer, and were supported as we are supported, we shall, through the same grace, win the same victory.

II. I will not detain you longer on that point, though there is much to be said, but I must take you to the second, and that is, WHAT ARE THESE?

John beheld them all in white robes, and the question to be answered was, “Who are these—these in heaven?” The reply was, “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” from which we gather, first, that *all those in heaven were sinners*, for they all needed to wash their robes. No superfluity would have been written down in this Book, but had the robes been perfectly white, there had been no necessity to cleanse them, certainly not to cleanse them in Jesus’ blood.

They were sinners then, those glorious ones were sinners like ourselves. Look up at them now! Observe their ravishing beauty! See how faultless they are! And then, remember what they were.

Oh, ye trembling sinners, whose bruised hearts dare not indulge a hope of the divine favor, those fair ones were once like you, and you are today what they were once. They were all shapen in iniquity as you were, they were every one of them of woman born, and therefore, conceived in sin. They were all placed in circumstances which allured them to sin, they had their temptations, as we have shown, and they lived in the midst of an ungodly generation, even as you do.

What is more, they all sinned, for mere temptation would not have soiled their robes, but actual sin defiled them. There were thoughts of sin, there were words of sin, there were acts of sin in all of them.

Did you observe that bright one who sang most sweetly of them all? Shall I tell you a part of his earthly history? He was one of the chief of sinners, he takes rank now amongst the chief of choristers, because he has most to sing about, since he had most forgiven and loved most. He will not tell you that he was naturally a saintly spirit, and that by mortification, and self-denial, and diligent perseverance he won his place in heaven. No, he will confess that his salvation was all of grace, for he was like others a sinner, and had transgressed above many.

You will say, perhaps, that none of the saints had committed sins like yours, but there I must flatly contradict you. Amongst that illustrious company there are those who were once sinners of the deepest dye—the adulterer, the thief, the harlot, the murderer, some who were such are now glorified, for we have such characters mentioned in infallible Scripture as having been forgiven, sanctified, and at length glorified.

Whatever your sin may be, and I will not mention it, for the mention of sin does not help to purify us from it, whatever it is, all manner of sin and blasphemy have been forgiven unto men, and the precious blood of Jesus has brought into eternal glory men stained with every form of sin. Jesus has cleansed crimson sinners, deep ingrained with iniquity, and scarlet sinners, whose crimes were of the most glaring hue. They all in heaven were sinners, such as we are.

Secondly, they *all who are in heaven needed an atonement*, and the same atonement as we rely upon. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Not one of them became white through his tears of repentance, not one through the shedding of the blood of bulls or of goats. They all wanted a vicarious sacrifice, and for none of them was any sacrifice effectual, except the death of Jesus Christ the Lord. They washed their robes nowhere but in the blood of the Lamb.

O sinner, that blood of the Lamb is available now. The fountain filled with blood, drunk from Immanuel’s veins, is not closed, nor is its efficacy diminished. Every child of Adam now in heaven came there through the blood of the great substitute. This was the key that opened heaven’s door—the blood, the blood of the Lamb. It was the one purification of them all, without one exception. If I were in your case, O sinner, God helping me, I would trust in the blood as they did, and enter heaven as they have done.

You will further notice that *the saints in heaven realized the atonement in the same way as we must do*. They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The act which gave them the virtue which lies in the atonement was the act of faith. They did not bring anything to the blood, any

merit, or feeling, or preparation. They only brought their filthy garments to the blood, and nothing else. They washed and were clean. That was all. They did not give, they took. They did not impart, but they received. In this same way I have realized the merit of my Savior's passion, and I know that every believer here will confess that this is his hope, he has washed and he is clean.

There is nothing to do, and nothing to feel, and nothing to be, in order to forgiveness, we have but to wash and the filth is gone. Every child of God in heaven whether he were king or prophet, or seer, or priest, came there through simply relying and depending upon the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb, and that is all—all. You must not dare to add to it, or you will sin against the all-sufficient sacrifice.

The text tells that the sole reason for the saints being in heaven at all was because they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, "Therefore are they before the throne of God." But is not one of them there because he had not sinned? There is no answer from all the shining hosts. Is not one of them glorified because a long life of consecration wiped out the small offenses of his youth? No response comes to the inquiry. But *if you ask* whether they were there because they have washed in the blood, the "Yes" which comes from them all is like the voice of many waters, and like great thunders.

III. Now, beloved, WHAT OF ALL THIS?

Why, first of all, we must not draw the conclusion that trouble and temptation are any argument that a man will get to heaven. Perhaps I may be misunderstood this morning, and therefore I add a caution. There is a groundless notion abroad that those who are badly off in this world will certainly have it made up to them in the world to come, and I have heard the parable of Lazarus and Dives quoted as though it taught that those who are poor here will be rich hereafter.

There is not a shadow of reason for any such belief. You may go through much tribulation to get to hell as well as to heaven, and as a man may have two heavens, here and hereafter, by living near to God, so may a man have two hells, the hell which he bringeth upon himself in this life by his extravagances, his wickedness, and his lust, and the hell that shall be his punishment forever in the world to come.

Believe me, many a ragged, loathsome beggar has been damned. He was as poor as Lazarus, but not as gracious as he, and therefore no angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. There is no efficacy in the tongues of dogs to lick away sin, and neither can a hungry belly atone for a guilty soul. Many a soul has begged for crumbs on earth, and has afterwards craved in vain for water in hell. You must take care not to suck poisonous error out of the flowers of the truth.

I would, however, have you learn that no amount of trial which we have to suffer here, if we are believers in Jesus, should lead us to anything like despair, for however trouble may encompass us today, those in heaven came through as great a tribulation, and why may not we? If messengers should come one after the other with swift feet to bring us heavy tidings, if all our property should melt, and our children should die, and even the partner of our bosom should tempt us to curse God, we must still hold fast our confidence.

Our faith's motto should be, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." God may smite His children, but He never can cast off His children. He must love them, and He will love them forever and forever. Let us also understand that no amount of sin of which we may have been guilty ought to lead us to despair of pardon, salvation, and ultimate entrance into heaven, if we also wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Those who are in heaven have washed their robes white by faith in Jesus, and so may we. I may be addressing some one who has written his own death warrant. I thank God that the Lord has never written it. You may have said, "I know that I never shall have mercy." Who told you that God had set a limit to His grace? Who has been up to heaven and found that your name is not written among His chosen? Oh, do God the justice to believe that He delighteth in mercy, and that it is one of His greatest joys to pass by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

And suppose this day you should have in your own person trouble and sorrow united. Suppose you should be going through the great tribulation, and at the same time you should have committed sin which has defiled your garment most conspicuously, though the gall and the wormwood be both in your

cup and both be bitterest of the bitter, yet do not despair, for the saints whom John saw had the double blessing of deliverance and cleansing, and why should not you?

I make bold to tell you that if your troubles were tenfold what they are, and your sins also were multiplied ten times, yet there is power in the eternal arm to bear you up under the tribulation, and there is efficacy in the precious blood to remove your sinful stains. By an act of faith cast yourselves upon God in Christ Jesus. If you do so, you shall take your place amongst the white-robed bands when this life ends.

I was led to these reflections this morning by the remembrance of the few short days ago since our beloved brother, Mr. Dransfield, whose mortal remains we committed to the tomb last Monday, was among us. You remember his accustomed seat, just here, at the prayer meeting. You remember how there was never an empty seat just over yonder at any of our public services. He was always among us, and he was just like ourselves. I am sure we all felt at home in his presence. He did not walk among us at all as a stilted personage or a supernatural being, he was a father among us, we loved him, esteemed him, revered him, but he was a man of men among us.

I have tried to realize the same spirit before the throne of God, and I think I have been able to grasp the thought. I know he was like we ourselves, I am equally certain that he is yonder, and that he is rejoicing in Christ, none of us doubt that.

Now let us make a practical, common sense use of that fact and feel, I, too, resting where he rested—for, oh, how sweetly did he rest in his dying Lord—I, too, hoping as he hoped, shall bear up under troubles as he did during his painful illness, and I, too, shall have a joyful death as he did, for his soul triumphed in his God beyond measure.

Why should not all of us, his brethren, enter where he is gone? Dear sister, why should not you? You who are consumptive, you who know that death is drawing near to you because you carry a disease about you which will take you home? Just realize the fact now before us. Our dear and well-known friend is really gone to the better land. You shook hands with that dear brother a few days ago, and now he is with God, and is waving the palm and wearing the white robe. It is not a dream, a fiction, or a fancy. It is not the delusion of high-blown fanaticism. It is not a wondrous attainment for some few special and renowned saints. Oh, no, it is for every one of us who believe in Jesus.

They in heaven are those who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not said, “These are they that were emperors,” not “These are they who were reared in marble halls,” not “These are they who were great scholars,” not “These are they who were mighty preachers,” not “These are they who were great apostles,” not “These are they who lived spotless lives.” No, but these are they who came through the tribulation of life, and were cleansed from their sins, as others must be, in the precious blood of Jesus, therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.

Dear brother Dransfield, you were bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and yet you are perfected before the throne. We, thy brethren are on the way and shall be with you soon. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 14

As a very large number of friends from a distance desire occasionally to attend the Tabernacle, but do not like to encounter the crowds at the doors, the deacons have resolved to issue early admission tickets, which will admit the holder before the general public, during the month of issue. They will be purchasable at the price of one shilling, and can be had by letter, enclosing twelve penny stamps, and one half-penny stamp for postage, of Mr. C. Blackshaw, Tabernacle, Newington Butts.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.