

VANITIES AND VERITIES

NO. 1380

A SERMON

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:
for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”
2 Corinthians 4:18.*

THE Apostle Paul was by no means a stoic. He had not conquered all human feeling and rendered himself a stone man. On the contrary, he was exceedingly sensitive. You can see abundant evidence, not only in the Acts of the Apostles, but also in the tone of all his epistles that he has a very tender spirit. He feels acutely any unkindness. If a friend forsakes him, he mourns it. Or if friends help him, there is genuine emotion in his gratitude. He is sensitive, too, to poverty, sensitive to shame—sensitive to all those griefs which he has to bear for Christ’s sake. He feels them—you can see that he does. He is not an invulnerable man in armor—he is a man of flesh and blood whom the arrows pierce and pain. Yet how bravely he sticks to his work. He faces every danger and never dreams of flinching. Never for a single moment does he seem to take into consideration what he may have personally to suffer for the testimony of Christ and the triumph of the gospel. He remembers the pangs when they are past. He looks on the scars when they are healed and he sometimes gives a long list of the perils and privations he has had to endure, thus showing that he was keenly sensitive, but he never tries to shelter himself from any sort of suffering if it is necessary to accomplish his lifework. Thus he pressed steadily on through evil report and good report, through honor and through dishonor, enjoying the love of the churches at one time and at another time smarting under a cruel suspicion of his apostleship even among his own converts. Now the hero of unbounded popularity, when the people crowd to do him honor, and at another time the victim of public hatred and frenzied riot when he is dragged out of the city to be stoned to death. “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me,” he could well say. He seemed as if God had thrown him forth from His hands even as He hurls a thunderbolt and he stayed not until he reached the end towards which the power of God was urging him. He cried, “The love of Christ constrains us.” He reckoned himself, therefore, dead to all but Christ. Well may we be curious to know what supported so noble a man under his trials and developed such a hero under such a succession of oppositions. What kept him so calm? What made him so self-possessed and intrepid?

How was it that when cast down he was not destroyed—that when troubled he was not distressed? What sustained him? He gives us the key to this fortitude by telling us that he counted his afflictions light because they were, in his estimation, but for a moment, and they were working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He was calm and happy midst rage and tumult, violent prejudice, and adverse and even disastrous circumstances, because, in the language of the text, he looked not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen, reckoning that the things which are seen are not worth looking at, so transient are they, while the things unseen are of priceless worth because they are eternal. That is our subject at this time. First, *things not to be looked at* and second, *things to be looked at*.

The text wears the shape of a double paradox. Things that can be seen are, naturally, the things to be looked at. What should a man look at but what he can see? And yet the apostle tells us not to look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. How can things invisible be looked at? That again is a paradox. How can you look at what you cannot see? This is only one paradox of the Christian life, which is all paradox, and the riddle lies rather in the words than in the sense. We shall soon discover that there is no contradiction or incongruity, no difficulty whatever.

I. First, then, let us LOOK AT WHAT CAN BE SEEN and ask what we are to understand by this declaration—“We look not at the things which are seen.” The word for “look” is used, I think, six times in the New Testament and is translated in four or five different ways. I do not intend to keep to those

translations, but to work them into the explanation of what is meant by not looking at the things which are seen.

It means, first, *lightly esteeming both present joy and present sorrow*, as if they were not worth looking at. The present is so soon to be over that Paul does not care to look at it. There is so little of it and it lasts such a brief time that he does not even care to give it a glance—he looks not at it. Here he is persecuted, despised, forsaken. “It will not last long,” says he. “It is but a pin’s prick. It will soon be over and I shall be with the goodly fellowship above and behold my Master’s face.” He will not look at it. He ignores it. Thus it behooves us to do if surrounded with trials, troubles, present sorrows—we should not think so much of them as to fix our attention or rivet our gaze on them. Rather, let us treat them with indifference and say, “It is really a very small matter whether I am in wealth or in poverty, in health or in sickness, whether I am enjoying comforts or whether I am robbed of them. The present will be so soon gone that I do not care to look at it. I am like a man who stays at an inn for a night while he is on a journey.” Is the room uncomfortable? When the morning breaks, it is of no use making a complaint and so he merely chronicles the fact and hastens on. He says to himself, “Never mind, I am up and away directly, it is of no use fretting about trifles.” If a person is going a long distance in a railway carriage, he may be a little particular as to where he shall sit to see the country and as to which way he likes to ride, but if it is only a short stage—between, say, the Borough Road and the Elephant and Castle—he does not think about it. He does not care in whose company he may be, it is only for a few minutes. He is hardly in before he is out again. It is a matter not worth thinking about. That is how the apostle regarded it. He reckoned that his present joys and present sorrows were so soon to be over that they were, to him a matter of indifference, not even worth casting his eye that way to see what they were. “Does Jesus bid me go to Rome?” asks the apostle. “Then I do not look to see whether I shall be housed in Nero’s palace or caged in Nero’s dungeon. It is for so short a while that if I can serve my Master better in the dungeon than I can in the palace, so let it be. My casual lot shall be my well-contented choice. It shall be a matter, if not of cool indifference, yet still of calm serenity, for it will soon be over and gone into history. A whole eternity lies beyond and therefore a short temporality dwindles into an insignificant trifle.” What a blessed philosophy this is which teaches us to not even look at passing, transient troubles, but to fix our gaze on eternal triumphs.

He meant more than that, however. He meant that he had learned not to regard the things of the present as if they were at all real. He did not look upon them as substantial or enduring. Like as clouds when they float overhead assume diverse shapes but change their form while we are gazing at them, so events, as they seemed to be transpiring, were to him no more than apparitions. When a man looks on a dissolving view, knowing that it is going to dissolve, he does not regard it as being other than an illusion. It is a shadow cast upon a sheet—there is nothing substantial in it. It may please his eye, but he will say, “The subject upon the sheet is not the real thing. The view before me is not the scene itself and if I turn my eyes away from it, it will have melted away into nothingness in a little while. So for all its charms or its terrors, I will not fret myself.” You know how Paul explains his own words in another passage when he says, “Brethren, the time is short: it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passes away.” That is so with the earthly joy of the best of men. He should say to himself, “This is a dying joy. This will pass away. I look at it as a shadow.” Is a child born into your house? Read across its brow the word, “Mortal,” and when it dies you will not be disappointed or be anything like so sad as if you dreamed that you were a parent of an immortal. Such a thought *must* be a dream, since *your* little one may be taken from you as well as the child of another. When you have riches, do you say to yourself, “This is a solid treasure. This is golden gain”? Ah, then it will be your god and if you lose it, the loss will eat like a canker into your spirit. But if you say, “These are fleeting things. They may take to themselves wings and fly away. I will not consider money to be treasure, but only look upon it as a shadow and hold it as such—as a thing not to be reckoned with substances—because it is seen and temporal.” That is the way to do with every one of our joys. Do not look upon them as though they were substantial, for they are not. They are a part of this life-dream, this empty show—they are nothing more at their very best. Oh, how often do they prove to us, painfully, that they

are unsubstantial! Look in the same way upon your circumstances. Say, “Well, I am in poverty, but this is not real poverty, because it is not lasting poverty. In a short time I shall be among the angels and walk the streets of gold and be as bravely clad as any prince among them. Therefore will I not fret and worry, since my poverty will soon be over.” Anything of loss or suffering that you are called upon to endure, always look upon it in the light of time and see what a fleeting thing it is, and bear it bravely like a man—no, like a Christian man—because you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. These transient things are not worthy to be considered. Look upon them as if they were just nothing at all. So the apostle did.

Again, I find the word sometimes translated, “*mark*.” “Brethren,” says the apostle, “mark them that are unruly.” The word is the same as that which is here rendered, “look.” Dear friends, we are not to mark the things which are seen as if they were worth notice. You know that little children, if you give them a new toy or a new frock, clap their hands and otherwise express their delight. That is because they are children. Be not children in knowledge, but quit yourselves as men—and as to the things of this life, look on them as toys. Do not act towards them as children do, but as men. “Oh,” says the young man, “I have taken my degree at the university today.” How he exults. What high importance he attaches to it. He wishes to get a newspaper to see if it is recorded there. It is to him an event as great as anything in history. We, perhaps, are rather amused at his excitement, for we do not consider anything of this sort much worthy of marking down. Another man finds that he has made some considerable gain and he, too, reckons it as a red letter day the day in which he seized these accessions to his fortune. If you are doing so, you are making sorrow for yourself, for as surely as joy becomes too sweet, sorrow will become too bitter. If I care nothing whatever for man’s approbation, I reckon little of man’s disapprobation—one gets to be brave in that way. It is not good to be much elated or much depressed by the joys and sorrows of life. If you are overjoyed, if you mark down certain matters as the very essence of happiness and begin to exult and revel in the things which are seen, then, mark you, when the untoward things come to you and blight your hopes, you will find that you have rendered yourself too sensitive and you will feel the smart far more keenly than you would have done if you had exercised wisdom enough to forbear reveling in the sweets. Look at the wasps and flies in summer. They will see placed for them by your kindness sweet liquid in which to catch them—sugar or honey is employed to hold their wings. The wise fly sips a little and away, but the unwise insect enjoys the sweet and wades in farther and farther till he clogs his wings and he it is who will suffer when you come to destroy your prey. It is a blessed thing to be able to sip of this world and no more—for to plunge into it is death. Avoid the sweets of this world when they begin to tempt you. Say of them, as Solomon did of wine—“Look not upon it when it is red, when it gives its color in the cup, when it moves itself aright—for who has woe, who has sorrow, who has contention, who has babbling, who has wounds without cause, who has redness of eyes?” Surely the men who make this world to be their highest joy find at the last it bites like a serpent and stings as an adder. They indulge their passions to the destruction of their souls. Do not, therefore, mark carnal joy as to be desired.

But are we never to have anything special to mark? Oh yes. Carefully mark down the eternal things. Did the Lord appear to you? Mark that down. Did you win a soul to Christ? Mark that down. Did you have sweet answers to prayer? Mark that down. Those are things of special note, as I am quite sure Paul thought. Though he would not say much about the discomforts of the dungeon of the Praetorian, he marked down its consolations. When Onesimus came to hear him, he made a note of it. It did not matter to him whether he was assailed with stones or surrounded with applause. Whether he lodged in a palace or slept in a prison was to him no more than the incident, or say but the accident, of the hour. He made no account of such trivialities. He never marked those things down—the eternal was what he marked, but not the transient.

Another meaning is, *take heed*. You must put all the translations together to get the meaning. In the gospel according to Luke this word is translated, “Take heed.” The apostle meant, no doubt, that he did not take heed of the things which were seen. He did not exercise care, thought, and anxiety about them, but his care, thought, and anxiety were about the things which are not seen. “After all these things,” says Christ, “do the Gentiles seek.” So they do. They are always seeking after the world—from early morning till late at night it is the world they are after. Well, let the Gentiles follow their pursuits, but the child

of God should not, for our Lord says unto us, “Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or wherewithal you shall be clothed.” He bids us cast our care upon Him and cease from all anxiety. “Seek you,” says He, “first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” So the apostle Paul tells us not to care, not to worry or trouble ourselves about things which are seen, whether good or bad, prosperous or adverse—never suffering them to eat like a corrosive acid into our spirit. We are to spend all our heed upon our walk with God, our obedience to His command, our fulfilling His will, our spreading His kingdom, our getting ready for the coming of Christ, our being prepared for judgment, our being prepared to dwell eternally with God at His right hand. About these we ought to take heed. This is our business, but alas, our thoughts naturally drift the other way. These temporalities are more apt to absorb us. There are some who not only apologize for themselves, but justify their worldly-mindedness. Fitly, therefore, does the Lord Jesus Christ, by the mouth of His apostle, recall our thoughts away from groveling themes and bids us take heed of the eternal and let the secular sit lightly on our minds.

Paul, in the epistle to the Galatians, uses the word in the sense of *considering*, “considering yourself lest you also are tempted.” We shall dive still more deeply into the meaning if we understand how in certain conditions the present, the transient, the things most palpable to the senses are properly left out of all consideration and not taken into the reckoning. For instance, if the apostle knew that he should glorify God by preaching the gospel, what would it matter to him if friend or foe should say to him, “Paul, you will risk your life by attempting to do so”? Live or die, he would be bold to preach. He never took their warnings into consideration. And if they had said, “If you state such-and-such a truth or administer such-and-such a reproof in a certain church, you will be sure to lose their respect. You will lose face among them.” Again, he would have smiled. It would have had no more influence upon him than it would have upon a merchant should you say to him, “If you go into such a district you will have to encounter clouds of dust.” He would reply, “Why, if I can net a thousand pounds, what do I care about dust or no dust?” If it is my object to ascend a mountain, am I to be deterred by a few cobwebs across my path? What are tiny obstacles to a strong man? So Paul did not consider the things which are seen to be worth a thought, though there are puny folk who value nothing else. The cost to him seemed so little that he would let it go into the scale or not, as men pleased. “I reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Are you not sometimes placed in this position? You know you ought to do right, but you fear that if you do, you will lose your situation. Well, now, if God’s cause is uppermost in your estimation you will not consider your loss as the first matter. You will rather say, “I can lose anything sooner than lose peace of mind and miss pleasing God.” Or there is some duty which you know you ought to perform and you are told, “Well, if you do that, you will lose your old uncle’s love. He will strike you out of his will. You must think about it.” What is the use of thinking about it? It is only an earthly, transient thing, and what are these transient things, be they what they may, compared with the eternal weight of glory? O brothers, if men lived in the light of eternity and judged their position accordingly, how differently would they act. But instead of so doing we begin weighing those trifles which we may have to endure for Christ’s sake and making much of them. This is playing the traitor to Christ and forsaking Him when we ought to be most firm; shame upon us if we thus requite our Lord; eternal contempt awaits such cowards. From this time forth may we never look upon the things which are seen as substantial, but put them down as vanity and let the things which are not seen rise before us in all their supremacy of value.

Perhaps you may get a still clearer perception of the meaning of the text if I tell you its full interpretation. By, “not looking at the things which are seen,” we may understand *not making them our scope*. That is the nearest English word I can find to interpret the Greek. Let not these visible objects be the scope of your life, for alas, there are many whose whole scope of life is that they may prosper in this world. The next world may go as it wills—their scope ends here. To win the esteem of God seems a trifle to them. That they may live at ease, enjoy the comforts, and if possible, the luxuries of this life are their sole aim and objective.

As for the eternal things of heaven they seem dim and unsubstantial. Now, it must not be so with us. We should say, “The things eternal I pursue. I am no more a citizen of this world, but a pilgrim bound for the Celestial City. When I passed through Vanity Fair, they asked me to buy this and that and I said,

'I buy the truth.' I must go through the Enchanted Ground, but I will not sleep there, for this is not my rest. Whatever I see which is enchanting to others shall have no power over me, for the scope of my soul's desire and lifework is eternity." Would God we all had invisible joys for our object.

To sum up the whole, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, look not at the things which are seen. Do not look upon your comforts as if they were enduring. Do not dote upon them. Do not think of them as if you had them otherwise than on loan or as if you had any right to them. Be thankful to God for them, but because they will so soon pass away, do not set much store by them. Build not your nest on any of these trees, for they are all marked for the axe and before long they will all come down. Say not of any mortal man, or woman, or dear child, or worldly possession, or knowledge, or pursuit, or honor, "This is much to me." Let it be little to you. Put the gifts of God far down in the scale compared with Himself. Try, when you have your comforts, to find God in them and when you lose your comforts, then just change the words and try to find all in God, for remember, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live."

You have not to live on the creature comforts—you are bound to live on the living word of the living God and you will never be fully happy until you do this. A man who goes to a town and chooses a house that is dilapidated—the foundations gone and the beams decayed—may say, "This is a very comfortable house," but *you* would not think so highly of its charms. "No," you would be ready to say, "I cannot be comfortable in it. The rich hangings and costly furniture do not hide the serious defects. It may come down at any time about the heads of the sleepers. This is not a house for me." You know this is the case in daily life and common experience. Well, it is just the same with regard to the things eternal. Say therefore to yourself, "I must repose my soul upon that which is true, real, well-founded, and imperishable. Earthly things are too transient to afford me any solace or security. I dare not set my soul upon them. I cannot drink water out of these broken cisterns. I must go to the fountain from where all satisfying, trustworthy supplies flow."

You must do the same with regard to your sorrows, although it looks rather hard, yet it is the wiser way to take them cheerfully, rather than to exaggerate their weight by murmuring at them. If a man has grace to live above his joys that same grace will enable him to live above his sorrows. As I said just now, when earthly joys enchant you too much, then should earthly sorrows overtake you, they will make you sorely despond. Your wisdom is to live above them both—above the glee of prosperity and the gloom of adversity. Dear brother, what ails you? Have you lost a child? Lost! Why, you will be where that dear one is within so incredibly short a time that you need not worry and fret. Coming down from such a domestic grief as that to a commercial anxiety—you have had a sad loss in the City, have you? Some of your comforts will be curtailed. But if you get nearer to the heart of your Lord and love Him better and walk in the light of His countenance more than you did, you will never know you had a loss. You will be so much richer in the fine gold of His comfort that you will scarcely miss the silver of this poor world.

And so, too, if you lose credit or are discountenanced by old friends, or are deprived of anything which men are apt to make great account of here below—if you do but remember that it was only a bubble and it has burst—you will not be broken-hearted. Say, "It never was more than a bubble and I ought to have known that it would soon be gone. The comfort I had was never anything but a temporary loan and I ought to have remembered that it was borrowed." If you get into that mindset, you will live above the cares of this life. May God help you so to do.

II. Now, for a few minutes let us address ourselves to the second point—LOOKING AT THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN. How can we do that? Well, first, *realize them by faith*. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the judgment, and in life everlasting according to the teaching of the Word of God. Try to look at these things to look at them as present facts. Some will never do so. They will tell you that they could not see them if they tried. But that is just what we, who have been taught of God to look at the things which are not seen, can palpably discern. Oh, to look beyond death to "the home over there," beyond the swelling flood where souls that were loved of God from before the foundation of the world are safe with Jesus. I invite you to do so, especially if you have some dear ones there. Do you see them? Do you hear their music? Do you behold their joys? Are you going to be troubled about them any longer, after having realized their certain happiness? By-and-by there comes the

resurrection and the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised. The very body over which you wept because it was to be given to the worms shall rise in matchless beauty in the likeness of its Lord. Will you not wipe your eyes dry now and submit to the divine will, for surely the hope of the blessed resurrection makes amends for the loss by death? Then there is to come the judgment and you and I will be there. A soldier, some time ago, was in the valley of Jehoshaphat where, according to tradition, the feet of the Messiah will rest in the Day of Judgment and He sat on a stone and said, "And shall we all be present? I will sit here in that day." And there, absorbed with the thought, he looked up to the sky and so distinctly did he realize the majestic vision of the Day of Judgment, that he fell to the ground in amazement, oblivious of everything that was transpiring around him. Ah, if all of us were living in the light of the day of the Lord, what trifles these ebbs and flows, these ups and downs of passing circumstances would seem! How lightly we would bear sorrow and how little we would think of earthly fortunes and misfortunes if we could actually forecast the tremendous day when, with angels for witnesses and Christ for our Judge, we shall have to stand and be judged according to the things done in the body. Realize heaven, brothers and sisters, the heaven of the perfected manhood after the resurrection—the heaven where we shall see the Beloved's face, and day and night extol Him forever. Oh, what is it to be poor? What is it to be sick? What would it be to go through a thousand deaths if we may but at last behold His glory, world without end? And think of hell, you that forget God and revel in vanities. As your trembling spirit best may, think what it must be to be driven from His presence—to hear Him say, "Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell." Ah, gilded world, how you lose your luster when once I see the lurid glare of Tophet. O painted harlot, how I see your haggard ugliness when I hear the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth of those who chose the broad road and let the Lord the Savior go! How I despise you! As the vision opens before the eyes of faith, what zeal it kindles in my breast! Would to God I could induce some careless person here who, nevertheless, does believe the Scriptures, to sit down, if it were but for a half-hour and try, believingly, to picture these things to his mind's eye. This sacred volume is full of pictures—pictures of things that shall shortly come to pass. Oh that you had the discernment to see them, not as weird fancies, but as veritable facts. The true sayings of God. The real thing is what you do not see to be real. The fiction is that which you account a solid fact. We are going down each one of us to the grave, but God lives forever and ever. As for that body of yours in which you are sitting in this house, it is not a substance which shall abide, but it is a shadow which shall dissolve, moldering into dust and exhaling into water. Yet there lives within you what you cannot see—the real and true self—and that true self of yours will pass into another state. and through it into yet another, which shall be everlasting. And oh, may God grant that your lot may not be everlasting sorrow, but endless joy. In either case, the things which are not seen are eternal. Gird up your loins and look at them like a man who will have before long to dispel the illusions of sense and confront the verities of eternity, whether he wants to or not.

The Christian learns to *look on these things with the eye of delight*. Is it not to you, my dear brother in Christ, a delight to see God? I should not like to go to any place where I could not see my God. Yet He is not seen. Is it not a delicious thing to look forward to the heaven that is above—to the city of the blessed? When the Lord indulges our faith with a view of that eternal joy—and some of us have known what it is—it has been too much for our weak capacity. We can laugh in our sleep when we dream of heaven and we can sit down in the midst of pain and sorrow and feel as if we could not feel more joy than we possess, because our souls have looked on the pinnacles of our Father's palace and seen the gleaming radiance of the twelve bejeweled foundations of the eternal city where there is a house and a crown and a harp for every believer among us. The poor girl who goes home from this joyous place of worship to her own little cheerless room would feel miserable, indeed, if she looked at the shady side of her condition, but she says, "My Lord is in this room," and the place glows as if it were made of slabs of gold. She settles down and begins to think of the heaven that is hers and she sees herself to be a King's daughter, a true princess, for she possesses in the glory-land a crown that no head can wear but hers, and there is a mansion provided for her which none can live in but herself. Happy, therefore, she well may be. O beloved friends, learn to look at these things with intense delight, because they are ours in belief now and are soon to be ours in possession.

On the other hand, if you are not converted, I would urge you to look upon the eternal future—for it is all eternal—with an intense dread, for without Christ what is there for you among the things which are not seen and are eternal, but that which will make you wring your hands for poignant grief and gnash your teeth for bitter self-reproach if you are resolved to live and to die as you now are? You see not yet the future state of woe, but like all the unseen things, it is eternal. There can be no termination to the misery of an immortal soul when once banished from God. I see no “larger hope” revealed in Scripture. Let my philosophical brothers conjecture what they will, where God speaks not, I am silent. But I do see the dread forebodings of a death that never dies and a fire that is never quenched. I would have every man who will not have Christ, or who dilly-dallies with salvation and runs risks with his soul, to look at what he risks. Face your future, O you who choose your own destruction! That was a solemn morning’s work for Abraham when he went to the place where he was known to meet with God, and he looked towards Sodom and he saw the smoke of it going up as the smoke of a furnace. O Christians, you do well, sometimes, to look that way. Such contemplation is not pleasant to flesh and blood. No, but it will do you good and make you feel fervent emotions of gratitude for your own redemption and intense desires for the salvation of others. But come here, sinner! Come here! I must have you here. Look, do you see it? Do you see it—the smoke of the flame which burns forever and ever? That flame is for your burning if you repent not. Do you see it as it reddens the heavens? That fire burns for you if you believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you not look? If you will not, you will have to feel it. You can not mitigate those woes by refusing to believe in their existence. It is the silly trick of the ostrich, so they say, when the hunter pursues it, to burrow its head in the sand, and fancy itself safe, and this is what you are doing with more than equal folly. I would gladly recall you to reason. Look at the things which are not seen, for they are eternal. I met with a remark the other day which struck me forcibly—If a man had no worse pain than a toothache, if he knew that it would last forever, he would desire to die that he might escape from it. When we have to endure any acute pain for a little while, we begin to cry out for relief and find it hard to be quiet, but were any pang to last eternally, the horror of such an expectation would even now be overwhelming! By the dread thought of eternity, I implore you see to it that your salvation is secured at once. Escape for your life, my friend and look not behind you, for unless you escape in time, your fate will be sealed forever and ever. Those things which are not seen are eternal and hell is one of them. Except you escape now by faith in Jesus Christ, you will never escape. There is no reprieve nor respite in the world to come; pardon therefore should be sought at once.

By looking into the things which are not seen, Paul doubtless meant that *he looked to them with hope*. To his view, the harvest was ripe and he was eager to reap it. I invite all believers to be looking with ardent hope for the things that are eternal. Long for the bright appearing of the Lord. Long for your translation into the city of glory. Expect it. Watch for it. It is on the way. You may be much nearer than you think. You may be in heaven before next year—indeed you may be there before tomorrow morning. Light is fading from the earth. Dear friend, look towards heaven. Look towards eternal things. Make it a point to look unto your future home. Should there be any young man here who is not twenty-one and he knows that when he comes of age he is to be squire of a village, own a park, and enjoy a rich heritage, I will be bound to say he has often forestalled the time because he is sure of his title. If any one of you had a legacy left him of a large estate, he would be off this week to have a look at it. One likes to look at one’s own—Christian, be sure to survey your own possession in the skies. Read much the book of God which tells you of your future inheritance. Say to yourself, “This is all mine. Why should I not begin to enjoy it? Did not the Israelites fetch bunches of the grapes of Eshcol before they entered Canaan? And why should not I?” I hope you will full often enjoy foretastes of bliss till you can sing with John Beridge—

*“Too long, alas, I vainly sought
For happiness below.
But earthly comforts, dearly bought,
No solid good bestow.
At length, through Jesu’s grace, I found
The good and promised land
Where milk and honey much abound
And grapes in clusters stand.*

*My soul has tasted of the grapes,
And now it longs to go
Where my dear Lord His vineyard keeps,
And all the clusters grow.
Upon the true and living Vine
My famished soul would feast,
And banquet on the fruit divine,
An everlasting guest.”*

What a sanctifying influence such anticipations would have upon you! “Everyone that has this hope in him purifies himself.” Pursue eternal things with concentrated mind. You must look right on to the end of the race for the prize. The runner does not cast a glance to the right or to the left, or to the flowers which adorn the pathway, but he keeps his eye on the prize and that helps him to run. He stretches every nerve to reach the end and win the prize. Brothers and sisters, make eternal things the scope of your life at all times. This I have told you is the literal sense of the original Greek. Make them that for which you plot and plan—that for which you think and consider—that for which you live and act. Throw your whole being into eternal things. “Are we, therefore, to neglect business?” you may ask. God forbid! Serve God in business. To leave business or to do business as if it were not a part of your religion would be a departure from your Master’s will and not a fulfillment of it. Sanctify your most common actions to the glory of God. “Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Have an eye always to eternity. Keep your thoughts upon that. Eat and drink as for eternity, remembering that what you eat and drink perishes and he that eats will perish, too. It is “earth to earth” whenever we eat, therefore let us not make gods of our bellies. When you enjoy any earthly thing, do it as in the light of eternity and say, “I am plucking a flower that must fade. This is not a diamond that will remain with me, always glistening, it is only a bright daisy. It looks very pretty at the moment, but it will soon fade. The children gather it, but soon let it fall and so do I. Put not your soul into that which is sensual at your peril. See that you pursue with all your might things spiritual. As for things transient, commit them to God’s providence. Do your best to honor God in the use of this world’s currency, but make it not your wealth. Look at Jonah sitting under his gourd which screened him from the scorching sun with its broad leaves. Think of Jonah as he said to himself, “How happy I am under this arbor. How cool it makes me.” He was content and comfortable, but God prepared a worm. The worm destroyed the wretched gourd. Though it seemed so beautiful before, it soon became only fit to be pulled down and cast upon the dung-hill. It may soon be the same with your earthly comforts. If you make your gourd your God, it will do you no good. Gourds are well enough, but they are not good when you put them in the place of eternal comforts.

I finish with this. Treat the things present as if they were not and live like an heir of heaven’s invisible but substantial joys. Higher and better things are in store for you. God bless you by His blessed Spirit with blessed foretastes of the blessed hereafter. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 4.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—783, 656, 657.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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