

NO TEARS IN HEAVEN

NO. 643

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”
Revelation 7:17.*

IT is an ill thing to be always mourning, sighing, and complaining concerning the *present*. However dark it may be, we may surely recall some fond remembrances of the *past*. There *were* days of brightness, there were seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Be not slow to confess, O believing soul, that the Lord has been your help! And though now your burden is very heavy, you will find an addition to your strength in the thought of seasons long since past when the Lord lightened your load, and made your heart leap for joy. Yet more delightful will it be to expect the *future*. The night is dark, but the morning comes. Over the hills of darkness, the day breaks. It may be that the road is rough, but its end is almost in view. You have been clambering up the steep heights of Pisgah, and from its brow you may view your glorious heritage. True, the tomb is before you, but your Lord has snatched the sting from death, and the victory from the grave. Do not, O burdened spirit, confine yourself to the narrow miseries of the present hour, but let your eyes gaze with fondness upon the enjoyment of the past, and view with equal ardor the infinite blessings of old eternity when you were not, but when God set you apart for Himself and wrote your name in His Book of Life; and let your glance flash forward to the future eternity, the mercies which shall be yours even here on earth, and the glories which are stored up for you beyond the skies. I shall be well rewarded, this morning, if I shall minister comfort to one heavy spirit by leading it to remember the glory which is yet to be revealed.

Coming to our text, we shall observe, in the first place, that as God is to wipe away tears from the faces of the glorified, *we may well infer that their eyes will be filled with tears till then*. And in the second place, it is worthy of reflection that as God never changes, *even now He is engaged in drying tears from His children's eyes*. And then, coming right into the heart of the text, we shall dwell upon the great truth of God, that *in heaven divine love removes all tears from the glorified*; and so we shall close, by making some *inquiry as to whether or not we belong to that happy company*.

I. Our first subject of meditation is the inference that TEARS ARE TO FILL THE EYES OF BELIEVERS UNTIL THEY ENTER THE PROMISED REST. There would be no need to wipe them away if there were none remaining. They come to the very gates of heaven weeping, and accompanied by their two comrades, sorrow and sighing; the tears are dried, and sorrow and sighing flee away. The weeping willow grows not by the river of the water of life, but it is plentiful enough below; nor shall we lose it till we change it for the palm branch of victory. Sorrow's dewdrop will never cease to fall until it is transformed into the pearl of everlasting bliss—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown.”*

Religion brings deliverance from the curse, but not exemption from trial.

The ancients were accustomed to use bottles in which to catch the tears of mourners. I think I see three bottles filled with the tears of believers. The first is a *common bottle*, the ordinary bottle containing griefs incidental to all men, for believers suffer even as the rest of the race. *Physical pain* by no means spares the servants of God. Their nerves, blood vessels, limbs, and inward organs are as susceptible to disease as those of unregenerate men. Some of the choicest saints have lain longest on beds of sickness, and those, who are dearest to the heart of God, have felt the heaviest blows of the chastening rod. There are pains which, despite the efforts of patience, compel the tears to wet the cheeks. The human frame is capable of a fearful degree of agony, and few there are who have not at some time or other watered their couch with tears because of the acuteness of their pains. Coupled with this, are *the losses and crosses of daily life*. What Christian among you trades without occasional difficulties and serious losses? Have any

of you a lot so easy that you have nothing to deplore? Are there no crosses at home? Are there no troubles abroad? Can you travel from the first of January to the last of December without feeling the weariness of the way? Have you no blighted field, no bad debt, no slandered name, no harsh word, no sick child, no suffering wife to bring before the Lord in weeping prayer? You must be an inhabitant of another planet if you have had no griefs, for man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards! No ship can navigate the Atlantic of earth without meeting with storms—it is only upon the Pacific of heaven that all is calm forevermore. Believers must, through much tribulation, inherit the kingdom of heaven. “Trials must and will befall.” *Death* contributes to our woes; the heirs of immortality are often summoned to gather around the tomb. Who has not lost a friend? If Jesus wept, expect not that we shall be without the tears of bereavement; the well-beloved Lazarus died, and so will our choicest friends. Parents will go before us, infants will be snatched from us, brothers and sisters will fall before the scythe of death. Impartial foe of all, you spare neither virtue nor vice, holiness nor sin; with equal foot you tread on the cherished loves of all!

The Christian also knows *disappointments* as bitter and as keen as other men. Judas betrays Christ, Ahithophel is a traitor to David. We have had our Ahithophels, and we may yet meet with our Judas. We have trusted in friends, and we have found their friendships fail. We have leaned upon what seemed a staff, and it has pierced us like a spear. You cannot, dear friends, traverse the wilderness of this world without discovering that thorns and thistles grow plenteously in it, and that, step as you may, your feet must sometimes feel their power to wound. The sea of life is salt to all men. Clouds hover over every landscape. We may forget to laugh, but we shall always know how to weep. As the saturated fleece must drip, so must the human race, cursed by the fall, weep out its frequent griefs.

I see before me *a second bottle. It is black and foul*, for it contains tears distilled by the force of the fires of sin. This bottle holds more than the first, and is far more regularly filled. Sin is more frequently the mother of sorrow than all the other ills of life put together. Dear brethren, I am convinced that we endure more sorrow from our sins than from God’s darkest providences. Mark our rebellious *lack of resignation!* When a trouble comes, it is not the trial which makes us groan so much as our rebellion against it. It is true the ox goad is thrust into us, but we kick against it, and then it hurts us far more. Like men with naked feet, we kick against the pricks. We head our vessel against the stream of God’s will, and then murmur because the waves beat violently upon us. An unsubdued will is like a maniac’s hand which tears himself. The chastisements which come directly from our heavenly Father are never as hard to bear as the fretting and fuming of our unhumiliated self-will. As the bird dashes against the wires of its cage and breaks its own wing, even so do we. If we would take the cross as our gracious Father gives it, it would not gall our shoulders, but since we revolt from it, and loathe the burden, our shoulders grow raw and sore, and the load becomes intolerable. More submission and we would have fewer tears.

There are the tears, too, of *wounded, injured pride*, and how hot and scalding they are! When a man has been ambitious and has failed, how he will weep instead of standing corrected, or gathering up his courage for a wiser venture. When a friend has spoken slightly of us, or an enemy has accused us, how we have had to put our fingers to our hot eyelids to keep the tears from streaming out, and have felt all the while as full of wretchedness as we well could be. Ah, these are cruel and wicked tears. God wipe them away from our eyes now! Certainly He must do it before we shall be able to enter heaven. How numerous, too, are the tears of *unbelief!* We manufacture troubles for ourselves by anticipating future ills which may never come, or which, if they do come, may be like the clouds, all “big with mercy,” and “breaking with blessings on our head.” We get to supposing what we should do if such-and-such a thing occurred, which thing God has determined never shall occur. We imagine ourselves in positions where providence never intends to place us, and so we feel a thousand trials in fearing one. That bottle, I say, ought never to carry within it a tear from a believer’s eyes, and yet it has had whole floods poured into it. Oh, the wickedness of mistrust of God, and the bitterness with which that distrust is made to curse itself. Unbelief makes a rod for its own back; distrust of God is its own punishment; it brings such lack of rest, such care, such tribulation of spirit into the mind, that he who loves himself and loves pleasure, had better seek to walk by faith and not by sight.

Nor must I forget the scalding drops of *anger against our fellow men*, and of petulance and irritation, because we cannot have our way with them. These are black and horrid tears, as noisome as the vaults of Tophet. May we be saved from such unholy tears. Sometimes, too, there are streams which arise from

depressed spirits—spirits desponding because we have neglected the means of divine grace and the God of grace. The consolations of God are small with us because we have been seldom in secret prayer; we have lived at a distance from the Most High, and we have fallen into a melancholy state of mind. I thank God that there shall never come another tear from our eyes into that bottle when eternal love shall take us up to dwell with Jesus in His kingdom!

We would never overlook the *third bottle* which is the true crystal bottle into which holy tears may drop, tears like the “*lachrymae Christi*,” the tears of Jesus, so precious in the sight of God. Even these shall cease to flow in heaven. Tears of *repentance*, like glistening dewdrops fresh from the skies, are stored in this bottle. They are not of the earth, they come from heaven, and yet we cannot carry them there with us. Good Rowland Hill used to say repentance was such a sweet companion, that the only regret he would have in going to heaven was in leaving repentance behind him, for he could not shed the tears of repentance there. Oh, to weep for sin! It is so sweet a sorrow that I would wish to be a constant weeper! Like a dripping well, my soul would always drop with grief that I have offended my loving, tender, gracious God. Tears for *Christ’s injured honor and slightedness* glisten in the crystal of our third bottle. When we hear Jesus’ name blasphemed among men, or see His cause driven back in the day of battle, who will not weep? Who can restrain his lamentations? Such tears are diamonds in Christ’s esteem; blessed are the eyes which are mines of such royal treasure. If I cannot win crowns, I will at least give tears. If I cannot make men love my Master, yet will I weep in secret places for the dishonor which they do Him. These are holy drops, but they are all unknown in heaven. Tears of *sympathy* are much esteemed by our Lord; when we “weep with those who weep” we do well; these are never to be restrained this side the Jordan. Let them flow; the more of them, the better for our spiritual health. Truly, when I think of the griefs of men, and above all, when I have communion with my Savior in His suffering, I want to cry with George Herbert—

*“Come all you floods, you clouds, you rains,
Dwell in my eyes! My grief has need
Of all the watery things that nature can produce!
Let every vein suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, fresh supplies,
And with my state agree.”*

It were well to go to the very uttermost of weeping if it were always of such a noble kind, as fellowship with Jesus brings. Let us never cease from weeping over sinners as Jesus did over Jerusalem; let us endeavor to snatch the firebrand from the flame, and weep when we cannot accomplish our purpose.

These three receptacles of tears will always be more or less filled by us as long as we are here, but in heaven the first bottle will not be needed, for the wells of earth’s grief will all be dried up, and we shall drink from living fountains of water unsalted by a tear. As for the second, we shall have no depravity in our hearts, and so the black fountain will no longer yield its nauseous stream; and as for the third, there shall be no place among celestial occupations for weeping even of the most holy kind. Till then, we must expect to share in human griefs, and instead of praying against them, let us ask that they may be sanctified to us; I mean of course those of the former sort. Let us pray that tribulation may work patience, and patience experience, and experience the hope which makes us not ashamed. Let us pray that as the sharp edge of the engraving tool is used upon us, it may only remove our filth, and fashion us into images of our Lord and Master. Let us pray that the fire may consume nothing but the dross, and that the floods may wash away nothing but defilement. May we have to thank God that, though before we were afflicted we went astray, yet now, by His grace, we have kept His Word; and so shall we see it to be a blessed thing, a divinely wise thing, that we should tread the path of sorrow, and reach the gates of heaven with the teardrops glistening in our eyes.

II. Secondly, EVEN HERE, IF WE WOULD HAVE OUR TEARS WIPED AWAY, WE CANNOT DO BETTER THAN RETURN TO OUR GOD.

He is the great tear wiper. Observe, brethren, that God can remove every vestige of grief from the hearts of His people by granting them complete resignation to His will. Our selfhood is the root of our sorrow. If self were perfectly conquered, it would be insignificant to us whether love ordained our pain, or ease appointed us wealth or poverty. If our will were completely God’s will, then pain itself would be attended with pleasure, and sorrow would yield us joy for Christ’s sake. As one fire puts out another, so

the master passion of love to God and complete absorption in His sacred will quenches the fire of human grief and sorrow. Hearty resignation puts so much honey in the cup of gall that the wormwood is forgotten. As death is swallowed up in victory, so is tribulation swallowed up in contentedness and delight in God.

He can also take away our tears by compelling our minds to dwell with delight upon the end which all our trials are working to produce. He can show us that they are working together for good, and as men of understanding, when we see that we shall be essentially enriched by our losses, we shall be content with them; when we see that the medicine is curing us of mortal sickness, and that our sharpest pains are only saving us from pains far more terrible, then shall we kiss the rod and sing in the midst of tribulation, "Sweet affliction!" Sweet affliction, since it yields such peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Moreover, He can take every tear from our eyes in the time of trial by shedding abroad the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts more plentifully. He can make it clear to us that Christ is afflicted in our affliction. He can indulge us with a delightful sense of the divine virtue which dwells in His sympathy, and make us rejoice to be co-sufferers with the Angel of the Covenant. The Savior can make our hearts leap for joy by reassuring us that we are written on the palms of His hands, and that we shall be with Him where He is. Sick beds become thrones, and hovels ripen into palaces when Jesus is made sure to our souls! My brethren, the love of Christ, like a great flood, rolls over the most rugged rocks of afflictions—so high above them that we may float in perfect peace where others are a total wreck. The rage of the storm is all hushed when Christ is in the vessel. The waters saw You, O Christ! The waters saw You and were silent at the presence of their King!

The Lord can also take away all present sorrow and grief from us by providentially removing its cause. Providence is full of sweet surprises and unexpected turns. When the sea has ebb'd its uttermost, it turns again and covers all the sand. When we think the dungeon is fast, and that the bolt is rusted in, He can make the door fly open in a moment! When the river rolls deep and black before us, He can divide it with a word, or bridge it with His hands. How often have you found it so in the past? As a pilgrim to Canaan, you have passed through the Red Sea, in which you once feared you would be drowned; the bitter wells of Marah were made sweet by God's presence; you fought the Amalekite; you went through the terrible wilderness, you passed by the place of the fiery serpents, and you have yet been kept alive, and so shall you be. As the clear shining comes after rain, so shall peace succeed your trials. As fly the black clouds before the compelling power of the wind, so will the eternal God make your griefs to fly before the energy of His grace. The smoking furnace of trouble shall be followed by the bright lamp of consolation.

Still, the surest method of getting rid of present tears is communion and fellowship with God. When I can creep under the wing of my dear God and nestle close to His bosom, let the world say what it will, and let the devil roar as he pleases, and let my sins accuse and threaten as they may—I am safe, content, happy, peaceful, rejoicing—

*“Let earth against my soul engage,
And hellish darts be hurled;
Now I can smile at Satan's rage,
And face a frowning world.”*

To say, "My Father, God," to put myself right into His hands, and feel that I am safe there; to look up to Him though it is with tears in my eyes and feel that He loves me, and then to put my head right into His bosom as the prodigal did, and sob my griefs out there into my Father's heart—oh, this is the death of grief, and the life of all consolation! Is not Jehovah called the God of all comfort? You will find Him so, beloved. He has been "our help in ages past." He is "our hope for years to come." If He had not been my help, then my soul would have perished utterly in the day of its weariness and its heaviness, Oh, I bear testimony for Him this day that you cannot go to Him and pour out your heart before Him without finding a delightful solace! When your friends cannot wipe away the tears, when you yourself with your strongest reasoning, and your boldest efforts cannot compel yourself to resignation; when your heart beats high and seems as if it would burst with grief, then pour out your hearts before Him! God *is* a refuge for us! He is our castle and high tower, our refuge and defense. Only go to Him, and you shall find that even here on earth God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes!

III. Now, we shall have to turn our thoughts to what is the real teaching of the text, namely, THE REMOVAL OF ALL TEARS FROM THE BLESSED ONES ABOVE.

There are many reasons why glorified spirits cannot weep. These are well known to you, but let us just hint at them. *All outward causes of grief are gone.* They will never hear the toll of the death knell in heaven. The mattock and the shroud are unknown things there. The horrid thought of death never flits across an immortal spirit. They are never parted; the great meeting has taken place to part no more. Up yonder, they have no losses and crosses in business. "They serve God day and night in His temple." They know no broken friendships there. They have no ruined hearts, no blighted prospects. They know even as they are known, and they love even as they are loved. No pain can ever fall on them—as yet they have no bodies, but when their bodies shall be raised from the grave, they shall be spiritualized so that they shall not be capable of grief. The tear glands shall be plucked away; although much may be there that is human, at least the tear glands shall be gone—they shall have no need of that organ; their bodies shall be unsusceptible to grief; they shall rejoice forever! Poverty, famine, distress, nakedness, peril, persecution, slander—all these shall have ceased. "The sun shall not light on them, nor any heat." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore," and therefore, well may their tears cease to flow.

Again, *all inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification worked in them by the Holy Spirit.* No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God shall vex them in paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. They shall never be led to think harshly of God, for their hearts shall be all love; sin shall have no sweetness to them, for they shall be perfectly purified from all depraved desires. There shall be no lusts of the eyes, no lusts of the flesh, no pride of life to be snares to their feet. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They are forever blessed, because they are without fault before the throne of God. What a heaven must it be to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Well may *they* cease to mourn who have ceased to sin!

All fear of change also has been forever shut out. They know that they are eternally secure. Saints on earth are fearful of falling, some believers even dream of falling away; they think God will forsake them, and that men will persecute and take them. No such fears can vex the blessed ones who view their Father's face. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while it endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in a sun which shall never set; they swim in a flood-tide which shall never ebb; they drink of a river which shall never dry up; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never be withered. Their blessedness knows not the thought, which would act like a canker at its heart, that it might, perhaps, pass away and cease to be. They cannot, therefore, weep, because they are infallibly secure, and certainly assured of their eternal blessedness.

Why should they weep when every desire is gratified? They cannot wish for anything which they shall not have. Eyes and ears, heart and hands, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will—every faculty shall be satisfied! All that their vast powers can wish, they shall continually enjoy. Though, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard the things which God has prepared for them who love Him," yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, to understand that they are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of infinite beatitude!

Still, dear friends, this does not quite account for the fact, that all tears are wiped from their eyes. I like better the text which tells us that *God* shall do it, and I want you to think with me of fountains of tears which exist even in heaven, so that the celestial ones must inevitably weep if God did not by a perpetual miracle take away their tears. It strikes me, that if God Himself did not interfere by a perpetual outflow of abundant consolations, the glorified would have very deep cause for weeping. You will say, "How is this?" Why, in the first place, if it were not for this, *what regrets they must have for their past sins.* The more holy a man is, the more he hates sin. It is a token of growth in sanctification, not that repentance becomes less acute, but that it becomes more and more deep. Surely, dear friends, when we shall be made perfectly holy, we shall have a greater hatred of sin! If on earth, we could be perfectly holy, why, I think we would do little else than mourn to think that so foul, and black, and venomous a thing as sin had ever stained us; that we would weep bitterly that we had ever offended such a good, gracious, tender, abundantly loving God. Why, the sight of Christ, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne," would make us remember the sins from which He purged us; the sight of our heavenly Father's perfection would be blinding to us if it were not that by some sacred means, which we know not, God wipes away all these tears from our eyes. And though we cannot but regret that we have sinned, yet per-

haps we will know that sin has been made to glorify God by the overcoming power of almighty grace; that sin has been made to be a black foil, a sort of setting for the sparkling jewel of eternal, sovereign grace, and it may be that for this reason we shed no tears over our past lives. They sing, “Unto Him Who has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood,” but they sing that heavenly song without a tear in their eyes. I cannot understand how this may be, for I know I could not do so as I now am—let this be the best reason that God has wiped away the tears from their eyes.

Again, do you not think, beloved, that the thought of the vast expense of shame and woe which the Savior lavished for our redemption must, in the natural order of things, be a constant source of grief? We sing sometimes that hymn which reminds us of the angelic song before the throne, and in one of its verses the poet says—

*“But when to Calvary they turn,
Silent their harps abide;
Suspended songs a moment mourn
The God who loved and died.”*

Now that is natural and poetical, but it is not true, for you know very well that there are no suspended songs in heaven, and that there is no mourning even over Christ “Who loved and died.” It seems to me, that if I were thoroughly spiritualized, and in such a holy state as those are in heaven, I could not look at the Lamb without tears in my eyes. How could I think of those five wounds; that bloody sweat in Gethsemane; that cruel crowning with thorns in Gabbatha; that mockery and shame at Golgotha—how could I think of it without tears? How could I feel that He loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*, without bursting into a passion of holy affection and sorrow? Tears seem to be the natural expression of such hallowed joy and grief—

*“Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I’ll bathe.”*

I must think it would be so in heaven if it were not that by a glorious method, I know not how, God shall wipe away even those tears from our eyes. Does it not need the interference of God to accomplish this wonder?

Is there not another cause for grief, namely, *wasted opportunities*? Beloved, when we once ascend to heaven, there will be no more feeding of Christ’s hungry people; there will be no giving of drink to the thirsty; no visiting His sick ones, or His imprisoned ones; no clothing of the naked. There will be no instructing the ignorant; no holding forth the Word of God among “a crooked and perverse generation.” It has been often and truly said, if there could be regrets in heaven, those regrets would be that we have wasted so many opportunities of honoring Christ on earth—opportunities which will then be gone forever. Now in heaven their hearts are not steeled and hardened, so that they can look back upon sins of omission without sorrow. I believe there will be the tenderest form of conscience there—for perfect purity would not be consistent with any degree of hardness of heart. If they are sensitive and tender in heart, it is inevitable that they should look back with regret upon the failures of the life below—unless some more mighty emotion should overwhelm that of contrition. I can say, beloved, if God would take me to heaven, this morning, if He did not come in and by a special act of His omnipotence dry up that fountain of tears, I would almost forget the glories of paradise in the midst of my own shame! Shame that I have not preached more earnestly, and have not prayed more fervently, and labored more abundantly for Christ. That text, to which we heard a reference from a dear brother during the week, where Paul says, “I call God to witness that for the space of three years I ceased not night and day with tears, to warn every one of you,” is a text that we cannot, any of us, read without blushes and tears. And in heaven, I think if I saw the apostle Paul, I must burst out in weeping if it were not for this text, which says that, “God shall wipe away *all* tears”—and these among them. Who but the Almighty God could do this!

Perhaps, again, another source of tears may suggest itself to you—namely, *regrets in heaven for our mistakes, and misrepresentations, and unkindness towards other Christian brethren*. How surprised we shall be to meet in heaven some whom we did not love on earth! We would not commune with them at the Lord’s Table. We would not acknowledge that they were Christians at all! We looked at them suspiciously if we saw them in the street. We were jealous of all their operations. We suspected their zeal as being nothing better than rant, and we looked upon their best exertions as having sinister motives at the bottom. We said many hard things, and felt a great many more than we said. When we shall see these unknown and unrecognized brethren in heaven, will not their presence naturally remind us of our of-

fenses against Christian love and spiritual unity? I cannot suppose a perfect man looking at another perfect man, without regretting that he ever ill-treated him—it seems to me to be the trait of a gentleman, a Christian, and of a perfectly sanctified man above all others, that he should regret having misunderstood, and misconstrued, and misrepresented one who was as dear to Christ as himself. I am sure, as I go round among the saints in heaven; I cannot (in the natural order of things) help feeling, “I did not assist you as I ought to have done. I did not sympathize with you as I ought to have done. I spoke a hard word to you. I was estranged from you,” and I think you would all have to feel the same—inevitably you must, if it were not that by some heavenly means, I know not how—the eternal God shall so overshadow believers with the abundant bliss of His own self that even that *cause* of tears shall be wiped away!

Has it never struck you, dear friends, that if you go to heaven and *see your dear children left behind unconverted*, it would naturally be a cause of sorrow? When my mother told me that if I perished, she would have to say, “Amen,” to my condemnation, I knew it was true, and it sounded very terrible, and had a good effect on my mind. But at the same time, I could not help thinking, “Well, you will be very different from what you are now,” and I did not think she would be improved. I thought, “Well, I love to think of your weeping over me far better than to think of you as a perfect being, with a tearless eye, looking on the damnation of your own child.” It really is a very terrible spectacle, the thought of a perfect being looking down upon hell, for instance, as Abraham did, and yet feeling no sorrow, for you will recollect that in the tones in which Abraham addressed the rich man, there is nothing of pity, there is not a single syllable which betokens any sympathy with him in his dreadful woes; and one does not quite comprehend that perfect beings, God-like beings, beings full of love and everything that constitutes the glory of God’s complete nature, should yet be unable to weep, even over hell itself; they cannot weep over their own children lost and ruined! Now, how is this? If you can tell me, I shall be glad—for I cannot tell you. I do not believe that there will be one atom less tenderness, that there will be one fraction less of amiability, and love, and sympathy—I believe there will be more—but that they will be in some way so refined and purified, that while compassion for suffering is there, detestation of sin shall be there to balance it, and a state of complete equilibrium shall be attained. Perfect acquiescence in the divine will is probably the secret of it; but it is not my business to guess; I do not know what handkerchief the Lord will use, but I know that He will wipe all tears away from their faces, and these tears among them.

Yet, once again, it seems to me that spirits before the throne, taking, as they must do, a deep interest in everything which concerns the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, *must feel deeply grieved when they see the cause of truth imperiled, and the kingdom of Christ, for a time, put back*. Think of Luther, or Wickliffe, or John Knox as they see the advances of Popery just now. Take John Knox first, if you will. Think of him looking down and seeing cathedrals rising in Scotland, dedicated to the service of the Pope and Satan. Oh, how the stern old man, even in glory, I think, would begin to shake; and the old lion would lash his sides once more, and half wish that he could come down and pull the nests to pieces that the rooks might fly away. Think of Wickliffe looking down on this country where the gospel has been preached so many years, and seeing monks in the Church of England, and seeing spring up in our national establishment everywhere, not *disguised* Popery as it was 10 years ago, but stark naked Popery, downright Popery, that unblushingly talks about the “Catholic Church,” and is not even Anglican any longer! What would Wickliffe say? Why, I think as he leans over the battlements of heaven, unless Wickliffe is mightily altered, and I cannot suppose he is (except for the better, and that would make him more tender-hearted and still more zealous for God), he must weep to think that England has gone back so far, and that on the dial of Ahaz the sun has beat a retreat. I do not know how it is they do not weep in heaven, but they do not.

The souls under the altar cry, “How long? How long? How long?” There comes up a mighty intercession from those who were slaughtered in the days gone by for Christ—their prayer rises, “How long? How long? How long?” And God, as yet, does not avenge His own elect, though they cry day and night unto Him. Yet that delay does not cost them a single tear. They feel so sure that the victory will come, they anticipate so much the more splendid triumph because of its delay, and therefore, they do both patiently hope, and quietly wait to see the salvation of God. They know that, without us, they cannot be made perfect, and so they wait till we are taken up, that the whole company may be completed, and that then the soul may be dressed in its body and they may be perfected in their bliss—they wait, but they do not weep. They wait and they cry, but in their cry, no sorrow has a place. Now, I do not understand this.

It seems to me that the more I long for the coming of Christ, the more I long to see His kingdom extended, the more I shall weep when things go wrong, when I see Christ blasphemed, His cross trampled in the mire, and the devil's kingdom established; but the reason is all in this, "*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*"

I thought I would just indicate to you why it says that God does it. It strikes me that these causes of tears could not be removed by an angel, could not be taken away by any form of spiritual enjoyment apart from the direct interposition of Almighty God. Think of all these things and wonder over them, and you will recall many other springs of grief which would have flowed freely if omnipotence had not dried them up completely. Then ask how it is that the saints do not weep and do not cry, and you cannot get any other answer than this—God has done it in a way unknown to us—forever taking away from them the power to weep.

IV. And now, beloved, SHALL WE BE AMONG THIS HAPPY COMPANY?

Here is the question and the context enables us to answer it. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." There is their character. "Therefore are they before the throne of God." The blood is a sacred argument for their being there, the precious blood. Observe, "They washed their robes." It was not merely their feet, their worst parts—but they washed their robes, their best parts. A man's robes are his most honored attire, he puts them on, and he does not mind our seeing his robes. There may be filthiness beneath, but the robes are generally the cleanest of all. But you see they washed even them. Now, it is the mark of a Christian that he not only goes to Christ to wash away his black sins, but to wash his duties, too. I would not pray a prayer unwashed with Jesus' blood; I would not like a hymn I have sung to go up to heaven except it had first been bathed in His blood; if I would desire to be clothed with zeal as with a cloak, yet I must wash the cloak in my Master's blood; though I would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and wear imparted righteousness as a raiment of needlework, yet I must wash even that in His blood.

What do you say, dear friends? Have you washed in His blood? The meaning of it is, *have you trusted in the atoning sacrifice?* "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." Have you taken Christ to be your all in all? Are you now depending on Him? If so, out of deep distress you shall yet ascend, leaning on your Beloved, to the throne of God, and to the bliss which awaits His chosen. But if not, "There is none other name," there is no other way. Your damnation will be as just as it will be sure. Christ is "the Way." But if you will not tread it, you shall not reach the end. Christ is "the truth," but if you will not believe Him, you shall not rejoice. Christ is "the Life," but if you will not receive Him you shall abide among the dead, and be cast out among the corrupt. From such a doom, may the Lord deliver us, and give us a simple confidence in the divine work of the Redeemer, and to Him shall be the praise eternally. Amen.

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