

Thoughts on the Last Battle

A Sermon

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“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But, thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—[1 Corinthians 15:56-57](#).

While the Bible is one of the most poetical of books, though its language is unutterably sublime, yet we must remark how constantly it is true to nature. There is no straining of a fact, no glossing over a truth. However dark may be the subject, while it lights it up with brilliance, yet it does not deny the gloom connected with it. If you will read this chapter of Paul’s epistle, so justly celebrated as a master-piece of language, you will find him speaking of that which is to come after death with such exultation and glory that you feel, “If this be to die, then it were well to depart at once.” Who has not rejoiced, and whose heart has not been lifted up or filled with a holy fire, while he has read such sentences as these: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Yet, with all that majestic language, with all that bold flight of eloquence, he does not deny that death is a gloomy thing. Even his very figures imply it. He does not laugh at it; he does not say, “Oh, it is nothing to die;” he describes death as a monster; he speaks of it as having a sting; he tells us wherein the strength of that sting lies; and even in the exclamation of triumph, he imputes that victory not to unaided flesh, but he says, “Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When I select such a text as this, I feel that I cannot preach from it. The thought o’er-masters me; my words do stagger; there are no utterances that are great enough to convey the mighty meaning of this wondrous text. If I had the eloquence of all men united in one, if I could speak as never man spake (with the exception of that one godlike man of Nazareth), I could not compass so vast a subject as this. I will not therefore pretend to do so, but offer you such thoughts as my mind is capable of producing.

To-night we shall speak of three things: first, *the sting of death*; secondly, *the strength of sin*; and thirdly, *the victory of faith*.

I. First, THE STING OF DEATH. The apostle pictures death as a terrible dragon, or monster, which, coming upon all men, must be fought with by each one for himself. He gives us no hopes whatever that any of us can avoid it. He tells us of no bridge across the river Death; he does not give us the faintest hope that it is possible to emerge from this state of existence into another without dying; he describes the monster as being exactly in our path, and with it we must fight, each man personally, separately, and alone; each man must die; we all must cross the black stream; each one of us must go through the iron gate. There is no passage from this world into another without death. Having told us, then, that there is no hope of our escape, he braces up our nerves for the combat; but he gives us no hope that we shall be able to slay the monster; he does not tell us that we can strike our sword into his heart, and so overturn and overwhelm death; but, pointing to the dragon, he seems to say, "Thou canst not slay it, man; there is no hope that thou shouldst ever put thy foot upon its neck and crush its head; but one thing can be done—it has a sting which thou mayest extract; thou canst not crush death under foot, but thou mayest pull out the sting which is deadly; and then thou need not fear the monster, for monster it shall be no longer, but rather it shall be a swift-winged angel to waft thee aloft to heaven. Where, then, is the sting of this dragon? Where must I strike? What is the sting? The apostle tells us, "that the sting of death is sin." Once let me cut off that, and then, though death may be dreary and solemn, I shall not dread it; but, holding up the monster's sting, I shall exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Let us now dwell upon the fact, that "the sting of death is sin."

1. First, sin puts a sting into death, from the fact that *sin brought death into the world*. Men could be more content to die if they did not know it was a punishment. I suppose if we had never sinned, there would have been some means for us to go from this world to another. It cannot be supposed that so huge a population would have existed, that all the myriads who have lived from Adam down till now could ever have inhabited so small a globe as this; there would not have been space enough for them. But there might have been provided some means for taking us off when the proper time should come, and bearing us safely to heaven. God might have furnished horses and chariots of fire for each of his Elijahs; or, as it was said of Enoch, so it might have been declared of each of us, "He is not, for God hath taken him." Thus to die, if we may call it death to depart from this body and to be with God, would have been no disgrace; in fact, it would have been the highest honor; fitting the loftiest aspiration of the soul, to live quickly its little time in this world, then to mount and be with its God; and in the prayers of the most pious and devout man, one of his sublimest petitions would be, "O God, hasten the time of my departure, when I shall be with thee." When such sinless beings thought of their departure, they would not tremble, for the gate would be one of ivory and pearl—not as now, of iron—the stream would be as nectar, far different from the present "bitterness of death." But alas! how different! Death is now the

punishment of sin. “In the day thou eatest there of thou shalt surely die.” *“In Adam all die.”* By his sin every one of us become subject to the penalty of death, and thus, being a punishment, death has its sting. To the best man, the holiest Christian, the most sanctified intellect, the soul that has the nearest and dearest intercourse with God, death must appear to have a sting, because sin was its mother. O fatal offspring of sin, I only dread thee because of thy parentage! If thou didst come to me as an honor, I could wade through Jordan even now, and, when its chilling billows were around me, I would smile amidst its surges; and in the swellings of Jordan my song should swell too, and the liquid music of my voice should join with the liquid swellings of the floods, “Hallelujah! It is blessed to cross to the land of the glorified.” This is one reason why the sting of sin is death.

2. But I must take it in another sense. “The sting of death is sin:”—that is to say, *that which shall make death most terrible to man will be sin, if it is not forgiven.* If that be not the exact meaning of the apostle, still it is a great truth, and I may find it here. If sin lay heavy on me and were not forgiven—if my transgressions were unpardoned—if such were the fact (though I rejoice to know it is not so) it would be the very sting of death to me. Let us consider a man dying, and looking back on his past life: he will find in death a sting, and that sting will be his past sin. Imagine a conqueror’s deathbed. He has been a man of blood from his youth up. Bred in the camp, his lips were early set to the bugle, and his hand, even in infancy, struck the drum. He had a martial spirit; he delighted in the fame and applause of men; he loved the dust of battle and the garment rolled in blood. He has lived a life of what men call glory. He has stormed cities, conquered countries, ravaged continents, overrun the world. See his banners hanging in the hall, and the marks of glory on his escutcheon. He is one of earth’s proudest warriors. But now he comes to die, and when he lies down to expire, what shall invest his death with horror? It shall be his sin. Methinks I see the monarch dying; he lies in state; around him are his nobles and his councillors; but there is somewhat else there. Hard by his side there stands a spirit from Hades; it is a soul of a departed woman. She looks on him and says, “Monster! my husband was slain in battle through thy ambition: I was made a widow, and my helpless orphans and myself were starved.” And she passes by. Her husband comes, and opening wide his bloody wounds, he cries, “Once I called thee monarch; but, by thy vile covetousness thou didst provoke an unjust war. See here these wounds—I gained them in the siege. For thy sake I mounted first the scaling ladder; this foot stood upon the top of the wall, and I waved my sword in triumph, but in hell I lifted up my eyes in torment. Base wretch, thine ambition hurried me thither!” Turning his horrid eyes upon him, he passes by. Then up comes another, and another, and another yet; waking from their tombs, they stalk around his bed and haunt him; the dreary procession still marches on, looking at the dying tyrant. He shuts his eyes, but he feels the cold and bony hand upon his forehead; he quivers, for the sitting of death is in his heart. “O Death!” says he; “to leave this large estate, this mighty realm, this pomp and power—this were somewhat; but to meet

those men, those women, and those orphan children, face to face; to hear them saying, ‘Art thou become like one of us?’ while kings whom I have dethroned, and monarchs whom I have cast down shall rattle their chains in my ears, and say, ‘Thou wast our destroyer, but how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou brought down as in a moment from thy glory and thy pride!’” There, you see, the sting of death would be the man’s sin. It would not sting him that he had to die, but that he had sinned, that he had been a bloody man, that his hands were red with wholesale murder—this would plague him indeed, for “the sting of death is sin.”

Or, suppose another character—a minister. He has stood before the world, proclaiming something which he called the gospel. He has been a noted preacher; the multitude have been hanging on his lips; they have listened to his words; before his eloquence a nation stood amazed, and thousands trembled at his voice. But his preaching is over; the time when he can mount the pulpit is gone; another standing-place awaits him, another congregation, and he must hear another and a better preacher than himself. There he lies. He has been unfaithful to his charge. He preached philosophy to charm his people, instead of preaching truth and aiming at their hearts. And, as he pants upon his bed, that worst and most accursed of men—for surely none can be worse than he—there comes up one, a soul from the pit, and looking him in the face, says, “I came to thee once, trembling on account of sin; ‘I asked thee the road to heaven, and thou didst say, ‘Do such and such good works,’ and I did them, and am damned. Thou didst tell me an untruth; thou didst not declare plainly the word of God.” He vanishes only to be followed by another; he has been an irreligious character, and as he sees the minister upon his deathbed, he says, “Ah! and art thou here? Once I strolled into thy house of prayer, but thou hadst such a sermon that I could not understand. I listened; I wanted to hear something from thy lips, some truth that might burn my soul and make me repent; but I knew not what thou saidst; and here I am.” The ghost stamps his foot, and the man quivers like an aspen leaf, because he knows it is all true. Then the whole congregation arise before him as he lies upon his bed; he looks upon the motley group; he beholds the snowy heads of the old, and glittering eyes of the young; and lying there upon his pillow, he pictures all the sins of his past life, and he hears it said, “Go thou! unfaithful to thy charge; thou didst no divest thyself of thy love of pomp and dignity; thou didst not speak

‘As though thou ne’er might’st speak again,
A dying man to dying men.’”

Oh! it may be something for that minister to leave his charge, somewhat for him to die; but worst of all, the sting of death will be his sin: to hear his parish come howling after him to hell; to see his congregation following behind him in one mingled herd, he having led them astray, having been a false prophet instead of a true one, speaking peace, peace, where there was no peace, deluding them with lies, charming them with music, when he ought rather to have told them in rough and rugged accents the Word of God. Verily, it is true, it

is true, the sting of death to such a man shall be his great, his enormous, his heinous sin of having deluded others.

Thus, then having painted two full-length pictures, I might give each one of you miniatures of yourselves. I might picture thee, O drunkard, when thy cups are drained, and when thy liquor shall no longer be sweet to thy taste, when worse than gall shall be the dainties that thou drinkest, when, within an hour, the worms shall make a carnival upon thy flesh; I might picture thee as thou lookest back upon thy misspent life. And thou, O swearer, methinks I see thee there, with thine oaths echoed back by memory to thine own dismay. And thou, man of lust and wickedness, thou who hast debauched and seduced others, I see thee there; and the sting of death to thee, how horrible, how dreadful! It shall not be that thou art groaning with pain, it shall not be that thou art racked with agony, it shall not be that thy heart and flesh faileth, but the sting, the sting, shall be thy sin. How many in this place can spell the word “remorse?” I pray you may never know its awful meaning. Remorse, remorse! You know its derivation; it signifies to bite. Ah! now we dance with our sins—it is a merry life with us—we take their hands, and, sporting in the noontide sun, we dance, we dance, and live in joy. But then those sins shall bite us. The young lions we have stroked and played with shall bite; the young adder, the serpent, whose azure hues have well delighted us, shall bite, shall sting, when remorse shall occupy our souls. I might, but I will not, tell you a few stories of the awful power of remorse; it is the first pang of hell; it is the antechamber of the pit. To have remorse is to feel the sparks that blaze upwards from the fire of the bottomless Gehenna; to feel remorse is to have eternal torment commenced within the soul. The sting of death shall be unforgiven, unrepented sin.

3. But if sin in the retrospect be the sting of death, what must *sin in the prospect* be? My friends, we do not often enough look at what sin is to be. We see what it is; first the seed, then the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. It is the wish, the imagination, the desire, the sight, the taste, the deed; but what is sin in its next development? We have observed sin as it grows; we have seen it, at first, a very little thing, but expanding itself until it has swelled into a mountain. We have seen it like “a little cloud, the size of a man’s hand,” but we have beheld it gather until it covered the skies with blackness, and sent down drops of bitter rain. But what is sin to be in the next state? We have gone so far, but sin is a thing that cannot stop. We have seen whereunto it *has* grown, but whereunto *will* it grow? for it is not ripe when we die; it has to go on still; it is set going, but it has to unfold itself forever. The moment we die, the voice of justice cries, “Seal up the fountain of blood; stop the stream of forgiveness; he that is holy, let him be holy still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.” And after that, the man goes on growing filthier and filthier still; his lust developes itself, his vice increases; all those evil passions blaze with tenfold more fury, and, amidst the companionship of others like himself, without the restraints of grace, without the preached word, the man becomes worse and worse; and who can tell whereunto his sin may grow? I

have sometimes likened the hour of our death to that celebrated picture, which I think you have seen in the National Gallery, of Perseus holding up the head of Medusa. That head turned all persons into stone who looked upon it. There is a warrior there with a dart in his hand; he stands stiffened, turned into stone, with the javelin even in his fist. There is another, with a poniard beneath his robe, about to stab; he is now the statue of an assassin, motionless and cold. Another is creeping along stealthily, like a man in ambuscade, and there he stands a consolidated rock; he has looked only upon that head, and he is frozen into stone. Well, such is death. What I am when death is held before me, that I must be forever. When my spirit goes, if God finds me hymning his praise, I shall hymn it in heaven; doth he find me breathing out oaths, I shall follow up those oaths in hell. Where death leaves me, judgment finds me. As I die, so shall I live eternally.

“There are no acts of pardon passed
In the cold grave to which we haste.”

It is forever, forever, forever! Ah! there are a set of heretics in these days who talk of short punishment, and preach about God’s transporting souls for a term of years, and then letting them die. Where did such men learn their doctrine, I wonder? I read in God’s word that the angel shall plant one foot upon the earth, and the other upon the sea, and shall swear by him that liveth and was dead, that *time* shall be no longer. But, if a soul could die in a thousand years, it would die in *time*; if a million of years could elapse, and then the soul could be extinguished, there would be such a thing as *time*; for, talk to me of years, and there is *time*. But, sirs, when that angel has spoken the word, “*Time* shall be no longer,” things will then be eternal; the spirit shall proceed in its ceaseless revolution of weal or woe, never to be stayed, for there is no time to stop it; the fact of its stopping would imply time; but everything shall be eternal, for time shall cease to be. It well becomes you, then, to consider where ye are and what ye are. Oh! stand and tremble on the narrow neck of land ‘twixt the two unbounded seas, for God in heaven alone can tell how soon thou mayest be launched upon the eternal future. May God grant that, when that last hour may come, we may be prepared for it! Like the thief, unheard, unseen, it steals through night’s dark shade. Perhaps, as here I stand, and rudely speak of these dark, hidden things, soon may the hand be stretched, and dumb the mouth that lisps the faltering strain. Oh! thou that dwellest in heaven, thou power supreme, thou everlasting King, let not that hour intrude upon me in an illspent season; but may it find me rapt in meditation high, hymning my great Creator. So, in the last moment of my life, I will hasten beyond the azure, to bathe the wings of this my spirit in their native element, and then to dwell with thee for ever—

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”

II. “THE STRENGTH OF SIN is the law.”

I have attempted to show how to fight this monster—it is by extracting and destroying its sting. I prepare myself for the battle. It is true I have sinned, and therefore I have put a sting into death, but I will endeavor to take it away. I attempt it, but the monster laughs me in the face, and cries, “The strength of sin is the law. Before thou canst destroy sin thou must in some way satisfy the law. Sin cannot be removed by thy tears or by thy deeds, for the law is its strength; and until thou hast satisfied the vengeance of the law, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing of its demands, my sting cannot be taken away, for the very strength of sin is the law.” Now, I must try and explain this doctrine that the strength of sin is the law. Most men think that sin has no strength at all. “Oh,” say many, “we may have sinned very much, but we will repent, and we will be better for the rest of our lives; no doubt God is merciful, and he will forgive us.” And we hear many divines often speak of sin as if it were a very venial thing. Inquire of them what is a man to do? There is no deep repentance required, no real inward workings of divine grace, no casting himself upon the blood of Christ. They never tell us about a complete atonement having been made. They have, indeed, some shadowy idea of an atonement, that Christ died just as a matter of form to satisfy justice; but as to any literal taking away of our sins, and suffering the actual penalty for us, they do not consider that God’s law requires any such thing. I suppose they do not, for I never hear them assert the positive satisfaction and substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ. But without that, how can we take away the strength of sin?

1. The strength of sin is in the law, first, in this respect, that *the law being spiritual, it is quite impossible for us to live without sin*. If the law were merely carnal, and referred to the flesh; if it simply related to open and overt actions, I question, even then, whether we could live without sin; but when I turn over the ten commandments and read, “Thou shalt not covet,” I know it refers even to the wish of my heart. It is said, “Thou shalt not commit adultery;” but it is said, also that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed that sin. So that it is not merely the act, it is the thought; it is not the deed simply, it is the very imagination, that is a sin. Oh now, sinner, how canst thou get rid of sin? Thy very thoughts, the inward workings of thy mind, these are crimes—this is guilt and desperate wickedness. Is there not, now, strength in sin? Hath not the law put a potency in it? Has it not nerved sin with such a power that all thy strength cannot hope to wipe away the black enormity of thy transgression?

2. Then, again, the law puts strength into sin in this respect—that *it will not abate one tittle of its stern demands*. It says to every man who breaks it, “I will not forgive you.” You hear persons talk about God’s mercy. Now, if they do not believe in the gospel, they must be under the law; but where in the law do we read of mercy? If you will read the commandments through, there is a curse after them, but there is no provision made for pardon. The law itself speaks not of that; it thunders out without the slightest mitigation, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” If any of you desire to be saved by works, remember one sin will spoil

your righteousness; one dust of this earth's dross will spoil the beauty of that perfect righteousness which God requires at your hands. If ye would be saved by works, men and brethren, ye must be as holy as the angels, ye must be as pure and as immaculate as Jesus; for the law requires perfection, and nothing short of it; and God, with unflinching vengeance, will smite every man low who cannot bring him a perfect obedience. If I cannot, when I come before his throne, plead a perfect righteousness as being mine, God will say, "you have not fulfilled the demands of my law; depart, accursed one! You have sinned, and you must die." "Ah," says one, "can we ever have a perfect righteousness, then? Yes, I will tell you of that in the third point; thanks be unto Christ, who giveth us the victory through his blood and through his righteousness, who adorns us as a bride in her jewels as a husband arrays his wife with ornaments.

3. Yet again; the law gives strength to sin from the fact that, *for every transgression it will exact a punishment*. The law never remits a farthing of debt: it says, "Sin—punishment." They are linked together with adamant chains; they are tied, and cannot be severed. The law speaks not of sin and mercy; mercy comes in the gospel. The law says, "Sin—die; transgress—be chastised; sin—hell." Thus are they linked together. Once let me sin, and I may go to the foot of stern Justice, and as, with blind eyes, she holds the scales, I may say, "O Justice, remember, I was holy once; remember that on such and such an occasion I did keep the law." "Yes," saith Justice, "all I owe thee thou shalt have; I will not punish thee for what thou hast not done; but remember you *this* crime, O sinner?" and she puts in the heavy weight. The sinner trembles, and he cries, "But canst thou not forget that? Wilt thou not cast it away?" "Nay," saith Justice, and she puts in another weight. "Sinner, dost thou recollect *this* crime?" "Oh!" says the sinner, "wilt thou not for mercy's sake—?" "I will not have mercy," says Justice; "Mercy has its own palace, but I have naught to do with forgiveness here; mercy belongs to Christ. If you will be saved by Justice, you shall have your full of it. If you come to me for salvation, I will not have mercy brought in to help me; she is not my vicegerent; I stand here alone without her." And again, as she holds the scales, she puts in another iniquity, another crime, another enormous transgression; and each time the man begs and prays that he may have that passed by. Says Justice, "Nay, I must exact the penalty; I have sworn I will, and I will. Canst thou find a substitute for thyself? If thou canst, there is the only room I have for mercy. I will exact it of that substitute, but even at his hands I will have the utmost jot and tittle; I will abate nothing; I am God's Justice, stern and unflinching, I will not alter, I will not mitigate the penalty." She still holds the scales. The plea is in vain. "Never will I change!" she cries; "bring me the blood, bring me the price to its utmost; count it down, or else, sinner, thou shalt die.

Now, my friends, I ask you, if ye consider the spirituality of the law, the perfection it requires, and its unflinching severity, are you prepared to take away the sting of death in your own persons? Can you hope to overcome sin yourselves? Can you trust that, by some

righteous works, you may yet cancel your guilt? If you think so, go, O foolish one, go! O madman, go! work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling, without the God that worketh in thee; go, twist thy rope of sand; go, build a pyramid of air; go, prepare a house with bubbles, and think it is to last forever; but know it will be a dream with an awful awakening, for as a dream when one awaketh will he despise alike your image and your righteousness. “The strength of sin is the law.”

III. But now, in the last place, we have before us THE VICTORY OF FAITH. The Christian is the only champion who can smite the dragon of death, and even *he* cannot do it of himself; but when he has done it, he shall cry, “Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” One moment, and I will show you how the Christian can look upon death with complacency, through the merits of Jesus Christ.

First, Christ has taken away the strength of sin in this respect, *that he has removed the law*. We are not under bondage, but under grace. Law is not our directing principle, grace is. Do not misunderstand me. The principle that I *must* do a thing—that is to say, the principle of law, “do, or be punished; do, or be rewarded,” is not the motive of the Christian’s life; his principle is grace: “God has done so much for me, what ought I to do for him?” We are not under the law in that sense, but under grace.

Then Christ has removed the law in this sense, *that he has completely satisfied it*. The law demands a perfect righteousness; Christ says, “Law, thou hast it; find fault with me; I am the sinner’s substitute; have I not kept thy commandments? Wherein have I violated thy statutes?” “Come here, my beloved,” he says, and then he cries to Justice, “Find a fault in this man; I have put my robe upon him; I have washed him in my blood; I have cleansed him from his sin. All the past is gone; as for the future, I have secured it by sanctification; as for the penalty, I have borne it myself; at one tremendous draught of love I have drunk that man’s destruction dry; I have borne what he should have suffered; I have endured the agonies he ought to have endured. Justice, have I not satisfied thee? Did I not say upon the tree, and didst thou not coincide with it, ‘It is finished; it is finished?’ Have I not made so complete an atonement that there is now no need for that man to die and expiate his guilt? Do I not complete the perfect righteousness of this poor, once condemned, but now justified spirit?” “Yes” saith Justice, “I am well satisfied, and even more content, if possible, than if the sinner had brought a spotless righteousness of his own.” And now, what saith the Christian after this? Boldly he comes to the realms of death, and entering the gates there, he cries, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” And when he had said it, the dragon drops his sting. He descends into the grave; he passes by the place where fiends lie down in fetters of iron; he sees their chains, and looks into the dungeon where they dwell, and as he passes by the prison door, he shouts, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” They growl and bite their iron bonds, and hiss in secret, but they cannot lay aught to his charge. Now see him mount aloft. He approaches God’s heaven, he come against

the gates, and Faith still triumphantly shouts, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” And a voice comes from within: “Not Christ, for he hath died; not God, for he hath justified.” Received by Jesus, Faith enters heaven, and again she cries, “Who even here amongst the spotless and ransomed, shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” Now the law is satisfied, sin is gone; and now surely we need not fear the sting of the dragon, but we may say, as Paul did, when he rose into the majesty of poetry—such beautiful poetry that Pope himself borrowed his words, only transposing the sentences, “O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?”

If it were necessary to-night, I might speak to you concerning the *resurrection*, and I might tell you how much that takes away the sting of death, but I will confine myself to the simple fact, that the sting of death is sin, that the strength of sin is the law, and that Christ gives us the victory by taking the sting away, and removing the strength of sin by his perfect obedience.

And now, sirs, how many are there here who have any hope that for them Christ Jesus died? Am I coming too close home, when most solemnly I put the question to each one of you, as I stand in God’s presence this night, to free my head of your blood; as I stand and appeal with all the earnestness this heart is capable of? Are you prepared to die? I sin pardoned? Is the law satisfied? Can you view the flowing

“Of Christ’s soul-redeeming blood,
With divine assurance knowing,
That he hath made your peace with God?”

O! can ye now put one hand upon your heart, and the other upon the Bible, and say, “God’s word and I agree; the witness of the Spirit here and the witness there are one. I have renounced my sins, I have given up my evil practices; I have abhorred my own righteousness; I trust in naught but Jesus’ doings; simply do I depend on him.

‘Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling.’”

If so, should you die where you are—sudden death were sudden glory.

But, my hearers, shall I be faithful with you? or shall I belie my soul? Which shall it be? Are there not many here who, each time the bell tolls the departure of a soul, might well ask the question, “Am I prepared?” and they must say, “No.” I shall not turn prophet to-night; but were it right for me to say so, I fear not one-half of you are prepared to die. Is that true? Yea, let the speaker ask himself the question, “Am I prepared to meet my Maker face to face?” Oh, sit in your seat and catechise your souls with that solemn question. Let each one ask himself, “Am I prepared, should I be called, to die?” Methinks I hear one say with confidence, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” I hear another say with trembling accents—

“Ah! guilty, weak, and helpless worm,

On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

Yes, sweet words! I would rather have written that one verse than Milton's "Paradise Lost." It is such a matchless picture of the true condition of the believing soul. But I hear another say, "I shall not answer such a question as that. I am not going to be dull to-day. It may be gloomy weather outside to-day, but I do not want to be made melancholy." Young man, young man, go thy way. Let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but for all this the Lord shall bring thee to judgment. What wilt thou do, careless spirit, when thy friends have forsaken thee, when thou art alone with God? Thou dost not like to be alone, young man, now, dost thou? A falling leaf will startle thee. To be alone an hour will bring on an insufferable feeling of melancholy. But thou wilt be alone—and a dreary alone it will be—with God an enemy! How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan? What wilt thou do when he taketh thee by the hand at eventide, and asketh thee for an account; when he says, "What didst thou do in the beginning of thy days? how didst thou spend thy life?" When he asks thee, "Where are the years of thy manhood?" When he questions thee about thy wasted Sabbaths, and inquires how thy latter years were spent, what wilt thou say then? Speechless, without an answer, thou wilt stand. Oh, I beseech you, as ye love yourselves, take care! Even now, begin to weigh the solemn matters of eternal life. Oh! say not, "Why so earnest? why in such haste?" Sirs, if I saw you lying in your bed, and your house was on fire, the fire might be at the bottom of the house, and you might slumber safely for the next five minutes; but with all my might I would pull you from your bed, or I would shout, "Awake! awake! the flame is under thee." So with some of you who are sleeping over hell's mouth, slumbering over the pit of perdition, may I not awake you? may I not depart a little from clerical rules, and speak to you as one speaketh to his fellow whom he loves? Ah! if I loved you not, I need not be here. It is because I wish to win your souls, and, if it be possible, to win for my Master some honor, that I would thus pour out my heart before you. As the Lord liveth, sinner, thou standest on a single plank over the mouth of hell, and that plank is rotten. Thou hangest over the pit by a solitary rope, and the strands of that rope are breaking. Thou art like that man of old, whom Dionysius placed at the head of the table; before him was a dainty feast, but the man ate not, for directly over his head was a sword suspended by a hair. So art thou, sinner. Let thy cup be full, let thy pleasures be high, let thy soul be elevated, seest thou that sword? The next time thou sittest in the theatre, look up and see that sword: when next in thy business thou scornest the rules of God's gospel, look at that sword. Though thou seest it not, it is there. Even now, ye may hear God saying to Gabriel, "Gabriel, that man is sitting in his seat in the hall; he is hearing, but is as though he heard not; unsheathe thy blade; let the glittering sword cut through that hair; let the weapon fall upon him and divide his soul and body." *Stop, thou Gabriel, stop! Save the man*

a little while. Give him yet an hour, that he may repent. Oh, let him not die. True, he has been here these ten or dozen nights, and he has listened without a tear; but stop, and peradventure he may repent yet. Jesus backs up my entreaty, and he cries, "Spare him yet another year, till I dig about him and dung him, and though he now cumpers the ground, he may yet bring forth fruit, that he may not be hewn down and cast into the fire." I thank thee, O god; thou wilt not cut him down to-night; but to-morrow may be his last day. Ye may never see the sun rise, though you have seen it set. Take heed. Hear the word of God's gospel, and depart with God's blessing. "Whosoever believeth on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto him." "Whosoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Let every one that heareth say, "Come; whosoever is athirst, let him come and take of the water of life, freely."