

## **A Voice from the Hartley Colliery**

A Sermon

(No. 432)

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

"If a man die, shall he live again?—[Job 14:14](#).

ONCE MORE THE LORD has spoken. Once again the voice of Providence has proclaimed "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of grass." O sword of the Lord, when wilt thou rest and be quiet? Wherefore these repeated warnings? Why doth the Lord so frequently and so terribly sound an alarm? Is it not because our drowsy spirits will not awaken to the realities of death? We fondly persuade ourselves that we are immortal, that though a thousand may fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand, yet death shall not come nigh unto us. We flatter ourselves that if we must die, yet the evil day is far hence. If we be sixty, we presumptuously reckon upon another twenty years of life; and the man of eighty, tottering upon his staff, remembering that some few have survived to the close of a century, sees no reason why he should not do the same. If man cannot kill death, he tries at least to bury him alive; and since death will intrude himself in man's pathway, we endeavor to shut our eyes to the ghastly object. God in providence is continually filling our path with tombs. With kings and princes there is too much forgetfulness of the world to come; God has, therefore, spoken to *them*. They were but few in number; one death might be sufficient in their case. That one death of a beloved and illustrious prince will leave its mark on courts and palaces. As for the workers, they also are wishful to put far from them the thought of the coffin and the shroud: God has spoken to *them* also. There were many; one death would not be sufficient; it was absolutely necessary that there should be many victims, or we should have disregarded the warning. Two hundred witnesses cry to us from the pit's mouth, a solemn fellowship of preachers all using the same text, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" If God had not thus spoken by the destruction of many, we should have said, "Ah, it is a common occurrence; there are frequently such accidents as these?" The rod would have failed in its effect had it smitten less severely. The awful calamity at the Hartley Colliery has at least had this effect, that men are talking of death in all our streets. Oh! Father of thy people, send forth thy Holy Spirit in richer abundance, that by this solemn chastisement higher ends may be answered than merely attracting our thoughts to our latter end. Oh! may hearts be broken, may eyes be made to weep for sin, may follies be renounced, may Christ be accepted, and may spiritual life be given as the result of temporal death to the many who now sleep in their untimely graves in Earsdon churchyard.

This text is appropriate to the occasion, but God alone knoweth how applicable the discourse may be to some here present; yes, to young hearts little dreaming that there is but a step between them and death; to aged persons, who as yet have not set their house in order, but who must do it, for they shall die and not live. We will take the question of the text, and answer it upon Scriptural grounds. "If a man die, shall he live again?" NO!—YES!

I. We answer the question first with a "No." He shall not live again here; he shall not again mingle with his fellows, and repeat the life which death has brought to a close. This is true of him with regard to himself, and equally true with regard to his neighbors. Shall he live again for himself? No. Shall he live again for his household? No.

1. Dwell for a moment on the first thought. "If a man die, shall he live again." *Shall he live for himself.* No; if he hath lived and died a sinner, that sinful life of his shall never be repeated. Sinner, thou mayest empty the cups of drunkenness in this world throughout a long life, but thou shalt never have another season to spend in intoxication! Thou who hast broken through all the bounds of morality, thou mayest live in this life debauched, depraved, and devilish, but death shall put an end to thy career of lust. Let the cup be sweet; it is the last time thou shalt ever drink it. If there be any pleasures in sin, thou shalt never taste them again. The sweets shall be over once for all, and at the bottom thou shalt find the bitter dregs which shall be gall for ever. Once thou shalt insult high heaven, but not twice. Once shalt thou have space to blaspheme; once shalt thou have time proudly to array thyself in self-righteousness; once shalt thou have power to despise the Christ who is the Savior of men, *but not twice.* The longsuffering of God shall wait for thee through thy life of provocations; but thou shalt not be born again into this world; thou shalt not a second time defile its air with blasphemies, nor blot its beauties with impiety. Thou shalt not live again to forget the God who hath daily loaded thee with mercies. Thou hast thy daily bread now; the clothes that are on thy back shelter thee from the cold; thou goest to thy house, and thou hast comforts and mercies there, but like the swine which feed beneath the oak forgetful of the green bough which yields the acorn, or like the brute which is content to eat the grass, but never thanks the sun or the cloud which nourished the pasture, so thou livest in this world, forgetful of the God who made thee, in whom thou livest, and movest, and hast thy being. In this life thou art unthankful but thou shalt have no further opportunity for this ingratitude. All thy candles shall go out in eternal darkness. There shall be no more dainty meals for thee; no more joyous holidays, no more quiet slumbers. Every mercy shall be taken from thee. That which makes life desirable shall be removed if thou diest impenitent, till thou shalt hate thine existence and count it thy highest blessing if thou couldst cease to be. Thou shalt not live again, I say, to treat thy God worse than the ox treateth its owner. The ass knoweth his master's crib, but thou knowest not, though thou shalt know, for this is the last season in which thou shalt play the brute. My dear hearers, many of you have something more than the common mercies of God, you have his Word, Sabbath after Sabbath, preached

in your ears. I may say truthfully concerning you who attend this house of prayer, that you hear one who, when he fails for want of power, fails not for want of will to do you good; one who has not shunned to warn you, and to preach in all simplicity the whole counsel of God, so far as he has been taught it by the Holy Spirit. If you die you shall not live again to stifle the voice of your conscience, and to quench the Spirit of God. You shall have no more Sabbaths to mis-spend when this life is over. There shall be no church bells for you, after your knell is tolled. No affectionate voice shall beseech you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. No warning hand shall point you to the cross; no loving lip shall cry, "This is the way; walk ye in it." Ye have your last warnings *now* sinners; if ye reject them ye shall have no more. Ye hear in this life your last invitations; despise them, and the door shall be shut in your face for ever. Christ is lifted up before your eyes, look to him now and live; refuse him, and there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, and no other life in which you may lay hold of him.

Fix'd is their everlasting state,  
Could man repent, 'tis then too late;  
Justice has closed mercy's door,  
And God's longsuffering is no more.

Here you may have a mother to weep for you; a wife to pray for you, friends who will counsel you; the blessings of a Christian country, an open Bible, and a house of prayer, but it is your last time. Now or never; now or never. Lost in time; lost in eternity; saved now, saved for ever. Sinner, it is thy last turn. Will thou choose to be damned? Then damned thou art without hope! May God save thee now, and saved thou art beyond fear of perishing. But it is thy last, thine only opportunity. Where the tree falleth there it must lie for ever.

"Return, O wanderer to thy home,  
'Tis madness to delay;  
There are no pardons in the tomb,  
And brief is mercy's day.  
Return! Return!"

Solemnly let us say it, awful as it appears, it is well that the sinner should not live again in this world. "Oh!" you will say, when you are dying, "if I could but live again, I would not sin as I once did." When you are in the pit of hell, perhaps your pride will lead you to imagine that if you could come back to earth again you would be another man. Ah! but you would not be so! Unless you had a new heart and a right spirit, if you could live again, you would live as you did before. Keep the fountain unchanged, and the same streams will flow. Let the cause remain, and the same effects will follow. If the lost spirits could escape from hell, they would sin as they did before; if they could again listen to the gospel they would again reject it, for he that is filthy will be filthy still; the flames of hell shall work no change in character; for they have no sanctifying influence; they punish, but they do not cleanse. Sin-

ners, it is well that you will not live again, for if you did you would but increase your condemnation. There would be two lives of sin, of rejection of Christ, of unbelief, and, if it were possible, hell would then be less tolerable for you than it shall be now. Oh! my poor dying hearers, by the corpses in the dark smothering gas of Hartley Pit, I pray you be awakened, for *your* death-hour is hastening on, and you have but to-day in which to find a Savior.

"Sinner beware.—the axe of death,

Is raised and aimed at thee:

Awhile thy Maker spares thy breath,

Beware, O barren tree."

Every time you hear your clock tick, let it say to you, "*Now or never*, NOW OR NEVER, NOW OR NEVER."

In the case of the child of God, it is the same, so far as he himself is concerned, when he dies he shall not live again. No more shall he bitterly repent of sin; no more lament the plague of his own heart, and tremble under a sense of deserved wrath. No more shall the godly pitman suffer for righteousness' sake, despising the sneer of his comrades. The battle is once fought: it is not to be repeated. If God hath safely guided the ship across the sea and brought it to its desired haven, it casteth anchor for ever, and goeth not out a second time into the storm. Like those earnest Methodist miners, we have one life of usefulness, of service, of affliction, of temptation; one life in which to glorify God on earth in blessing our fellow-men; one life in which faith may be tried and love made perfect; one life in which we may prove the faithfulness of God in providence; and one life in which we may see Christ triumphant over sin in our mortal bodies, but we shall not return to the scene of conflict.

Brethren is it not a mercy for you and for me if we be in Christ, that our furnace is not to be re-lit? Oh, brethren, it were unkind for us to wish back the dead! Ah, when we think of those brethren, those men of God, who in the pit held prayer meeting when they knew that the fatal gas would soon take away their lives; though we look at their weeping widows and their sorrowing children, it were wrong to wish them back again. What would any of us who fear God think, if we were once in heaven? Would not the very suggestion of return, though it were to the most faithful spouse and best-beloved children, be a cruelty? What, bring back again to battle the victor who wears the crown! Drag back to the storm and the tempest, the mariner who has gained the strand! What, bring me back again to pain and sorrow, to temptation, and to sin? No. Blessed be thou, O God, that all the wishes of friends shall not accomplish this, for we shall be

"Far from this world of grief and sin,

With God, eternally shut in."

This world is not so lovely as to tempt us away from heaven. Here we are strangers and foreigners; here we have no abiding city; but we seek one to come. There is one wilderness, but we bless God there are not two. There is one Jordan to be crossed, but there is not an-

other. There is one season when we must walk by faith and not by sight, and be fed with manna from heaven; but blessed be God there is not another, for after that comes the Canaan—the rest which remaineth for the people of God. What man among ye, immersed in the cares of business, would desire two lives? Who, that is tired to-day with the world's noise, and vexed with its temptations; who that has come from a bed of sickness; who that is conscious of sin, would wish to leave the haven when once it is reached? As well might galley-slave long to return to his oar, or captive to his dungeon? No, blessed be God, the souls which have ascended from the colliery to glow are not to leave their starry spheres, but rest in Christ for ever.

2. But now we pass to the other thought under this first head. If a man die, shall he live again? *Shall he live for others?* No. The sinner shall not live to do damage to others. If there were any fathers who perished in the pit who had neglected the training of their children, they cannot live again to educate them for Christ. If there were any there (we hope there were not, and there is a hopeful sign, for I am told that there was not a single public-house within a mile of the village), but if there were there any who by their ill example taught others to sin, they shall never do it again. If there were any there who led others astray, by bold speeches against God, they have done once for all their life's-mischiefs. And so with each of us to-night. Do I speak to one here who is living a useless life; a tree planted in rich soil but bearing no fruit; a creature made by God but rendering him no service? Do I not speak to some such to-night? I know I do. You cannot be charged with outward vice, or with positive irregularity of conduct, but still it may be said of you, "I was an hungred and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison and ye visited me not." Ye have not done it unto one of the least of these his brethren, and ye have not done it unto Christ. It is not necessary to do anything in order to be lost. The way to perdition is very simple; it is only a little matter of neglect. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." Well, sinner, this is the last life of negligence that you shall ever spend; the very last season when you shall turn upon your heel and say, "Ha! ha! there is nothing in it!" The last time in which you shall put off the messenger by saying, "When I have a more convenient season I will send for thee." The neglect of our own souls is a most solemn mischief to others. When others see that we neglect, they take courage and neglect too.

"One sickly sheep infests the flock,  
And poisons all the rest."

But there are others whose example is bad. What sorrow it is to notice men who carry the infection of sin wherever they go about them. In some of our villages, and especially in our towns, we have men who are reeking dung-hills of corruption. To put them by the side of a youth for an hour would be almost as dangerous as to make that youth walk through Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. Men who, as Saul breathed out threatenings, breathe out

lasciviousness. Ah! do I speak to such a wretch? It is thy last rebellion—thy last revolt. Thou shalt never do this again. Never again shalt thou lead others down to hell, and drag them to the pit with thee. Remember that. And some there be who not only by example, but by overt teaching drive others astray. We have still, in this enlightened Christian land, wretches who boast the name of "infidel lecturer;" whose business it is to pervert men's minds by hard speeches against the majesty of heaven. Let them labor hard if they mean to subvert Jehovah's throne, for they have little time to do it in. Well may the enemies of the Lord of Hosts be desperately in earnest, for they have an awful work to do, and if they consider the puny strength with which they go forth to battle against the Judge of all the earth, and the brevity of the time that can be given to the struggle, well may they work and toil. This is their only time their sure damnation draweth nigh. Hushed shall be their high words; cold shall be their hot and furious hearts. God shall crush them in his anger, and destroy them in his hot displeasure. If a man die, he shall not live again to scatter hemlock seed, and sow sin in furrows. I do not know what your life is my friend. You have stepped in here to-night; it is not often you are in a place of worship, but listen now. You know that to your family you are sometimes a terror, and always an ill example. Ah, you are a co-worker with Satan now, but God shall put you where you shall do no more hurt to that fair child of yours; where you shall not teach your boy to drink; where you shall not instil into your daughter's mind unholy thoughts. The time shall come, masters, when you shall be taken away from those men who imitate you in your evil ways. The time shall be over with you working-man yonder, you shall not much longer jeer at the righteous, and sneer at the godly. You will find it hard work to laugh at the saints when you get into hell. You will find when God comes to deal with you, and your life is over, that it will be utterly impossible for you then to call them fools, for you will be thinking yourself the greatest fool that ever was, that you did not, like them, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Well, jeer and joke, and point the finger, and slander, and persecute as you may; it is the last time, and you shall never have another opportunity to mock the saints. O remember, it were better for you that a mill-stone were about your neck, and that you were cast into the depths of the sea than that you should thus offend Christ's little ones. Well, I think we may say it is a great mercy that the sinner shall not live again in this sense. What, bring him back again—that old drunkard of the village tap-room, restore him to life? No, no; good men breathed more freely when he was gone. What, bring back that vile old blasphemer who used to curse God? No, no; he vexed the righteous long enough; let him abide in his place. What, bring back that lewd, lascivious wretch to seduce others and lead them astray? What, bring back that thief to train others to his evil deeds? Bring back that self-righteous man who was always speaking against the gospel, and striving to prejudice other men's minds against gospel light? No, no. With all our love of one man, the love of many is stronger still, and we could not wish for the temporary and seeming good of one, to permit him to go raging, among others.

Natural benevolence might suggest even the loosing of a lion as a creature, but a greater benevolence says, "No, let him be chained, or he will rend others." We might not wish to crush even a serpent. Let it live, it has its own sphere and its own enjoyment. But if the serpent creep among men, where it can bite and infuse its poison into human veins, let it die. Without compunction we say it,—*"It were better that one man should die for the nation, that the whole nation perish not."* If a man die then, as far as others are concerned, he shall not live again to curse his kind.

And now, me remind you that it is the same with the saint, *"If a man die, shall he live again?"* No. This is our season to pray for our fellow-men, and it is a season which shall never return. Mother, you shall never come back to pray for your daughters and your sons again! Ministers, this is your time to preach. We shall never have an opportunity of being God's ambassadors anymore. Oh! when I sometimes think of this, I am ashamed that I can preach with dry eyes, and that sobs do not choke my utterance. Methinks if I were lying upon my dying bed, I might often say, *"O Lord, would that I could preach again, and once more warn poor souls."* I think Baxter says he never came out of his pulpit without sighing, because he had played his part so ill, and yet who ever preached more earnestly than he? And so, at times when we have felt the weight of souls, yet in looking back, we have thought we did not feel it as we should; and when we have stood by the corpse of one of our own hearers, we have had the reflection, *"Would that I could have talked more personally, and spoken more earnestly, to this man!"* I often feel that if God should ever permit me to say I am clear of the blood of you all, it is about as much as I can ever hope to have, for that must be heaven to a man, to feel that God has delivered him out of his ministry, it is such an awful thing to be responsible before God for the souls of men. *"If the watchman warn them not, they shall perish, but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."* And so, remember, it is with each one of you. Now is your time to rescue the fallen, to teach the ignorant, to carry the lambs in your bosom, or to restore the wandering; now is your season for liberality to the Church, for care of the poor, for consecration to Christ's service, and for devotion to his cause. If there could be sorrow among the spirits that are crowding around the throne of Christ, methinks it would be this, that they had not labored more abundantly, and were not more instant in season and out of season in doing good. If those godly pitmen over whom we mourn tonight, had not done their utmost while they were here, the deficiency could never be made up. Let me commend to you the example of some of those who were in the pit, praying and exhorting their fellow men just as they were all in the last article of death. They were Primitive Methodists. Let their names clothe Primitive Methodism with eternal honor! I conceive that in employing poor unlettered men to preach, the plan of the Primitive Methodists is New Testament and Scriptural policy. Such methods of usefulness we have endeavored to pursue, and hope to do so yet more fully. The Primitive Methodists think that a man may preach who never went to college; that a man may preach to his fellow-

miners even though he cannot speak grammatically; and hence they do not excite their ministers to labor after literary attainments, but after the souls of men; and the local preachers are chosen solely and wholly for their power to speak from the heart, and to make their fellow-men feel. We should have done more for London if we had not been so squeamish. Real Primitive Methodism we have seen in London, in the person of Mr. Richard Weaver; and if you would put a score of the ministers who have preached in the theatres altogether, they would not have made one such a man as Richard Weaver, for real effect upon the masses. And yet what teaching had he, and what wisdom? None, but that he feels the power of God in his own soul, and speaks out of his heart, roughly and rudely, but still mightily to others. We want all our Churches to feel that they must not say, "Who is John So-and-so? He is only a cobbler; he must not preach. What is Tom So-and-so? He is only a carpenter; why should he preach?" Ah, these are the men who shook the world; these are the men whom God used to destroy old Rome. With all our gettings, while we seek to get education in the ministry, we must take care that we do not despise those things that are not, which God shall make mightier than the things that are: and those base things which God hath chosen to stain the pride of human glorying, and to bring into contempt all the excellent of the earth. I know that I address some working men here. Working men, oh, that you knew Christ in your own hearts as they did in the Hartley pit! You see they had no preacher down there. Do not get the notion that you want a minister in order to come to Christ. Priestcraft is a thing we hate, and as you hate it too, we are quite one in that opinion. I preach the Word, but what am I more than you? If you can preach to edification, I pray you do so. Your poor brethren in the pit, though not set apart to that work, were yet as true priests unto the living God, and ministers for Christ, as any of us. So be you. Hasten to work while it is called to-day; gird up your loins and run the heavenly race for the sun is setting never to rise again upon this land.

II. "If a man die shall he live again?" Yes, yes, that he shall. He does not die like a dog; he shall live again; not here, but in another and a better or a more terrible land. The soul, we know, never dies, but when it leaves the clay it mounts to sing with angels or descends to howl with fiends. The body itself shall live again. The corpses in the pit were some of them swollen with foul air; some of them could scarcely be recognized, but as the seed corn has not lost its vitality, shrivelled though it be, neither have those bodies. They are now sown, and they shall spring up either to bear the image of condemnation, or of immortality and life. Scattered to the winds of heaven, devoured of beasts, mixed with other substances and other bodies, yet every atom of the human body has been tracked by the eye of omniscience, and shall be gathered to its proper place by the hand of omnipotence. The Lord knoweth every particle of the bodies of them that are his. All men, whether they be righteous or wicked, shall certainly live again in the body, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. This much cometh to all men through Christ, that all men have a resurrec-



tion. But more than that. They shall all live again in the eternal state; either for ever glorified with God in Christ, blessed with the holy angels, for ever shut in from all danger and alarm; or in that place appointed for banished spirits who have shut themselves out from God, and now find that God has shut them out from him. They shall live again, in weal or woe, in bliss or bane, in heaven or in hell. Now ye that are unconverted, think of this I pray you for a moment. Ye shall live again; let no one tempt you to believe the contrary. Whatever they shall say, and however speciously they may put it, mark this word—you shall not rot in the tomb for ever; there shall not be an end of you when they shall say "Earth to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes." Ye shall live again. And hark thee, sinner; let me hold thee by the hand a moment; *thy sins shall live again*. They are not dead. Thou hast forgotten them, but God has not. Thou hast covered them over with the thick darkness of forgetfulness, but they are in his book, and the day shall come when all the sins that thou hast done shall be read before the universe and published in the light of day. What sayest thou to this, sinner? The sins of thy youth, thy secret sins—oh! man, let that thought pierce through thee like a point of steel, and cut thee to the very quick—thy sins shall live again. *And thy conscience shall live*. It is not often alive now. It is quiet, almost as quiet as the dead in the grave. But it shall soon awaken, the trumpet of the archangel shall break its long sleep; depend on that; the terrors of hell shall make thee lift up thine eyes which have so long been heavy with slumber. You have had an awakened conscience, but then you are still in the land of hope, you will find however that an awakened conscience when there is no Christ to flee to is an awful thing. Remorse of conscience has brought many a man to the knife and to the halter. Ah, careless sinner, you dare not to-night sit up an hour alone and think over the past and the future; you know you dare not. But there will be no avoiding conscience hereafter, it speaks now, but it will thunder then; it whispers now, and you may shut your ears, but its thunder-claps then shall so startle you that you cannot refuse to listen. Oh! transgressor, thy conscience shall live again, and shall be thy perpetual tormentor. Remember that *your victims shall live again*. Am I addressing any who have enticed companions into sin, and conducted friends to destruction? Your dupes shall meet you in another world and charge their ruin upon you. That young lad whom you led astray from the path of virtue shall point to you in hell and say, "He was my tempter." That woman—let us cover up that deed,—bright eyes shall sparkle upon you through the black darkness like the eyes of serpents, and you shall hear the hissing voice, "Thou didst bring me here," and you shall feel another hell in the hell of that other soul. Oh! God, save us, let the sins of our youth be covered. Oh, save us! Let the blood of Jesus be sprinkled on our conscience, for, there are none of us that dare meet our conscience alone! Shelter us, thou Rock of Ages. Deliver us from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation. Sinner, remember thy God shall live. Thou thinkest him nothing now; thou shalt see him then. Thy business now stops the way; the smoke of time dims thy vision; the rough blasts of death shall blow all this away, and thou shalt see clearly revealed to thyself

the frowning visage of an angry God. A God in arms, sinner, a God in arms, and no scabbard for his sword; a God in arms, and no shelter for thy soul; a God in arms, and even rocks refusing to cover thee; a God in arms, and the hollow depths of earth denying thee a refuge! Fly, soul! while it is yet time: fly, the cleft in the rock is open now. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." Fly, sinner, to the open arms of Jesus! Fly! for he casteth out none that come to him.

And then, lastly, as this is true of the sinner, so it is true of the saint. He shall live again. If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men the most miserable. If we knew that we must die and not live for ever, our brightest joys would be quenched; and in proportion to the joy we lost would be the sorrow which followed. We shall live again. Godly wife, thy Christian husband, though he perished by the fatal "damp," shall live again, and thou shalt sit with him before the eternal throne. He finished his life with prayer amid his comrades, he shall begin anew with praise amid the cherubim. Widow, bereaven of thy many children, thou hast lost them all; not lost we hope, but gone before. Oh! there shall be joy when every link that was snapped shall be re-fitted; when again the circle shall be completed, and all losses restored.

"Far, far removed from fear and pain,

Dear brethren we shall meet again."

That sweet hymn of the children is a blessed one after all—

"We shall meet to part no more."

Death, thou canst not rob us, thou canst not tear away a limb from Jesu's body! Thou canst not take away a single stone from the spiritual temple. Thou dost but transplant the flower, O death! thou dost not kill it. Thou dost but uproot it from the land of frost to flourish in the summer's clime; thou dost but take it from the place where it can only bud, to the place where it shall be full blown. Blessed be God for death, sweet friend of regenerated man! Blessed be God for the grave, safe wardrobe for these poor dusty garments till we put them on afresh glowing with angelic glory. Thrice blessed be God for resurrection, for immortality, and for the joy that shall be revealed in us. Brethren, my soul anticipates that day; let yours do the same. One gentle sigh and we fall asleep; perhaps we die as easily as those did in the colliery; we sleep into heaven, and wake up in Christ's likeness. When we have slept our last on earth, and open our eyes in heaven, oh! what a surprise! No aching arm, no darkness of the mine, no choked arnp, no labor and no sweat, no sin, no stain there! Brethren, is not that verse near the fact which says,

"We'll sing with rapture and surprise,

His loving kindness in the skies?

Shall we not be surprised to find ourselves in heaven? What a new place for the poor sinner. From the coal mine to celestial spheres. From black and dusty toil to bright and

heavenly bliss. Above ground once for all, ay and above the skies too. Oh! long-expected day begin! When shall it come? Hasten it, Lord.

Come death and some celestial hand,  
To bear our souls away!"

I have thus tried to bring forward the text. Oh that the Lord, in whose name I desire to speak, may bless it to some among you. I have now to ask you kindly to think of those who are suffering through this terrible calamity. More than four hundred widows and orphans are left bereaved and penniless, for the working-man has little spare cash to provide for such contingencies. As a congregation we can do but little to alleviate so great a sorrow, let us, however, bear our part with others. I have no doubt the wealthier ones among you have already contributed in your different connexions, either through the Lord Mayor, or Mark Lane, or the Coal Market, or the Stock Exchange, or in some other way, but there are many of you who have not done so, and those who have may like an opportunity of doing so again. Let us do what we can to-night, that we may show our gratitude to God for having spared our lives; and as we drop our money into the box, let us offer a prayer that this solemn affliction may be blessed to all in the land, and that so Christ may be glorified.

The preacher desires to bear testimony to the hearty sympathy which led his audience, on a cold wet evening to assemble in considerable numbers, and which opened up their hearts to subscribe £120 for the bereaved. May the Lord bind up the bleeding hearts!

\* This sermon was preached to commemorate the Hartley Mining Disaster of 16 January 1862—exactly two weeks prior to the preaching of this message. In one of the most horrific mining disasters ever, 204 men and boys lost their lives when part of a giant cast iron beam (more than 20 tons of it) broke off the massive pumping engine and launched itself down the shaft, blocking the only exit and trapping more than 200 men in the vast underground coal pit. Although the remaining men of the town and hundreds from nearby communities laboured for days to try to open up a means of rescue, most of the men trapped in the pit probably succumbed to noxious gasses within 36 hours. At the time Spurgeon preached this message, bodies of the victims were still being recovered, and England was just coming to grips with the magnitude of the disaster. Pictures of a memorial erected near the disaster site may be viewed on the Web.