

## **“Alas For Us, If Thou Wert All, and Nought Beyond, O Earth”**

A Sermon

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”—1  
[Corinthians 15:19](#).

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND that the apostle is arguing with professedly Christian people, who were dubious about the resurrection of the dead. He is not saying that all men are now miserable if there be no hope of the world to come, for such an assertion would be untrue. There are very many who never think of another life, who are quite happy in their way, enjoy themselves, and are very comfortable after a fashion. But he speaks of Christian people—“If *we*, who have hope in Christ, are led to doubt the doctrine of a future state and of a resurrection, then we are of all men most miserable.” The argument has nothing to do with some of you who are not Christians; it has nothing to do with you who have never been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; it only respects those who are real, living followers of the Savior, and who are known by this, that they have *hope in Christ*—hope in his blood for pardon, in his righteousness for justification, in his power for support, in his resurrection for eternal glory. “If we who have hope in Christ, have that hope for this life only, then we are of all men most miserable.” You understand the argument; he is appealing to their consciousness; they, as Christians, had real enjoyments, “but,” says he, “you could not have these enjoyments if it were not for the hope of another life; for once take that away, if you could still remain Christians and have the same feelings which you now have, and act as you now do, you would become of all men most miserable,” therefore to justify your own happiness and make it all reasonable, you must admit a resurrection; there is no other method of accounting for the joyous peace which the Christian possesses. Our riches are beyond the sea; our city with firm foundations lies on the other side the river: gleams of glory from the spirit-world cheer our hearts, and urge us onward; but if it were not for these, our present joys would pine and die.

We will try and handle our text this morning in this way. First, *we are not of all men most miserable*; but secondly, *without the hope of another life we should be*—that we are prepared to confess—because thirdly, *our chief joy lies in the hope of a life to come*; and thus, fourthly, *the future influences the present*; and so, in the last place, *we may to-day judge what our future is to be*.

I. First then, WE ARE NOT OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE. Who ventures to say we are? He who will have the hardihood to say so knoweth nothing of us. He who shall affirm that Christianity makes men miserable, is himself an utter stranger to it, and has never partaken of its joyful influences. It were a very strange thing indeed, if it did make us wretched, for see *to what a position it exalts us!* It makes us sons of God. Suppose you that God will give all the happiness to his enemies, and reserve all the mourning for his sons? Shall his foes have mirth and joy, and shall his own home-born children inherit sorrow and wretchedness? Are the kisses for the wicked and the frowns for us? Are we condemned to hang our harps upon the willows, and sing nothing but doleful dirges, while the children of Satan are to laugh for joy of heart? We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Shall the sinner, who has no part nor lot in Christ, call himself happy, and shall we go mourning as if we were penniless beggars? No, we will rejoice in the Lord always, and glory in our inheritance, for we "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The rod of chastisement must rest upon us in our measure, but it worketh for us the comfortable fruits of righteousness; and therefore by the aid of the divine Comforter, we will rejoice in the Lord at all times. We are, my brethren, married unto Christ; and shall our great Bridegroom permit his spouse to linger in constant grief? Our hearts are knit unto him: we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and though for awhile we may suffer as our Head once suffered, yet we are even now blessed with heavenly blessings in him. Shall our Head reign in heaven, and shall we have a hell upon earth? God forbid: the joyful triumph of our exalted Head is in a measure shared by us, even in this vale of tears. We have the earnest of our inheritance in the comforts of the Spirit, which are neither few nor small. Think of a Christian! He is a king, and shall the king be the most melancholy of men? He is a priest unto God, and shall he offer no sweet incense of hallowed joy and grateful thanksgiving? We are fit companions for angels: he hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and shall we have no days of heaven upon earth? Is Canaan ours from Dan to Beersheba, and shall we eat no fruit from Eshcol's vine on this side of Jordan? Shall we have no taste of the figs, and of the pomegranates, and of the flowing milk and honey? Is there no manna in the wilderness? Are there no streams in the desert? Are there no streaks of light to herald our eternal sunrising? Heritors of joy for ever, have we no foretastes of our portion? I say again, it were the oddest thing in the world if Christians were more miserable than other men, or not more happy. Think again of *what God has done for them!* The Christian knows that his sins are forgiven; there is not against the believer a single sin recorded in God's book. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." More than that, the believer is accounted by God as if he had perfectly kept the law, for the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he stands clothed in that fair white linen which is the righteousness of the saints, And shall the man whom God accepts be wretched? Shall the

pardoned offender be less happy than the man upon whom the wrath of God abideth? Can you conceive such a thing? Moreover, my brethren, we are made temples of the Holy Ghost, and is the Holy Ghost's temple to be a dark, dolorous place, a place of shrieks, and moans, and cries, like the Druidic groves of old? Such is not like our God. Our God is a God of love, and it is his very nature to make his creatures happy; and we, who are his twice-made creatures, who are the partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, is it to be supposed that we are bound by a stern decree to go mourning all our days? Oh! if ye knew the Christian's privilege, if ye understood that the secret of the Lord is laid open to him, that the wounds of Christ are his shelter, that the flesh and blood of Christ are his food, that Christ himself is his sweet companion and his abiding friend, oh! if ye knew this, ye would never again foolishly dream that Christians are an unhappy race. "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?" Who can be compared with the man who is "satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord." Well might the evil prophet of Bethor exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

We will go a step farther. We will not only say that from the nature of his position and privileges, a Christian should be happy, but we declare that he is so, and that among all men there are none who enjoy such a *constant peace* of mind as believers in Christ. Our joy may not be like that of the sinner, noisy and boisterous. You know what Solomon says—"The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot"—a great deal of blaze and much noise, and then a handful of ashes, and it is all over. "Who hath woe, who hath redness of the eyes? They that tarry long at the wine-men of strength to mingle strong drink." The Christian, in truth, does not know much of the excitement of the bowl, the viol and the dance, nor does he desire to know; he is content that he possesses a calm deep-seated repose of soul. "He is not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." He is not disturbed with any sudden fear: he knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He is in the habit in whatever society he may be, of still lifting up his heart to God; and therefore he can say with the Psalmist, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."

"He waits in secret on his God;  
His God in secret sees;  
Let earth be all in arms abroad,  
He dwells in heavenly peace.  
His pleasures rise from things unseen,  
Beyond this world and time,  
Where neither eyes nor ears have been,  
Nor thoughts of sinners climb.  
He wants no pomp nor royal throne

To raise his figure here:

Content and pleased to live unknown,

Till Christ his life appear.

“There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God.” Believers drink of that river and thirst not for carnal delights. They are made “to lie down in green pastures,” and are led “beside the still waters.” Now this solid, lasting joy and peace of mind sets the Christian so on high above all others, that I boldly testify that there are no people in the world to compare with him for happiness. But do not suppose that our joy never rises above this settled calm; for let me tell you, and I speak experimentally, we have our seasons of *rapturous delight* and overflowing bliss. There are times with us when no music could equal the melody of our heart’s sweet hymn of joy. It would empty earth’s coffers of every farthing of her joy to buy a single ounce of our delight. Do not fancy Paul was the only man who could say, “Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth,” for these ecstasies are usual with believers; and on their sunshiny days when their unbelief is shaken off and their faith is strong, they have all but walked the golden streets; and they can say, “If we have not entered within the pearly gate, we have been only just this side of it; and it we have not yet come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, if we have not joined the great congregation of the perfect in actual body, yet still—

“E’en now by faith we join our hands

With those that went before,

And greet the blood-besprinkled bands

On the eternal shore.”

I would not change one five minutes of the excessive joy my soul has sometimes felt for a thousand years of the best mirth that the children of this world could give me. O friends, there is a happiness which can make the eye sparkle and the heart beat high, and the whole man as full of bounding speed of life as the chariots of Amminadib. There are raptures and high ecstasies, which on festival days such as the Lord allotteth to his people, the saints are permitted to enjoy. I must not fail to remind you that the Christian is the happiest of men for this reason, that *his joy does not depend upon circumstances*. We have seen the happiest men in the most sorrowful conditions. Mr. Renwick, who was the last of the Scotch martyrs, said a little before his death, “Enemies think themselves satisfied that we are put to wander in mosses and upon mountains, but even amidst the storm of these last two nights I cannot express what sweet times I have had when I have had no coverings but the dark curtains of night: yea, in the silent watch my mind was led out to admire the deep and inexpressible ocean of joy wherein the whole family of heaven do swim. Each star led me to wonder what He must be who is the star of Jacob, and from whom all stars borrow their shining.” Here is a martyr of God driven from house and home and from all comforts, and yet having such

sweet seasons beneath the curtains of the black night as kings do not often know beneath their curtains of silk. A minister of Christ going to visit a very, very poor man, gives this description. He says, "I found him alone, his wife having gone out to ask help of some neighbor. I was startled by the sight of the pale emaciated man, the living image of death, fastened upright in his chair by a rude mechanism of cords and belts hanging from the ceiling, totally unable to move hand or foot, having been for more than four years entirely deprived of the use of his limbs, and suffering extreme pain from swellings in all his joints. I approached him full of pity, and I said, "Are you left alone, my friend, in this deplorable situation?" He answered with a gentle voice—his lips were the only parts of his body which he appeared to have power to move—"No, sir, I am not alone, because the Father is with me." I began to talk with him, and I soon observed what was the source of his consolation, for just in front of him lay the Bible upon a pillow, his wife having left it open at some choice Psalm of David so that he might read while she was gone, as he had no power to turn over the leaves. I asked him what he had to live upon, and found that it was a miserable pittance, scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, "But," said he, "I never want anything, for the Lord has said, 'Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure,' and I trust in him, and I shall never want while God is faithful to his promise." "I asked him," says this minister "whether he did not often repine on account of suffering so acutely for so many years. "Sir," said he, "I did repine at first, but not for the last three years, blessed be God for it, for I know whom I have believed, and though I feel my own weakness and unworthiness more and more, yet I am persuaded that he will never leave me nor forsake me; and so graciously does he comfort me that when my lips are closed with lock-jaw and I cannot speak a word for hours together, he enables me to sing his praises most sweetly in my heart." Now here was a man to whom the sun of all earthly comfort was set, and yet the sun of heaven shone full in his face, and he was more peaceful and happy in deep poverty and racking pain than all you or I have been in the health and strength of youth. John Howard spent his time in visiting the gaols and going from one haunt of fever to another, he was asked how he could find any ground of happiness when he was living in miserable Russian villages, or dwelling in discomfort in an hospital or a gaol. Mr. Howard's answer was very beautiful. "I hope," said he, "I have sources of enjoyment which depend not upon the particular spot I inhabit. A rightly cultivated mind, under the power of divine grace and the exercise of a benevolent disposition affords a ground of satisfaction that is not to be affected by heres and theres." Every Christian will bear you his witness that he has found his sad times to be his glad times, his losses to be his gains, his sicknesses means to promote his soul's health. Our summer does not depend upon the sun, nor our flood-tide upon the moon. We can rejoice even in death. We look forward to that happy hour when we shall close our eyes in the peaceful slumbers of death, believing that our last day will be our best day. Even the crossing of the river Jordan is but an easy task, for we shall hear him say, "Fear not; I am

with thee: be not dismayed, I am thy God; when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee, and the floods shall not overflow thee." We dare to say it, then, very boldly, we are *not* of all men most miserable: we would not change with unconverted men for all their riches, and their pomp, and their honor thrown into the scale.

"Go you that boast in all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine,  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,  
And my Redeemer's mine.

II. This brings us to the second point—WITHOUT THE HOPE OF ANOTHER LIFE, WE WILL ADMIT, THAT WE SHOULD BE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE.

Especially was this true of the apostles. They were rejected by their countrymen; they lost all the comforts of home; their lives were spent in toil, and were daily exposed to violent death. They all of them suffered the martyr's doom, except John, who seems to have been preserved not from martyrdom, but in it. They were certainly the twelve most miserable of men apart from that hope of the world to come, which made them of all men the most happy. But this is true, dear friends, not merely of persecuted, and despised, and poverty-stricken Christians, but of all believers. We are prepared to grant it, that take away from us the hope of the world to come we should be more miserable than men without religion. The reason is very clear, if you think that the Christian has *renounced those common and ordinary sources of joy from which other men drink*. We must have some pleasure: it is impossible for men to live in this world without it, and I can say most truthfully I never urge any of you to do that which would make you unhappy. We must have some pleasure. Well then, there is a vessel filled with muddy filthy water which the camels' feet have stirred: shall I drink it? I see yonder a rippling stream of clear flowing water, pure as crystal and cooling as the snow of Lebanon, and I say, "No, I will not drink this foul, muddy stuff; leave that for beasts; I will drink of you clear stream." But if I be mistaken, if there be no stream yonder, if it be but the deceitful mirage, if I have been deluded, then I am worse off than those who were content with the muddy water, for they have at least some cooling draughts; but I have none at all. This is precisely the Christian's case. He passes by the pleasures of sin, and the amusements of carnal men, because he says, "I do not care for them, I find no pleasure in them: my happiness flows from the river which springs from the throne of God and flows to me through Jesus Christ—I will drink of that," but if there were no hereafter, if that were proved to be a deception, then were we more wretched than the profligate and licentious.

Again, the Christian man has *learned the vanity of all earthly joys*. We know when we look upon pomp that it is an empty thing. We walk through the world, not with the scorn of Diogenes, the cynical philosopher, but with something of his wisdom, and we look upon the common things in which men rejoice, and say with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." And why do we say this? Why, because we have chosen eternal things in which

there is no vanity, and which are satisfying to the soul. But, my brethren, it is the most unhappy piece of knowledge which a man can acquire, to know that this world is vain, if there be not another world abundantly to compensate for all our ills. There is a poor lunatic in Bedlam, plaiting straw into a crown which he puts upon his head, and calls himself a king, and mounts his mimic throne and thinks that he is monarch over all nations, and is perfectly happy in his dream. Do you think that I would undeceive him? Nay, verily, if I could, I would not. If the delusion makes the man happy, by all means let him indulge in it; but, dear friends, you and I *have been* undeceived; our dream of perfect bliss beneath the skies is gone for ever; what then if there be no world to come? Why then it is a most sorrowful thing for us that we have been awakened out of our sleep unless this better thing which we have chosen, this good part which shall not be taken from us, should prove to be real and true, as we do believe it is.

Moreover, the Christian man is a man who has had *high, noble, and great expectations*, and this is a very sad thing for us if our expectations be not fulfilled, for it makes us of all men most miserable. I have known poor men waiting and expecting a legacy. They had a right to expect it, and they have waited, and waited, and borne with poverty, and the relative has died and left them nothing; their poverty has ever afterwards seemed to be a heavier drag than before. It is an unhappy thing for a man to have large ideas and large desires, if he cannot gratify them. I believe that poverty is infinitely better endured by persons who were always poor, than by those who have been rich and have had to come down to penury, for they miss what the others never had, and what the originally poor would look upon as luxuries they consider to be necessary to their existence. The Christian has learned to think of eternity, of God, of Christ, of communion with Jesus, and if indeed it be all false, he certainly has dreamed the most magnificent of all mortal visions. Truly, if any man could prove it to be a vision, the best thing he could do would be to sit down and weep for ever to think it was not true, for the dream is so splendid, the picture of the world to come so gorgeous, that I can only say, if it be not true, it ought to be—if it be not true, then there is nothing here worth living for, my brethren, and we are disappointed wretches indeed—of all men most miserable.

The Christian, too, *has learned to look upon everything here on earth as fleeting*. I must confess every day this feeling grows with me. I scarce look upon my friends as living. I walk as in a land of shadows, and find nothing enduring around me. The broad arrow of the great skeleton king is, to my eye, visibly stamped everywhere. I go so often to the grave, and with those I least expected to take there, that it seems to be rather a world of dying than of living men. Well, this is a very unhappy thing—a very wretched state of mind for a man to be in, if there be no world to come. If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is the Christian indeed committed to a state of mind the most deplorable and pitiable. But, O my brethren, if there be a world to come, as faith assures us there is, how joyous it is to be weaned from

the world, and to be ready to depart from it! To be with Christ is far better than to tarry in this vale of tears.

“The cords that bound my heart to earth  
Are broken by his hand;  
Before his cross I find myself,  
A stranger in the land.  
My heart is with him on his throne,  
And ill can brook delay;  
Each moment listening for the voice,  
'Make haste, and come away.'”

May I not pant to be in my own sweet country with my own fair Lord, to see him face to face? Yet, if it be not so and there be no resurrection of the dead, “we are of all men most miserable.”

III. OUR CHIEF JOY IN THE HOPE OF THE WORLD TO COME. Think of the world to come, my brethren, and let your joys begin to kindle into flames of delight, for heaven offers you all that you can desire. You are, many of you, weary of toil; so weary, perhaps, that you can scarcely enjoy the morning service because of the late hours at which you have had to work at night. Ah! there is a land of *rest*—of perfect rest, where the sweat of labor no more bedews the worker's brow, and fatigue is for ever banished. To those who are weary and spent, the word “rest” is full of heaven. Oh! happy truth, there remaineth a rest for the people of God. ” They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” Others of you are always in the field of battle; you are so tempted within, and so molested by foes without, that you have little or no peace. I know where your hope lies. It lies in the *victory*, when the banner shall be waved aloft, and the sword shall be sheathed, and you shall hear your Captain say, “Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast fought a good fight; thou hast finished thy course: henceforth wear thou the crown of life which fadeth not away.” Some of you are tossed about with many troubles; you go from care to care, from loss to loss: it seems to you as if all God's waves and billows had gone over you; but you shall soon arrive at the land of *happiness*, where you shall bathe your weary soul in seas of heavenly rest, You shall have no poverty soon; no mud-hovel, no rags, nor hunger. “In my Father's house are many mansions,” and there shall you dwell, satisfied with favor, and full of every blessing. You have had bereavement after bereavement; the wife has been carried to the tomb, the children have followed, father and mother are gone, and you have few left to love you here; but you are going to the land where graves are unknown things, where they never see a shroud, and the sound of the mattock and the spade are never heard; you are going to your Father's house in the land of the *immortal*, in the country of the hereafter, in the home of the blessed, in the habitation of God Most High, in the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all. Is not this your best joy, that you are not to be here for ever, that you are



not to dwell eternally in this wilderness, but shall soon inherit Canaan? With all God's people their worst grief is sin. I would not care for any sorrow, if I could live without sinning. Oh! if I were rid of the appetites of the flesh and the lusts thereof, and the desires which continually go astray, I would be satisfied to lie in a dungeon and rot there, so as to be delivered from the corruption of sin. Well but, brethren, we shall soon attain unto *perfection*. The body of this death will die with this body. There is no temptation in heaven, for the dog of hell can never cross the stream of death; there are no corruptions there, for they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; there shall by no means enter into that kingdom anything which defileth. Methinks as I hear the joyous song of the glorified this morning, as I catch floating down from heaven the sound of that music which is like many waters and like the great thunder, and as I hear the harmony of those notes which are sweet as harpers harping with their harps, my soul desireth to stretch her wings, and fly straight to yonder worlds of joy. I know it is so with you, my brethren in the tribulation of Christ—as you wipe the sweat your brow, is not this the comfort: there is rest for the people of God? As you stand out against temptation and suffer for Christ's sake, is not this your comfort: "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." When you are slandered and despised by men, is not this your hope: "He will remember me when he cometh into his kingdom. I shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome, and sitteth down upon his Father's throne?" Oh! yes, this is the music to which Christians dance; this is the wine which maketh glad their hearts; this is the banquet at which they feast. There is another and a better land, and we, though we sleep with the clods of the valley, shall in our flesh see God, when our Redeemer shall stand in the latter days upon the earth. I think you catch my drift—we are *not* of all men most miserable; apart from the future hope we should be, for our hope in Christ for the future is the mainstay of our joy.

IV. Now, dear friends, this brings me to a practical observation in the fourth place, which is, that **THUS THE FUTURE OPERATES UPON THE PRESENT**.

I had some time ago a conversation with a very eminent man whose fame is familiar to you all, but whose name I do not feel justified in mentioning, who was once a professed believer but is now full of scepticism. He said to me in the course of our argument, "Why, how foolish you are, and all the company of preachers. You tell people to think about the next world, when the best thing they could do would be to behave themselves as well as they can in this!" I granted the truth of the observation; it would be very unwise to make people neglect the present, for it is of exceeding great importance, but I went on to show him that the very best method to make people attend to the present was by impressing them with high and noble motives with regard to the future. The potent force of the world to come supplies us through the Holy Spirit with force for the proper accomplishment of the duties of this life. Here is a man who has a machine for the manufacture of hardware. He wants steam power to work this machine. An engineer puts up a steam engine in a shed at some

considerable distance. "Well," saith the other, "I asked you to bring steam power here, to operate upon my machine." "That is precisely," says he, "what I have done. I put the steam engine there, you have but to connect it by a band and your machine works as fast as you like; it is not necessary that I should put the boiler, and the fire, and the engine close to the work, just under your nose: only connect the two, and the one will operate upon the other." So God has been pleased to make our hopes of the future a great engine wherewith the Christian man may work the ordinary machine of every-day life, for the band of faith connects the two, and makes all the wheels of ordinary life revolve with rapidity and regularity. To speak against preaching the future as though it would make people neglect the present is absurd. It is as though somebody should say, "There, take away the moon, and blot out the sun. What is the use of them—they are not in this world?" Precisely so, but take away the moon and you have removed the tides, and the sea becomes a stagnant, putrid pool. Then take away the sun—it is not in the world—take it away, and light, and heat, and life; everything is gone. What the sun and moon are to this natural world, the hope of the future is to the Christian in this world. It is his light—he looks upon all things in that light, and sees them truly. It is his heat; it gives him zeal and energy. It is his very life: his Christianity, his virtue would expire if it were not for the hope of the world to come. Do you believe, my brethren, that apostles and martyrs would ever have sacrificed their lives for truth's sake if they had not looked for a hereafter? In the heat of excitement, the soldier may die for honor, but to die in tortures and mockeries in cold blood needs a hope beyond the grave. Would you poor man go toiling on year after year, refusing to sacrifice his conscience for gain; would yon poor needle-girl refuse to become the slave of lust if she did not see something brighter than earth can picture to her as the reward of sin? O my brethren, the most practical thing in all the world is the hope of the world to come; and you see the text teaches this, for it is just this which keeps us from being miserable; and to keep a man from being miserable, let me say, is to do a great thing for him, for a miserable Christian—what is the use of him? Keep him in a cupboard, where nobody can see him; nurse him in the hospital, for he is of no use in the field of labor. Build a monastery, and put all miserable Christians in it, and there let them meditate on mercy till they learn to smile; for really there is no other use for them in the world, But the man who has a hope of the next world goes about his work strong, for the joy of the Lord is our strength. He goes against temptation mighty, for the hope of the next world repels the fiery darts of the adversary. He can labor without present reward, for he looks for a reward in the world to come. He can suffer rebuke, and can afford to die a slandered man, because he knows that God will avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him. Through the Spirit of God the hope of another world is the most potent force for the product of virtue; it is a fountain of joy; it is the very channel of usefulness. It is to the Christian what food is to the vital force in the animal frame. Let it be said of any of us, that we are dreaming about the future and forgetting the present, but let the future

sanctify the present to highest uses. I fear our prophetic brethren err here. They are reading continually about the last vials, the seventy weeks of Daniel, and a number of other mysteries; I wish they would set to work instead of speculating so much, or speculate even more if they will, but turn their prophecies to present practical account. Prophetic speculations too often lead men away from present urgent duty, and especially from contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; but a hope of the world to come is, I think, the best practical power which a Christian can have.

V. And now, to conclude, this will let us see very clearly WHAT OUR FUTURE IS TO BE.

There are some persons here to whom my text has nothing whatever to say. Suppose there were no hereafter, would they be more miserable? Why, no; they would be more happy. If anybody could prove to them that death is an eternal sleep, it would be the greatest consolation that they could possibly receive. If it could be shown, to a demonstration, that as soon as people die they rot in the grave and there is an end of them—why some of you could go to bed at night comfortable, your conscience would never disturb you, you would be molested by none of those terrible fears which now haunt you. Do you see, then, this proves that you are not a Christian; this proves as plainly as twice two make four, that you are no believer in Christ; for if you were, the taking away of a hereafter would make you miserable. Since it would not tend to make you happy to believe in a future state, this proves that you are no believer in Christ. Well, then, what have I to say to you? Why just this—that in the world to come, *you will be of all men most miserable*. “What will become of you?” said an infidel once to a Christian man, “supposing there should be no heaven?” “Well,” said he, “I like to have two strings to my bow. If there be no hereafter I am as well off as you are; if there be I am infinitely better off. But where are you? Where are you?” Why then we must read this text in the future—“If in this life there be indeed a hope of a life to come, then you shall be in the next life of all men most miserable.” Do you see where you will be? Your soul goes before the great Judge, and receives its condemnation and begins its hell. The trumpet rings; heaven and earth are astonished; the grave heaves; yonder slab of marble is lifted up, and up you rise in that very flesh and blood in which you sinned, and there you stand in the midst of a terrified multitude, all gathered to their doom. The Judge has come. The great assize has commenced. There on the great white throne sits the Savior who once said, “Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest;” but now he sits there as a Judge and opens with stern hand the terrible volume. Page after page he reads, and as he reads he gives the signal, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,” and the angels bind up the fares in bundles to burn them. There stand you, and you know your doom; you already begin to feel it. You cry to the lofty Alps to fall upon you and conceal you. “O ye mountains, can ye not find in your rocky bowels some friendly cavern where I may be hidden from the face of him who sits upon the throne?” In terrible silence the mountains refuse your petition and the rocks reject

your cry. You would plunge into the sea, but it is licked up with tongues of fire; you would fain make your bed even in hell if you could escape from those dreadful eyes, but you cannot; for now your turn is come, that page is turned over which records your history; the Savior reads with a voice of thunder and with eyes of lightning. He reads, and as he waves his hand you are cast away from hope. You shall then know what it is to be *of all men most miserable*. Ye had your pleasure; ye had your giddy hour; ye had your mirthful moments; you despised Christ, and you would not turn at his rebuke; you would not have him to reign over you; you lived his adversary; you died unreconciled, and now where are you? Now, what will ye do, ye who forget God, in that day when he shall tear you in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver you? In the name of my Lord and Master I do conjure you, fly away to Christ for refuge. "He that believeth in him shall be saved." To believe is to trust; and whosoever this morning is enabled by faith to cast himself upon Christ, need not fear to live, nor fear to die, You shall not be miserable here; you shall be thrice blessed hereafter if you trust my Lord.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
To Christ, and heal your wounds;  
This is the welcome gospel-day  
Wherein free grace abounds."

O that ye would be wise and consider your latter end! O that ye would reflect that this life is but a span, and the life to come lasts on for ever! Do not, I pray you, fling away eternity; play not the fool with such solemn things as these, but in serious earnestness lay hold upon eternal life. Look to the bleeding Savior; see there his five wounds, and his face bedewed with bloody sweat! Trust him, trust him, and you are saved. The moment that you trust him your sins are gone. His righteousness is yours; you are saved on the spot, and you shall be saved when he cometh in his kingdom to raise the dead from their graves. O that the Lord might lead us all thus to rest on Jesus, now and ever. Amen.