

A Discourse Upon True Blessedness Here and Hereafter

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"Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him." [James 1:12](#).

THE text is a Beatitude. It begins with BLESSED. We should all like to be blessed. What a more than golden word that "blessed," is! It begins the Psalms of David—there is sweetest poetry in it. It begins the sermon of the Son of David. It is the end of all holy teaching. "Happiness" is the earthly word. "Blessedness" is the heavenly one. Happiness may prove to be a superficial appearance, but blessedness is deep as the abyss. Happiness ripples like a flowing brook, but blessedness is a springing well. Happiness may be wholly human, but blessedness has the Divine element in it. Happiness is transient; blessedness is eternal! Happiness may lie in our own conception of things; blessedness is God's verdict, God's truthful statement of a man's condition! Happiness may prove but tinsel—blessedness is solid gold. Oh, to be blessed! Blessed of the Lord which made Heaven and earth!

Where are these blessed men? There are such still upon the earth, for the text says, "Blessed is the man." It speaks not of a phantom, but of a man. It treats not of an ideal man, but of one who is tried and made to endure temptation. I hear in this verse the echo of the music of many a Psalm which was chanted by the saints hundreds of years ago! James took pen in hand concerning blessed men and of the same persons, David, long before, had sung of men well known to him. There are such persons as blessed men, or the eminently practical James would not have written concerning them. It is true the curse has fallen on the world and man is born to endure toil and suffering in tilling a thorn-bearing earth and earning his bread with the sweat of his face, but for all that, there are blessed men—men so blessed that the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for them—and by their presence the desert is made to rejoice and blossom as the rose!

Where are these blessed men? Can we be of their number? Is there any way by which we can enter their ranks and become members of their glorious peerage? Blessed men! From this day on we will not rest until we are initiated into this sacred fellowship!

Great mistakes are made as to the persons who are happy and blessed. Some suppose that the wealthy must be blessed—but if their lives were written, it could be proven, without a doubt, that some of those who have had the largest possessions have had the very least of blessedness, especially when those possessions have brought with them the curses of the oppressed and the wailings of the down-trodden. It must be an awful thing to have tons of

cankered gold and silver pressing upon the soul—and burying the true life beneath the accursed load! Yes, and when wealth comes justly, it often brings such care, such burdensomeness with it, that it is well described in the Scriptures as a load of thick clay! In addition, there may be such a lack of power to enjoy it that the man may be rather cursed than blessed by his possessions. Well may we pity the man who has pictures but no sight, music but no ear, meat but no appetite, estates but no health with which to enjoy them.

Are there not thousands of such? Certainly they are not blessed by their fortunes. Moreover, riches are uncertain things. Like the hoarfrost of the morning, they are gone when the sun is up. Do but clap your hands and the birds that cover the fields fly away—and so do riches—they "take to themselves wings and fly away." How should such fleeting things bring blessedness to the fields on which they light for so short an hour? No, look not in gold mines for blessedness, for it gleams not among the nuggets. Blessedness cannot be gotten for all the treasures of the miser, or the wealth of nations.

But, surely, it is to be found in positions of eminence and power! These are greatly coveted and men will sell their souls to win them. But I suppose from what I have read of history that if I were to select the most unhappy set of men beneath the vault of Heaven, one would only have to select statesmen, emperors and kings! Surely on the day of his installation, the great man may well say, "Farewell peace!" I should certainly not search among the lofty glaciers of yonder Alps to find the flowers of happiness. All is chill and cold and tempestuous in the high places of the earth. And if one had the choice of such a place, he might accept it out of a self-denying wish to do good, but otherwise he were unwise to have it as a gift. Not the high but the holy are blessed—not those who sit with the great, but those who serve with the good are marked out by the Lord as blessed.

Nobler natures feel no greed for gold and pine for no distinction of rank. They count those blessed who know and are stored with wisdom. Surely to pry into the secrets of Nature and read the pages of philosophy must be pleasure of a lofty kind. Therefore ambitious youth burns the midnight oil—and the oil from the marrow of life as well—hoping that in search and study the mystery of blessedness will be discovered. But is it so? Does he that increases knowledge increase joy? Does he not, rather add to his sorrow? If knowledge were bliss, the devil would be in Heaven! Should we possess the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, yet these would profit us nothing in the trade of happiness. Telescopes, microscopes, air pumps and calculating machines are not the instruments of that alchemy which brings happiness out of all conditions! In another school than that of Plato we must learn in whatever state we are to be content. Blessedness is not the bookworm of the library, but a spirit which descends from above!

But some think that, surely, blessedness may be had by a combination of dignity and wisdom and riches. Put these together and a man might surely be blessed! And yet it does not seem so. I should think that no mortal that ever lived had finer opportunities than So-

lomon. He began with a blessed heritage from a father who was a man after God's own heart. He gathered riches like the sand of the sea and he had a capacious mind like the sea itself! None of that age could be thought of as his rival and, perhaps, none since have altogether equaled this many-sided man. He denied himself no luxury. He abstained from no pleasure. He tried everything that could be tried, both serious and comic.

There was nothing from which he stayed his hand. He cast everything into the crucible and he brought out of it, not gold, but ashes! "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity." This is the conclusion of Solomon's life as well as of Solomon's discourse. No, you cannot find blessedness on a throne nor in making many books, nor in seeking out many inventions, nor in enjoying all luxuries. These things all cry, "It is not in me!" Blessedness is a thing which is not discoverable beneath the moon, apart from Him who sits above this world and looks down—and by His Spirit influences human minds after the best things. Apart from Him you may have health and wealth and talent and eminence and power and dignity—and yet be written down among the most wretched of mankind!

If you want blessedness, hear Him speak who knows. That is, hear the Holy Spirit speak by the mouth of His servant James—"Blessed is the man that endures temptation." The subject for tonight shall be the blessed man in his worldly state and, secondly, the blessed man in the world to come.

I. We are going to find him first, in this present world, and consider him in this present life. Let us behold THE BLESSED IN THIS LIFE. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation."

It does seem very startling, at first sight, that the blessed man should be described in this way. Notice, it does not say, "Blessed is the man that is tempted," nor, "Blessed is the man that is beset by temptation." No. "Blessed is the man that endures temptation." That is to say, the man who bears up under it, survives it, is not led aside by it, but endures it as gold endures the fire.

But observe, first, that it does not say, "Blessed is the man who is never tempted." I am sure that word has often been ready upon our lips when we have been in the sharp fire of the enemy. We have said, "Blessed is that man who is never tried, never afflicted, never tempted. Oh when shall we get to the place where there shall be none of these trials and temptations?" But James says not, "Blessed is the man who is not tempted," but, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation."

Look, Sirs, suppose we are professing Christians tonight and, as such, think that we have genuine faith in Christ—that we have a bright hope of Heaven—that we have a pure and fervent love to God—that we have, in ourselves, received the gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit and that we are certainly the children of God? These are flattering beliefs and tend greatly to our present comfort.

But suppose none of these have been tried? It would be a very presumptuous and unwise thing for us to pronounce ourselves blessed, for when such trial shall come—and come it will to us all in life or in death—suppose all our happy signs and cheering tokens should fail us? We cannot say that we are blessed till our Graces have been tried and proven— and when they have been tried and proven and we have endured the test in God's great proof-house, then are we blessed, but not till then! Here is a man who has received a file of what looks to be bank notes and he thinks he is very rich. Have you tried to pass one of them? Have you taken one of them to a bank? No, poor fool! He does not wish to have his fine fortune tried, but he gets angry when you suggest a doubt. And yet his wealth is mere fiction! Those flimsy papers are bank notes of the Bank of Elegance and if he were to attempt to pass them, he might rather be suspected to be a thief, than be judged to be a rich man! Much faith in this world is no better than that—and he is not blessed, but blinded— that possesses it!

He is blessed who has tried his faith, who has gone to God with a promise and received an answer to his prayer. He is blessed who has had his faith tried—who, having been put into the furnace, has by that faith in God been made to walk safely amid the flaming coals and to come out unharmed. Untried faith is questionable faith. Is it faith at all? Was there ever in this world a Believer altogether without trouble, or a grain of faith which had undergone no trial?

Blessed, then, is the man that endures trial. I would not like to have everything about me untried. You would hardly like to sleep in a bed concerning which you were not sure that it might not be damp and cause your death. One would not like to buy a house that he had never seen, or a yoke of oxen that he had never tried, or even a cheese which he had not tasted. One feels like David when he put on Saul's armor. Though it was royal armor, he did not like it any the better for that, for he had never seen the go of it, nor tried how far he could move and fight in it. It fitted him a great deal too much and he could hardly find himself within its ample scope. At last he made up his mind to have none of it—he must have it off and, therefore, he cried "I cannot go with these, for I have not proven them!" He had well tried that bit of hide which made his sling, though—he knew what he could do with that and a smooth stone—and, therefore, he felt at ease with tried weapons. But as for Saul's armor—well, he had not tried it. If your religion has never been tested, you can hardly be described as "blessed." "Blessed is the man that endures temptation."

It may seem a fine thing to have a religion that you lay aside on Monday morning after having carefully brushed it. It may seem correct and proper to put your Sunday religion into a box with a sprig of lavender or something to keep away the moth. But it is an awful farce. Your godliness will come out again on Saturday evening with your clean linen and you will be very gracious on Sunday morning when you have put on your suit and your sanctity, your hat and your heavenly-mindedness. As for the week—well, you do not need

to wear your religion out too soon and, therefore, you do not use it on Monday! You have other manners for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This is a wretched comedy! O Sirs, the sooner you burn such religion, the better! You need to have a religion which is tested every day in the week and which stands you in good stead because it can endure the test! You are blessed if you have a religion which God gives, which God tries, which God sustains, which God accepts! As an uncultivated garden is no garden, so untried godliness is no godliness! A faith that will not bear strain and test is no faith! A love that cannot endure a temptation is no love to God at all! See, then, he is not blessed who is screened from temptation, but he is blessed whose faith, hope, love and every Grace will bear the trial.

In these times, we need not wish for more temptations, for they are all around us. Men who live in London need not go across the street to meet the devil. The very atmosphere of a great city is close and hot with the reek of sin. As flies in summer, so will temptations torment you, go where you may. Men of business, you need not ask for temptations—they are thick in every trade and they multiply like gnats. They swarm in the factory, the counting-house, the exchange and the shop. The Christian man in public needs not sigh for temptations—they will not be ashamed to solicit him in the open streets. This age tests the backbone of every Christian. A man had necessarily be a man at such an hour as this! We must not be dwarfs nor spiritual consumptives! We have come into the very thick of the fight and woe to that man who cannot endure temptation—but blessed is the man who can bear it even to the end!

Dear Sister in Christ, you think yourself very patient. Have you any pain? Have you endured the loss of children or husband? If not, be not too sure of your patience. But blessed are they whose patience has endured the open grave, the constant gnawing at the heart, the bitterness of poverty and the agony of an everyday struggle for bread. The men who bear affliction in a gracious manner, these are the blessed people, for they have a patience that has been tested, a faith

that has passed the ordeal, a love that has been more than a conqueror in trial! These, according to our text, are the blessed people! The Holy Spirit pronounces them such.

And they are blessed among other things for this reason—because they have endured temptation through their love to God. Read the text again, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised—"to them that endure temptation"? No, "to them that love Him." So that those who endure temptation rightly, endure it because they love God. They say to themselves, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" They cannot fall into sin because it would grieve Him who loves them so well and whom they love with all their hearts! To abstain from sin for any reason is, so far, good. But you may abstain from sin from a motive which will lend no virtue to your abstinence! Some abstain from sin from fear of men, or

from hope of gain—as the thief is honest when he sees a policeman and the beggar becomes pious when a meal is to be had at church. One sin will often kill another sin, as the miser shuns profligacy because he is too mean to spend his money riotously.

But to abstain from sin because you love God—yes, that is the thing! To cease from evil ways because the Lord Jesus Christ has loved you and given Himself for you and you have been led to put your sole trust in the merit of His precious blood—this is a genuine work of Grace! You love Him because He first loved you and then you say, "Now will I, with holy earnestness, keep myself clean from every sin and fly from everything that is not upright, true, honest, kind, good and pure. I will purge myself, by the help of God's Divine Spirit, from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit." When you endure temptation out of love to God, then you are blessed!

"Well," says one, "I do not yet see the peculiar blessedness of that." You would, dear Friend, if you had ever possessed it! I do not need, for a moment, to explain to the child of God what a blessed condition he is in who has endured temptation out of love to God—for there is, first, a main element of blessedness in the fact that it is a blessed thing to love God. I cannot see how a man can be unhappy who really loves God. If you love God, you cannot be cast into Hell because there can be no Hell in the heart that loves God! Love to God is, in itself, such a delightful emotion that before long the indulgence of it perfumes the whole mind with happiness. To love You, my God! To love You, my God! Surely if You give me no more than this I will bless You forever and ever! It is Heaven enough for such a poor creature as I am to be permitted to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul and strength!

Then there arises out of the endurance of temptation a sense of God's acceptance. The text says, "Blessed is the man that endures temptation, for when he is approved"—that is the new version—and a very correct one, too. Not so much when he is tried, but when he has been tried—when he has been put into the refining pot and has come out certified to be real unalloyed gold. When he is proven and, therefore, approved—then he shall receive the crown of life.

After the tried man has stood against temptation, God says of him "Now I know that you fear Me," as he said concerning Abraham after He had tried him. "Now I know that you fear God." This approval of God breeds a holy delight in the soul. The soul becomes conscious of the approbation of God and, I venture to say, that any man who has felt that approbation in his heart knows the beginning of Heaven! Blessed is that man who consciously enjoys his Maker's approval, who can stand up before the infinitely Holy One and say, "Although I have sinned, my Lord Jesus has washed me in His blood and the Holy Spirit has helped me to resist the temptations which once overcame me. And I know that the gracious Father approves me." This is, indeed, blessedness! I know of nothing to exceed it. Blessed is the man that steadfastly endures temptation, for the Lord Himself is well pleased with Him!

There comes over the back of this a number of things to help to make such a man blessed, for he has great thankfulness in his soul. "O God," he says, "I thank You that I have been kept while passing through those temptations." He is as glad as one who has been taken out of a burning house! I have known what it is to escape from a strong temptation without falling into it and I think that I have felt as grateful to God as a man would be who had seen a shark after him—and had been almost between its jaws and had just slipped away as he heard the monster close his mouth with a snap! I remember standing under a building which was in course of building and seeing a mass of stone fall from a great height just in front of me. What a thud it made! How narrow was my escape! How I started! But what joy filled my heart! So it is when one is delivered from temptation—from temptation which began to overpower the heart. As David said, "My feet had almost gone—my steps had well near slipped."

You remember Bunyan's description of the feelings of Christian when he had passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and was able to look back by the morning light? He was struck with awe to think that he had ever

passed through such a war as that, with an abyss on one side and a quagmire on the other. The road was haunted with sprites and hobgoblins and beset with traps and snares beyond all count—and yet he had actually come through that way in safety! When he saw what he had escaped, what could he do but fall down on his knees and bless God with all his heart that he had been protected through so great a peril? It helps to make a man blessed when his mind is filled with holy gratitude to God who has preserved him—

"Kept alive with death so near, I to God the Glory give," says the man. And he is blessed by the thankfulness which he so gladly expresses!

Besides, another feeling comes over him—that of deep humility. "Oh," he says, "what a wonder of Grace I am! However is it that I have escaped such peril? With such a base nature as mine, how have I been kept from destruction? I shall perish and fall tomorrow unless the Lord, Himself, is still my Helper." Putting his trust in God, that sense of his own nothingness, accompanied with a sense of his perfect security in God, makes him feel exceedingly happy! A little rabbit, hunted and pursued, rushes through a narrow crevice under the rock and enters the place where he has his burrow. How quiet he is when he is once there! He hears many noises, but he knows that he is quite safe—not because he is so big or so strong, but because he is so little and so weak that he has been able to hide himself away under a rock where nobody can get at him. Such a feeling is blessedness to the child of God—to be nothing, but for Christ to be everything to him—to be weak to the last degree, but for God's strength to be his everlasting security! Therefore, such a man who has been hunted by temptation and driven into the cleft of the Rock, Christ Jesus, enjoys a very singular and remarkable blessedness!

And, once more, he enjoys a fearlessness of heart. It must be an awful thing to go about the world and feel, "I fell under that temptation the other day and I would not have it known for all the world. I fell into that vile deed on such and such an occasion and if it were known, where should I be?" Poor wretch! I have heard of a toad under a harrow and I have often admired that situation without wishing to be in it—but that would be Heaven to the position of men who are conscious that they have not been true to conscience or true to God and yet have kept up a flaming profession! What poor creatures are those jackdaws who strut about in feathers which are not their own! A guilty conscience is the back door to Hell! But he that knows that, before God, he has stood though tempted and that though often assailed he has never been vanquished, can walk through the world and care for no man! The forked tongue of slander has no power with him! He has an antidote against the venom of malice. The noise and strife of this world can little distress him, for innocence walls him up against the onslaught of the enemy! He stands like a rock in the midst of the raging billows, for God has given him steadfastness of soul—and is not that blessedness?

If it is not, I cannot tell what is! Young men beginning the Christian life, pray that you may be helped to endure temptation, for in that endurance lies blessedness like a pearl within a rough oyster shell! All of you that take the name of Christ upon you, ask for Grace to stand fast in your integrity, for as the beauty of the palm is its uprightness, so is integrity the Glory of the man! Ask for power to stand against every wind and wave because you have heard Christ's Words and, by His Grace, have practiced them and are, therefore, like houses that are built upon rocks! Ask for Grace that your piety may be such as will stand every assault of the world, the flesh and the devil, for, "blessed is the man that endures temptation."

So ready are we to sin, that to prevail over one temptation is a great joy! To have overcome many temptations is a multitudinous blessedness! To have overcome them all will be an infinite Heaven! The poet Spenser seems to anticipate that we shall all be overcome if the battle lasts long enough, just as a famous politician was known to say that every man has his price. At any rate, it will be a great rapture to fight out the last conflict and conquer in it. Oh to be victorious in our last Armageddon! It will be a joy worth worlds to disprove the Spenserian stanza which I have alluded to, which may well make the most bold tremble—

"But all in vain; no fort can be so strong,
No fleshly breast can armed be so sound,
But will at last be won with battery long,
Or unawares at disadvantage found.
Nothing is sure that grows on earthly ground,
And who most trusts in arm of fleshly might
And boasts in beauty's chain not to be bound
Does soon fall in disadventurous fight

And yields his wretched neck to victors most despite." With this dark prophecy ringing in our ears, we can truly call him blessed who endures right on, and never starts aside, let the test be what it may!

Thus I have set before you what the blessed man is on earth.

II. Just a few words on WHAT THE BLESSED MAN IS TO BE, BY-AND-BY. "When he is approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love Him"

He shall receive a crown. Of course the allusion is to the Grecian games. See how the man runs! Every muscle is strained. There is not a part of his body but what is violently exercised. He tries to pass his fellows. He flies to the goal; he reaches it and then he receives a crown. A crown of laurel, or of ivy, or, perhaps, of parsley, is put upon his head. It has no value in itself. The Greeks were so little honest that a man could not have kept his crown in his house if it had been worth a penny. Strong rooms and iron safes had not, then, been dreamed of and, therefore, they gave the athletic Greek a crown of fading leaves—and yet many men threw away health and even life to gain that paltry wreath! Though it was intrinsically worthless, it had about it a meaning which made each leaf inexpressibly precious to him who labored for it and obtained it. Now, if we live through faith in Christ, by God's Grace, a life that shall be full of purity and holiness, God will give us a crown, not of laurel, nor of parsley, nor even of gold and rarest gems, but a, "crown of life that He has promised to them that love Him." Very wonderful, is it not, that God should reward our poor endeavors? Yet so He will!

Let us dwell, just for a minute, upon the figure of a crown. What did that crown mean? It meant something done—a race finished, a battle fought, a prize poem written with care and accepted by the Greek world. It recorded and rewarded something done. Oh it will be glorious, at last, for Christ to say, "Well done!" That crown which is promised us is not for talk, nor thought, nor vow, but it records something done.

It was something appreciated—appreciated by him that gave the crown. It will be no small Heaven for God, Himself, to appreciate our poor lives! We think little of them if we are gracious, but God thinks much of them because He is gracious. It is ours to humble ourselves for our imperfections, but it is God's, despite the imperfections, to see what we desire to be and what in heart we really are. It is our blessedness both now and forever to be accepted in Christ Jesus. A crown signifies something done and that something appreciated.

A crown meant reward. Now, in the Gospel system there is room for a reward, though it is not of debt, but of Grace. The child of God, like Moses, has "respect unto the recompense of the reward." He does not run to win a crown by his own merit, but he runs knowing that there will be a crown given to him according to the love and goodness of the God of Grace. It is not difficult for a child of God to hate legality and yet to expect a reward at the last. He

knows how the great Lord who saves us by His Grace does also reward us according to His Grace! God grant us, then, Brothers and Sisters, to be living so as to receive the gracious reward of a holy life.

There is a crown for me. Does it make you laugh? I think I seldom think of it without beginning to laugh. Shall you and I wear crowns? Shall it be that our poor limping will yet win the race—that our staggering struggles will yet overcome and that we shall be crowned? O you dear Christian people that live in poverty and obscurity, I have a reverence for your heads which are already anointed with Grace, for your heads that are yet to be crowned with Glory! You run— often run better than the greatest and most observed of your fellow Christians—and you shall not miss your reward! There is a crown laid up, not only for Paul, "but for all them that love our Lord's appearing." Therefore, laugh to yourselves, not with unbelief as Sarah did, but with a holy joy, as Abraham did! Shall I have a crown? Shall this aching brow be decked with a crown? Shall this forehead be decked with a tiara? O my God, will You set a coronet upon my head? Then will I gird up my loins and quicken my pace, since the crown is so sure to those who run with patience!

Now go an inch farther in the text—"A crown of life." What must that be? What is a crown of life? A crown is a dead thing. There, put it away, put it away! Somebody may steal it if they think it worth the snatching, but, after all, it is a poor lifeless circlet! A crown is made of a somewhat rare earth which men call gold, a substance yellow and cold which is hammered and sold to break hearts and buy immunity for vice. Poor stuff! In crowns there are also jewels. Pebbles, or perhaps, consolidated gases which flash and blaze in a cold joyless light of their own. A crown is a dead hard weight. But if we serve the Lord aright, we are to have "a crown of life." What is life? Well, I thought to myself, this morning, as I

was preaching and the multitude were listening so eagerly, "This is life." It was no dead work to preach! Sometimes one preaches and you are like a yacht out at sea without a capful of wind—and there you lie dead, becalmed, motionless. Many a sermon resembles a dead ship on a dead sea! But when the breeze is up and you fly before it merrily, then you say, "This is life." This kind of thing comes to us in our spiritual work, as well as in our everyday course.

Life does not mean existence. Why, they say that when God promises eternal life to Christians, it means that they shall eternally exist. They always must eternally exist because God has made their souls immortal—but there is no blessing in eternal existence! On the contrary, it may curdle into a curse. The blessing is in eternally living—and what is living? It is not mere existing! In fact, existence, though it is essential to life, does not enter into the meaning of life, nor so much as come near it! To live means to be in health, to be in vigor, to be in force, to be in joy, to be in right and fit condition, to have one's whole self in order and to enjoy all that surrounds you with all that is within you. God will give to all His people, by-and-by, such a crown of life! There shall be no sickness—the inhabitant shall no more

say, "I am sick." There shall be no weakness—even our body shall be raised with power. There shall be no dullness—we shall be forever fresh and young—led to living fountains of water!

There shall be no emptiness, no sense of depletion, nor of need—we shall be forever filled with all the fullness of God. There shall be no pain, no misery—but a plenitude of enjoyment at His right hand where there are pleasures forevermore. We shall possess and enjoy all that manhood can desire. All that you can ask or think shall be yours and much more than that—inconceivable enjoyment, bliss, rapture and ecstasy—all shall be bestowed upon you by the unstinted hand of boundless love. Life shall crown all! All your life shall be crowned and all the crown shall be life! "A crown of life."

Does it not mean, however, as well—is it not a sort of Hebraism for a living crown? The crown they gave in the Olympic games soon faded. That bit of parsley, or olive, or laurel was soon turned into faded leaves. But you shall have a living crown, that is to say, it shall never be taken from you, nor you from it. When yon sun grows pale with weariness; when his bright eye grows dim with age; when yonder moon shall redden into blood as her brightness is over shaded— then shall your crown be as resplendent as ever! When time, itself, shall cease to be and visible things shall die and death, itself, shall be swallowed up, yet you shall not cease to be blessed, for you shall receive a living crown—a crown of everlasting life which cannot know an end!

What is more, it shall be a living crown. The best thing in this world grows stale. If a man could have all the wealth and all the art treasures of this world, he would soon grow tired of it. Did you ever go to see any exhibition without, at last, feeling, "Well, I have had enough of this. I would not care to come here every day"? But the crown of life will be just as fresh after myriads and myriads of ages as on the first day of your celestial coronation! There was a dear Sister of ours, whom the most of us will never forget, Mrs. Bartlett. Blessed among women was that mother in Israel! She has been 10 years in Heaven, today! Did you remember that? I should like to hear her story of her first 10 years in Paradise. What a chapter to read if she could write it and send it down to us! I will guarantee you that she has not known a weary moment! She has not known an instant in which her Lord has ceased to be, to her, a fullness of delight! I believe that she is beginning Heaven now—it is still the New Jerusalem to her! She is just at the commencement of her bliss!

Brothers and Sisters, we shall soon be with her! Our own beginnings of Glory are drawing near. Project yourselves through a million years till all that is prophesied shall be fulfilled and there you are, sitting among the angels. Listen! It is a new song they are singing and you are evidently delighted with the new melody. Did you hear those harps? They strike out novel music. You have heard it long, but it is quite new to you. Look! Look at the brightness of the seraphs! They shine as burningly as if their glow had only but kindled

yesterday! "But as for myself," says a bright spirit, clothed upon with his resurrection body, "it is a million years since I was down on earth and sinned—and washed my robes in the blood of the Lamb—and I have needed no other washing! Come, Brother, let us sing together, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,' for we have washed our robes and made them white in His precious blood and, therefore, are we before the Throne of God!" They are always at their beginnings in Glory, for Christ is always their Alpha. They have always reached the fullness of their Glory, for He is their Omega! O happy saints, that wear an ever living crown!

But listen once more. Did you ever try to indulge a speculation as to what the crown of life shall be? I mean this— you have a bulb in your hand of an unknown plant. I have had several, lately, from Central Africa. The missionary said, "Put it in your hothouse" and I did. It did not look to me worth half a farthing—it was an uncomely root. But it has

developed large green leaves! It is growing rapidly and "it does not yet appear what it shall be." I am speculating upon the color of the flowers and the form of the fruit. I guess, by the delicate velvetiness of its leaves, that it is going to turn out something very remarkable, but I cannot prophesy what it will be. Man, by nature, is that uncomely bulb. When he dies, you know what a poor dried-up bulb he seems to those who lay him in his coffin. Yet even here, when God gives spiritual life, what a beautiful thing the Christian is! There is an amazing comeliness about the heavenly life even here below—yet we do not know what it is going to be. We know what spiritual life is, but we cannot guess what the flower of that life will be. Whatever it is to be, God will give that Glory to those who, by His Grace, endure temptation because they love Him.

You gentlemen who believe in evolution, as I do not, tell us what a man will come to when God has sanctified him fully, by His Grace, and he has passed through ages of blessedness. What will he be when his life develops into the crown of life? We make poor guesswork of it. But I will tell you what I mean to do. I pray you follow me therein. I mean to go and see what this crown of life is like. We do not know what we shall be, but we have heard a soft whisper say, "When He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." Come, let us go to Jesus! First, let us hasten away to His Cross and unitedly look up, and say, "We trust You, Jesus." Then, from His Cross let us come down and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, and say, "Jesus, we will follow You." Then, let us go with Him into the thick throng of temptation, where Satan shall try us with wealth and honor, or with necessities even unto hunger, as he tried our Lord. And there let us stand and say, "We will wrestle with temptation, O Lord Jesus, even as You did. O Lord, when we have done this, we will die with You! And if You come not soon, we will lie asleep in You! And when You say, 'Awake,' we will answer, 'Here we are. We will live with You forever and forever!'"

And our joy shall be that crown of life which the Lord has promised of His own free, rich, Sovereign Grace to them that love Him! May every person in this congregation wear

that crown! May you soldiers in your red coats over yonder win this crown and wear it forever! May you all be more than conquerors, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen!