

Messages to Sinners and Saints

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"For thus says the Lord GOOD, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. But you would not." [Isaiah 30:15](#).

THIS message related to the invasion of the land of Judah by Sennacherib. The approach of the enormous hosts of the Assyrian king put almost the whole nation into a state of great alarm. They wanted to make an immediate alliance with the king of Egypt and to ask that mighty monarch to send his forces to drive back the army of Sennacherib. But Isaiah the Prophet was sent to warn them of the folly and sin of such an alliance and to tell them that their strength was to sit still. They were to confide alone in the Most High and not to look for any other helper, but to cast themselves upon the faithfulness of the God who had never failed them. If they did so, they would suffer no harm—but just in proportion as they turned away from the unseen Jehovah and began to rely upon an army of flesh—they would be sure to find trouble.

We might have supposed that these people would have gladly accepted the very cheering message. Surely it was a good thing for them not to have to go to war with the Assyrians and not to need to despoil themselves and their Temple in order to send gold to the king of Egypt, but simply to rest in God who had promised to be a wall of fire round about them and the Glory in the midst of them. But, Brothers and Sisters, faith is an exotic in any heart where it is made to flourish—it does not grow there by nature—it must be planted by Grace. We are, all of us, idolaters by nature. We need something to look at in our worship even though God has forbidden it to us in the strongest terms. And as to our life, we are always pining for the arm of flesh, needing to rely upon something tangible and visible. We cannot, except as God's Grace enables us to do so, cast ourselves absolutely upon the unseen and trust ourselves to a God whose way we cannot trace! Yet, when His gracious Spirit teaches us this sacred art, it is well with us. The soul is elevated above gross materialism, above selfishness and self-confidence, above fear, alarm and trepidation—and brought into a condition of strength, power and peace. This is what the text tells us—that in returning and rest we shall be saved, and in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! As it was with God's ancient people in the days of Sennacherib, so is it with us. This principle holds good all along—the faith that relies upon God will bring to us both salvation and strength.

I purpose to take my text out of its context and to address two different classes of hearers, using one of the sentences of my text as a message concerning the salvation of sinners. And using another sentence as a message concerning the strength of saints.

I. First, then, here is A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE SALVATION OF SINNERS—"In returning and rest shall you be saved."

Dealing, first, with the matter of returning to God, let me ask you a few questions. Have you played the prodigal? Have you got far away from your father's house. Have your joyous days all ended? Is your money all spent? Is your strength all but gone? Have your so-called "friends" forsaken you? Are you brought very low? Is there a mighty famine in the land and have you begun to be in need? There is but one thing for you to do—and that is to return. There is nothing more required of you than that you should return to God and rest in Him. Returning, however, is your first business. I would that you would say, as the prodigal in his hunger said, "I will arise and go to my father." You will never get right till you get back to God. You cannot do without the God who made you. You may try to do so as much as you will, but a creature apart from the Creator is nothing but vanity, a man apart from his Maker is in utter misery!

You never will rest—it is impossible that you should do so—till you rest on the Rock of Ages, you will be continually tossed about and disquieted until you come there.

Possibly you say to me, "But how am I to return? How can I come back to God?" There is a way made for you. He has filled up the valleys and cut down the mountains! Christ is the way of approach to the Father and the only way, for no man comes to the Father but by Him. And along that way innumerable pilgrims have traveled and they have reached God through Jesus Christ. Behold before you the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream—the foot rests just where you are, but its top reaches to the Covenant God in Heaven! It is by the way of the Person, work and merits of the Incarnate Son of God that you must climb into His Father's bosom! By the way of His shameful Cross, by the way of His death and burial, and Resurrection, you must come back to God. Again I remind you that this is the only way! There is no other entrance to Heaven and to the heart of God!

"I know that," says one, "yet I still feel as if I could not return." Why not? "My sin lies heavy upon me. I would that I could shake it off and then return." Ah, my Friend, that is not the way to return to God! If you were to come back to God having somehow got rid of your sin by your own efforts, you would come self-righteously and boastfully—but the right way to get back to Him is the way the prodigal took when the first words he uttered were these, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Come back to God with a full confession of your sin! Whisper into His august but condescending ear the sad story of the many transgressions of the days that are past—sins against His Law, sins against His Gospel, sins against the Light of God, sins of ignorance, sins against Him, against His Son and sins against His Spirit. Come back to God,

laden with guilt, full of woe and confess all before Him, through Jesus Christ, His Son—and forgiveness shall be yours, for it is written in His Word, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy."

"Yes," says one, "but that is my difficulty, for I observe that I am to forsake my sin as well as to confess it." It is truly so, my Hearer. If you will come back to God through Jesus Christ, who is the only way to the Father, He will enable you to forsake your sin. Before our Savior's birth, the angel said to Joseph, "You shall call His name, Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." The salvation which Jesus gives is salvation from unbelief, salvation from a seared conscience, salvation from pride, from lust, from malice, from envy, from evil of every kind! Which of your sins do you wish to keep? Is there one so fair that you have the desire to spare it? Come, Brother, let us take these sins of yours, one by one, and let us ask the Lord to lend us the sword of Divine Justice that we may slay them and hang them up before the Lord, for they are accursed things! Be not tender of heart concerning any one of them, even though, like another Agag, it comes to you delicately and says, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." Put the sword to the throat of every sin! Though each one should be like a prince, yet slay it and hang it up upon the Cross. There stands the gallows whereon they hanged your Lord, so hang up the traitor sins there and let them all die. I think I hear you say, with good Dr.

Watts—

"'Twas for my sins my dearest
Lord hung on the cursed tree,
And groaned away a dying life
For thee, my Soul, for thee!
Oh, how I hate those lusts of nine
That crucified my God!
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die—
My heart has so decreed!
Nor will I spare the guilty things
That made my Savior bleed."

Remember that if you do not kill them, they will kill you! Returning to God includes turning from sin. Do you think that the prodigal, when he came back to his father, brought his dice in one hand and some other implement of sin in the other? He may come foul with the filth of the wine. He may come wretched through hunger and famine. But he must leave his riotous living, his wine-cup, his debauchery in the far country—these cannot be tolerated in his father's house!

Neither can he receive the kiss of forgiveness till he has said, "Father, I have sinned." And the fact that he stands before his father, separated from his former sins, proves that he has forsaken them!

"Well," says one, "I have yet another difficulty. I have confessed my sin to God and I have resolved, by His Grace, to forsake it. But how can I get rid of the guilt of my past sin?" I will tell that directly, but, for the present, my text says, "Return." In returning to God you shall be saved and you may return to Him, now, by simply trusting Him. Come, Man, the cause of all your sin is that you do not trust Him! If you did trust Him, you would obey Him and you would prove that happiness comes through obedience to Him! You did not believe that this was true and, therefore, you have gone away into disobedience under the mistaken notion that you could find greater happiness. But even now, if you will believe, all things are possible unto you if you will do God the bare justice of believing that in this quarrel between you and Him, He is right and you are wrong! If you will capitulate to Him, yielding up your weapons of rebellion and say, "'Tis all ended, good Lord. I do believe that You are just, and true, and gracious. I know not how You can be just and yet pardon me, but, anyhow, I come to You and I rest myself upon You—I dare not be Your adversary any longer. Should You give me Heaven, itself, I could not be content with it unless I were reconciled to You, my God, my Creator, my Preserver, my Father, my All-in-All. My heart longs to come to You. I cannot rest till I am with You. I seek You with my whole soul." There lies the way of salvation! No, dear Heart, if what I have been saying for you is really true, your salvation is already assured, for he who longs after God is no more God's adversary! God's Grace has already been operating upon you and it is even now drawing you to Him—or else those ardent pangs of strong desire would never possess your soul.

Now turning to the second half of this portion of my text, let me speak of resting in the Lord, as well as returning to Him, for His declaration is, "In returning and rest shall you be saved." What you need, in returning to God, is to rest in Him. Here is the answer to the question which we asked just now concerning your sin. "Listen," says God, "do not let your past sin keep you back from Me, for I laid My sin upon the shoulders of My Son. I allowed Him to be scourged as though He had been the guilty one. I gave Him up to the executioners as though He had been a malefactor. I even drew My own sword from its scabbard and smote My well-beloved Son with it. While He was bearing your sin, I left Him alone till He cried, in His anguish, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' I gave Him up to endure the bitter pangs of death that He might bear the wrath that was due to you. Now, then, as He has borne the punishment for all your sin, come unto Me and rest in Me.

My dear Hearers, I shall be very unhappy if while I am preaching to you, some of you are not following me and doing just what I am urging you to do. I am hoping that while I am speaking many of you are returning to your God, drawn by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. If you are returning to Him and are still troubled by the remembrance of

your past sin, rest in what He has done on behalf of just such sinners as you are! He has set forth Christ to be a Propitiation for sin. Therefore, rest in Him. Say, however timidly you may utter the words, "I do trust alone to the atoning Sacrifice of Jesus, and for all my guilt I rest my soul on Him." This is how you will be saved—not by your works, not by your weeping, not even by your praying, but by thus resting on the Lord! It is true that you will work and you will weep. And you will pray and holy deeds will, I trust, be abundant in your life. But, in order to be saved you have simply to come to Jesus and to rest on Him! Can you not do that? If you cannot, I will tell you why. It is not because you are too weak, but because you are too strong! It is strength that keeps a man from resting! It is weariness that makes him recline. The more faint and feeble he is, the more readily does he lean upon another. It is your strength that will destroy you—it is your supposed goodness that will ruin you—it is your own works that will be your destruction! Come now, and lean wholly and alone upon that almighty Savior whose heart was pierced for you, and then it shall be well with you! After you are saved, you will labor for the Lord with a mighty God-given force, but just now, return to the Lord and rest in Him, for "in returning and rest shall you be saved."

"Yes, but my present state is so bad," says one, "I am not so much troubled over my past sin, because I believe that God has forgiven it—but I grieve over my present hardness of heart and distance from God." Come along, my Brother, come speak to the Lord, for your heart will never get any softer through staying away from Him! How many hundreds of times have I said from the pulpit that if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, come to Him with a broken heart! If you cannot come as you should, come anyway that you can, in order that you may be taught to come as you ought! It is quite true that your condition is bad, but then Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Those open sores and bleeding wounds of yours only prove that you need the care and skill of a wise physician. Do not stay away from Him till you are cured, but come to Him to be cured, and come to Him now! And when you do come to Jesus, just leave your case—past, present and future—in His hands. Rest on Him! Say, "I believe that as He is able to forgive my past sin, so is He able to remove my present hardness of heart—to take away the heart of stone out of my flesh and to give me a heart of flesh."

"It is the future that troubles me," says another. "I am anxious to return to the Lord and to rest in Him, but I am afraid that I shall sin in days to come. I cannot feel sure that I shall not go back to my old life, even if I try to leave it." It is a good thing, my Friend, when you realize that you can no longer trust in yourself—and that is the very reason why you should put your trust in One who can never fail you! Therefore, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and rest in Him concerning the future, as well as the past and the present. Did you never hear those words that Paul wrote to Timothy, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day?" This is

what you have to do, then—commit yourself to Christ for all the future, with all its temptation and its trials, its sorrows and its sins—and rest there.

Here is salvation for the past, the present and the future! Here is complete salvation, and the way to get it is to return to God and rest in Him! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would graciously lead many of you to do this! I feel that I must keep on preaching the Gospel to you very simply. God forbid that I should ever try to bring before you any other theme, or even seek for goodly words in which to tell forth that theme! No, I feel that I must keep on telling you—

"The old, old story of Jesus and His love." After this morning's service, I looked upon the corpse of a beloved friend who was with us a little while ago, who died yesterday afternoon. As I knelt by his bed, with his mourning wife and brother, I could not help feeling that there was a loud call to me, from those silent lips, to keep on preaching Christ and nothing else but Christ as long as I live! My friend, who has been thus suddenly called Home, was in the very prime of life and his death has quite stunned me. As I gazed at him, I could hardly believe that his lips were really silent and that his eyes would never be opened any more in this world. If this summons had come for any of you who have not believed in Jesus, it would have been a still more bitter sorrow for us to know that you were dead in trespasses and sins when you were taken from us—and so must perish forever and ever. Now, Soul, will you have Christ as your Savior, or will you not have Him? If this were a thing which required hard tugging and toiling, it would be well worth the effort. But when the Gospel message is simply, "Believe and live," and when Christ is willing, if you will only trust Him, to give you a force with which you shall be able to shape a new and nobler life—a Divine Power by which you shall rise superior to sin and be, in His good time, made like unto Himself, will you refuse these great blessings? Will you despise the heavenly banquet and stay outside and starve? Then, if so, your blood will be upon your own head! But may God, in His Infinite mercy, prevent you from that which would be spiritual suicide and save you, by His Grace—and He shall have the praise for it world without end.

I have read of a great man who was once taken around the French galleys. He was an ambassador from a foreign country and the French king wished to do him honor, so he told him that when he went to the galleys, he might set free any one of the convicts whom he pleased. So the ambassador took the following method of finding out to whom he would give this free pardon. He began by asking the first man, "How came you here?" The man said that he had done wrong, but that he had been entirely led into it by other people and they were to blame more than he was. So the ambassador went on to another man, who said that he was perfectly innocent. He had never committed any crime at all, but he had been condemned through perjured witnesses and so on. The ambassador found quite a number of "innocent" men of that sort, but, at last, he came to a man who frankly confessed that he deserved to be there. What had he done? Well, he had committed such crimes that he was

ashamed to mention them. But, in answer to many questions, he did mention them and he said, "I very richly deserve all that I have to suffer here, and I think myself happy that I was not condemned to die, for I well deserved it." "Well," said the ambassador, "you are evidently too bad a fellow to be here with all these 'innocent' men, so I shall give you a free pardon." He had the right to give it to whomever he pleased and he made his choice in that way. And when the Lord, who has the right to give pardon to whom He pleases, gives it to anybody, if there is any choice, it generally is given to the man who feels that he does not deserve it, but admits that he deserves the wrath of God. "Ah," says the Lord, "you are the man who shall receive the free pardon which you admit that you do not deserve."

II. Now I want, for a little while, to speak to God's people and to give them THE MESSAGE OF THE TEXT TO THE CHILDREN OF GOD—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." O Beloved, what a blessed message is this!

This is true concerning all the trials and troubles of this mortal life—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength! I will suppose that you are passing through some business trouble. There are many tremors in the commercial world just now. Perhaps they are causing some of you to shake and tremble. But if so, be not too easily carried away by secondary matters—be not either excited or depressed by them. Sit loosely by all worldly things, but take a firm grip of the unseen God! You will get no good by fretting, worrying and hurrying. Be calm and quiet, for all will yet be well with you if you are the Lord's children! Perhaps your trial takes the form of personal sickness. If so, nothing can be better for you than quietness and confidence. The doctor will tell you that you will make a good patient if he can keep your mind quiet and restful. All the worrying in the world will not make you well, though worrying will help to keep you ill. You will be ill just as long as God appoints, but if anything could help to heal you, it would be quietness and confidence of heart. Have you lost a friend? Is there a great sorrow at home? Have you, in the cemetery, some loved one lying in a newly-made grave? Well, my Brother, or my Sister, you cannot bring the dear one back and you ought not to wish to do so! It is wise to submit to the inevitable. It is gracious to bow to the will of your ever-gracious God. You cannot do anything that will be so helpful to your own sorrowing spirit as to exercise quietness and confidence. It will, indeed, be your strength.

Have you what I think is a sorrow fully equal to that of bereavement? Have you a loved one who daily suffers? Have you one who seems, week after week, to be lying upon the brink of the grave? Is that the kind of living cross that you have to carry? Well, Brother, it is no use fretting over it and it can do you no good to rebel against it. Let us not only submit to the will of the Lord, but let us ask Him to grant us Grace to acquiesce in it, for in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength. We often want to do too much and we often really do too much—and so we spoil everything! We fret and we worry, but nothing good ever comes of all our fretting and worrying. But if we would learn to wait upon the Lord, we

would renew our strength—we would mount up with wings as eagles! We would run and not be weary! We would walk and not faint. I am addressing God's tried children just now and whatever their condition may be, I press the message of the text upon their most earnest consideration.

Fretting is weakening. Whoever gathered an atom of strength by fretting and fuming, plotting and planning, or doing this and that in haste and confusion? You must have noticed, in reading the Book of Genesis, what a great descent there was from Abraham to Jacob. What a grand man Abraham was! He was every inch a king—no, kings were but dwarfs in comparison with the Patriarch who was so great because He believed God! But look at Jacob—a pettifogging, bargaining man, constantly cheating or being cheated! Jacob might be regarded by some people as by far the better man of business—such a keen, shrewd man. Yes, he was a cunning man and very crafty, but Abraham had that kind of wisdom which is better than craft and cunning! He was so trustful that he never thought of chaffering and bargaining with his God as Jacob did. Quiet majesty is the characteristic of the man of faith, just as unquiet weakness is the characteristic of the unbeliever. May God make you strong, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by taking from you the fret and the worry in which you have too long indulged—and by giving to you the quietness and confidence which shall be your strength for the future!

Moreover, fretting and worrying distract us, but quietness and confidence help us in many an emergency. I have known a merchant who was losing money, feel very agitated and restless. The perspiration was upon his brow and if he had gone on much longer in that fashion, he would have lost a great deal more money. But I have known that same man pull up in an instant, slip aside into some quiet corner, breathe a brief, earnest prayer to God and then go back to his post feeling "I am ready for any of you"—cool, calm, quiet. While he was forgetting his God, he was distracted, and all about him were his masters, but when he had told the Lord about his troubles, he came back, not self-reliant, but God-reliant, which is a very different thing and a much better thing! There he was, cool, calm, with all his wits about him, ready to meet those who, a little while before, would have been more than a match for him. Trust in God, Beloved, for faith in Him will keep your vision clear and your judgment sound. Trust in God and then, in the day of stern conflict, there shall be no man's arms that shall be as strong as yours. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Besides, this quietness and confidence often prevent us from wasting our strength in efforts which might end in failure. Oh, the fussy efforts many of us have made! I know that I have and I will make the confession. I have had various matters to put right and I have tried, and tried, and tried, but all my trying has only made them get worse and worse. They are like our good Sister's thread that was in a tangle, the other day, and she was in such haste to get it disentangled that she got it into a mass of knots that nobody in this world could

untie! But another time when there was a tangle, she just took it calmly and quietly—and slipped this thread through here—and that thread through there and it was all unsnarled very speedily! Her quietness helped her to see the way out of the difficulty! But we are often in such a hurry to get things done that it takes us three times as long to undo the mischief that we worked in our haste as it would have taken us if we had, in the first place, asked God to help us to do the thing properly!

I know that the Grace of God is needed to bring us into this state of quietness and confidence, but, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, when you are brought into it, I pray you to keep in it and to walk so close to God as never to lose the consciousness of it. I always admire the spirit which is characteristic of the Society of Friends. As a general rule, the spirit of the Quaker is calm, quiet, deliberate. That kind of spirit is not absolutely perfect. I can see something that is lacking from it. Still, that sort of spirit is a long way ahead of that which is manifested by some of my friends whom I might easily name. I wish that we all had more of that spirit—calm, quiet, self-possessed or, rather, God-possessed. I believe that is the best spirit for preachers to have. We can do most by way of moving others when we ourselves are firmly fixed upon a solid base. You need not fluster yourself, young man, in the way that you often do. You will not save souls by stamping your foot, thumping your Bible and shouting at the top of your voice. From the very bottom of your heart, in an earnest Spirit, tell your hearers something that is worth their hearing and pray God to put His blessing upon it! You will find, even in preaching, that in confidence and quietness shall be your strength. Thunder is not lightning and you may make a great noise and yet not do much good. But if you calmly, yet earnestly, proclaim the Truth of God, and with sober sense press it upon men's consciences, you may reasonably hope that God will send a blessing upon your message.

I believe that the rule laid down in our text applies not only to the trials and troubles of life, but that it holds good with regard to many other matters. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" when you are involved in discussion and meet with opposition. Some of us are often obliged to bring forth arguments in favor of what we believe to be the Truth of God—and there is one thing at which I always aim when I take part in a discussion—and that is to never let my opponent cause me to lose my temper. I know that in proportion as I get excited and angry, I am losing strength. I must seek to overcome my adversary by the power of the Truth of God, but, let him say what he will, I must not let him make me feel annoyed. For if he does, then to that extent he has conquered me. You may make this a rule in all your conversations with the ungodly. If you are a Christian woman and your husband is unconverted, when he speaks to you in angry tones, do not answer him in the same style, but remember that "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." If sometimes his words seem to stagger you and you fear that you will fall, clutch at this precious Truth—lay hold of Christ, rely upon the almighty Grace of God—but do not reply. Be quiet. You know

the old proverb about "a still tongue." I will turn it around, for I am not sure that "a still tongue makes a wise head," but I am quite sure that a wise head makes a still tongue, especially in family masters! You Christian wives and Christian husbands may do a heap of mischief if, as you think, you get angry for Christ's sake. It will be far better if, for Christ's sake, you bear quietly and calmly all that you have to endure! You should also do this for the sake of the one who vexes you, for how do you know, O wife, but that you may be the means of saving your unbelieving husband, and that you, O husband, may be the means of bringing to Christ your unbelieving wife by Christian quietness like that which Christ Himself manifested when He was upon the earth?

There is a woman here—I do not know just where she is, but she is here—and her husband has complained to me that she not only comes here twice on the Sabbath, but that she is also here at all the weeknight services, neglecting her husband and family and home duties as no Christian woman ought to do. "Oh," says someone, "I wonder who that woman is?" Well, there may be more than one to whom that description applies, and if the cap fits you, I hope you will wear it. But I beg you not to let your Christianity become a needless cause of offense to others. Do try to so adapt your mode of life to those who are around you that no unconverted person shall be able to truly say, "My life is made utterly miserable because my wife is a Christian," or, "because my husband is a Christian." Try to make your husband twice as happy as he would be with an unconverted partner and then, after a while, he will be obliged to say, "My wife is a strange

woman to be so fond of going to listen to preaching, but, bless her, she does make our home a happy one! Nobody else would ever look after the children as she does." If you are a Christian husband, you may win your wife. If you are a Christian father, you may win your child. Or if you are a Christian child, you may win your father by that quietness and consistency of behavior which shall tell in the long run. "In quietness and in confidence"—not by bitterness of speech, not by "nagging" and wrangling—but "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Lastly, in all Christian labor, and in all Christian conflict, quietness and confidence will be our strength. When we go forth seeking to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, let us not go as if we were poachers creeping on the sly on somebody else's ground to steal his game. No, my Friends, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," and when God calls us to go anywhere for Him, let us not go as if we were trespassers, for every part of the earth belongs to Christ! When you go to that lodging house to preach or speak to the residents, do not go as if you had to ask leave to live, but deliver your message courageously, as becomes a man who is sent to be an ambassador for Christ! As for that ungodly man whom you heard swear the other day, speak to him when a notable opportunity presents itself—not intrusively, but modestly, yet not slavishly as though you begged his pardon for talking to him in God's name. We must take high ground here—we who love the Lord and whom He sends forth

on His missions of mercy—as He does send forth everyone of us who has heard the Gospel call, for He has said, "Let Him that hears say, Come." Go then, and say to the people, "Come to Jesus" and, being sent to them by Christ, who is Lord of All, do not approach them on bended knee!

Many years ago, the Emperor of China insisted that all ambassadors who approached his majesty should crouch on the ground before him. One of our admirers happened to have a little business with him which would require a few gunboats in order to settle it. And when he had an interview with the Emperor, he told him that an Englishman would not crouch down before him. So, when you go into the world—you young men, especially—do not go sneaking into the shop as though you were ashamed of your religion. If anybody has cause to be ashamed, it is the man who has not any religion! Make him feel that it is so, or, at any rate, do not let him make you feel that you have any reason to be ashamed that you are a Christian! If you were the son of a lord, I do not suppose that you would be anxious to conceal your pedigree and afraid to have it known. So, if you are a child of God, do not wish to conceal that blessed fact. You need not be ostentatious in displaying your religion, but, at the same time, do not be slavishly afraid to confess that Christ is your Lord and Savior! Speak out for God with a holy boldness, yet with due humility of spirit giving to Him all the glory for the Grace which He has bestowed upon you!

Life's labor will soon be over and life's warfare, too. In due season we shall die unless our Lord shall first return. The appointed hour for each of us is drawing near—what shall we do then? Why, then, Beloved, trusting in Jesus, quietness and confidence will still be our strength! We shall not send our friends running to fetch a "priest" to perform some mysterious ceremony over us. Christ is all we need and as we have Him, we can die any day with perfect serenity! I love to see a Christian die a calm serene death. The idea of Bengel, the expositor, the author of "The Gnomon," concerning death, always strikes me as being very beautiful. He said, "I do not think there ought to be any scare-making about death. We ought to so live and to so die daily, that when death comes, it will be only a part of life—not a flourish of trumpets at the finish, but just a natural closing of the whole scene." He also said, "I should like to die just as I might retire from this room when, being engaged with company, a message is brought to me saying that I am needed and I go out quietly and say nothing about it—and my friends presently discover that I have gone." That was precisely how he died. Finishing the proof sheets of the last page that he wrote of his exposition, he was suddenly gone from earth and present with the Lord whom he loved. Oh, blessed way of dying!

I have often told you what my dear old grandfather said, not long before he died. My uncle James began quoting to him that hymn by Dr. Watts—

"Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands, My Lord, my hope, my trust"

"Ah, James!" he said, "that verse won't do for me now, for the earth is not firm at all! I find it slipping away from beneath my feet. And now that I am about to depart and to meet

my God, I need something firmer than the earth to rest upon. Yes, James," he added, "I like the good old doctor better when he says—

"Firm as His Throne His promise stands,

And He can well secure

What I've committed to His hands, Till the decisive hour."

"That is it, James," he said, "there you have Divine Sovereignty and Sovereign Grace! That kind of doctrine will do to rest your soul upon, my son, both in life and in death." Calmly uttering such words as those, full of restful confidence in the faithful, Immutable God he had so long served, he closed his eyes and went Home, like a laboring man does when his day's work is done—just as you and I, Beloved, will soon go home. I do not know how long we may remain here—some of you may go very soon, and so may I—it does not much matter when we do go so long as we are ready. When I said, the other day, "So-and-So has gone Home," a dear old friend said to me, "Where could he go better?" Ah, just so! Where could he go better than go Home to his father and his God? Well, I trust that in those last days we shall neither fret, nor worry, nor trouble, nor question, nor doubt, nor fear—but in quietness and confidence shall be our strength! The Lord grant that it may be so, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.