

Lewis H. Schuh

Funeral Sermons by Lutheran Divines



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Funeral Sermons By Lutheran Divines

Collected and Edited by Rev. Lewis
Herman Schuh, Ph. D.

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Occasion: For a child

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce these authors to a new generation of those seeking spiritual truth.

Included in this volume are sermons by:

Bauslin, David Henry

Brenner, William

Clausen, F. B.

Dannecker, H. P.

Gohdes, Conrad B.

Gongoware, G. J.

Harley, William

Hartmann, M. K.

Hoppe, W

Kildahl, John N.

Kuhlman, J. H.

Lenski, Richard C. H.

Long, Simon Peter

Rygh, G.

Schillinger, J. W.

Schneider, J. H.

Schramm, W. E.

Schuh, Henry Jacob

Schuh, Lewis Henry

Sittler, J.

Solberk, O. K.

Stienhaeuser, F. W.

Stump, Joseph

Tressel, Walter E.

Troutman, G. J.

Walter, M. R.

Zeilinger, G. J

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Part One

1. God's Will For Our Little Ones By Rev. Prof. R. C. H. Lenski, D. D.

“Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” – Matt. 18:14.

Occasion: For an Unbaptized Child¹

DEAR PARENTS AND FRIENDS:

Our life and light is God's precious Word. This guides and keeps us in days that are fair, this comforts and supports us in days that are dark. When bereavement and grief appear, we seek out God's Word. When perplexing questions make this grief harder to bear, we the more earnestly scan the sacred pages. So now.

This little babe, born but a few days ago, has already been stricken with death. Unexpectedly, in a way no one thought, the calamity befell. That in itself is grief enough. But for your Christian hearts there is a pang especially bitter in that your little one expired without the blessing of holy Baptism. Before you could carry out this your sacred duty, the little spark of life went, and you are wounded now with what I may call a double blow.

There are some, of course, who would pass lightly over the absence of the holy sacrament, because they think it a mere ordinance or outward ceremony, conveying no spiritual benefit to a little babe. The comfort they would offer is one that we could not accept, because it is hollow and false.

Baptism is and remains God's saving ordinance, and this especially for our little ones. It is wrong to reduce this sacrament to a lower level. What we must do now is not to alter any of God's assurances and promises but to search God's Word in order to find what real comfort and hope is there offered us to meet our painful need.

Thank God there is such comfort also for you who sadly mourn today. Our Lord Jesus himself has spoken with some fullness about little children, especially on the occasion when he set a little child in the midst of his disciples and gave them the instruction they needed so much, and we as much as they. Let me direct your attention especially to his declaration concerning

(GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LITTLE ONES)

"It is not the will of your Father which is heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

They are mistaken who think that God has disregarded babes and little ones in his great plan of salvation. We are all conceived and born in sin, and we all, from the first moment of our lives to the last, need salvation and the means whereby it is applied. And lest any man here harbor a doubt, the Lord explicitly states, that our Father in heaven does not want our babes to perish, but to have everlasting life.

We must note that this divine purpose and will lies back of the special provision which God has made for the salvation of our children. Because he willed to save them he sent his Son also for them. Not a single babe is born on earth, but what Christ lived and died also for it. Because the Father willed our children's salvation he also sent his Holy Spirit for them, and provided a means by which this Spirit might enter their hearts and give them the new birth, the adoption of children of God, and the inheritance of life eternal. This means is Baptism in the name of the Triune God. Babes cannot be taught, for their little minds are still undeveloped; but they can receive the washing of regeneration through the Holy Ghost, which saves them just as effectually as the preaching and teaching of the Word saves grown men and women. And so indeed every babe that is born again of water and the Spirit enters Christ's spiritual Kingdom, is the heavenly Father's child and heir. Because of this purpose and will of our God our one great duty is to apply the means he has given us, in order that thus salvation

may be secured for our little ones. God has thus bound us, and no man can dispense himself from this binding without contradicting God's gracious will and purpose.

But here is a little babe that has died without Baptism. Father and mother had the firm intention to secure for it, and that in a few days, the blessing of the holy sacrament. Some might conclude, that God will let the intention suffice, accepting it in place of the actual Baptism. Now, without doubt, God does take our intentions into account, even also when we have been prevented from carrying them into effect. But we have no word of God to assure us that he accepts the intention to baptize as equivalent to Baptism itself. Such ground of comfort is not strong enough to steady our hearts when doubt and distress assail them in the midst of grief.

Let me show you, my dear friends, a better stay, the one provided by our Lord himself in this wonderful eighteenth chapter of Matthew on children and little ones. Here the Lord does not speak of Baptism, except by distant implication; he speaks of what lies back of Baptism in the mind and heart of God, of his great saving will regarding our little ones, that will from which Baptism indeed has come, but much more than Baptism. The Father's will is that none of these little ones should perish. This was spoken by the Lord before he ever instituted Baptism, when God's people were still under the old dispensation, the first covenant, made with Abraham and consummated through Moses on Mount Sinai. Then indeed he had also provided a means for children to receive his gracious covenant, namely circumcision on the eighth day. Yet we know that some children of God's chosen people died before reaching that day, moreover this ordinance could be applied only to male children. Were those to whom it could not be applied lost? It would contradict all that we know of God from his Word to say so. On the contrary, here the full force of Christ's Word concerning the Father's will must come to our minds. God wanted to save all the little ones of his people Israel, and he did save them, some by means of the covenant seal of circumcision, the others without that seal in a way known only to himself. And thus also he now wills to save also our little ones. This is the great truth for us to hold fast and build our hope upon. It is your one support and stay in this sad hour.

Because God wants to save our little ones, he has bound us to make use of Baptism to this end, and has added his sure and strong promises that by means of this sacrament his will shall be attained. But while he has thus

bound us, even as he bound Israel of old to use the ordinances of circumcision, he has in no way bound himself. We know indeed, from all that the Scriptures say, that no babe can enter heaven in the sinful condition in which it is born here. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and remains flesh until God gives it a new birth by his Spirit. It is useless to persuade ourselves that little babes are without sin, since they do not commit open sin in thought, word, and deed like grown sinners. Babes die, and death is always the result of sin, even temporal or bodily death. This babe has died, and that proclaims aloud to us that it too came into the world touched by the terrible taint of sin. It is a sad mistake, then, to think that this or any other babe may enter heaven just as it is in its sinful condition. There must be a cleansing, a purification, a new birth. Now God has not told us just what he will do when our little ones are overtaken by death before we are able to administer the sacrament he has provided. He has left us in this case where he left the Jews of old when their sons died before the eighth day or when their daughters died in infancy. We know only this – and it is from the lips of the Saviour himself: his will is, not to let them perish, but to save them. Us he has bound to Baptism, himself he has bound only to this one gracious and comprehensive purpose, to save them. With that we must be content. And with that we can indeed be content, leaving all else to him who has ways and means to carry out his purpose far beyond what we are able to comprehend and know. That reduces the measure of our comfort as compared with what is ours when at the death of a child we are able to point to all the shining promises centering in Baptism. But while we admit this, let us hold fast to the assurance which Jesus has given us. His word about the Father's will for our little ones is enough; it is infinitely more than any substitute which man could offer us.

So this little one rests in the Father's hands. He gave it life and being; its soul is precious in his sight; he redeemed it through the blood of his Son. God's will was to save this little babe. While we do not know from his Word the manner in which he carries out his will in instances of this kind, we do know that will itself, and we confidently trust its heavenly ability to bring its saving purpose to pass.

Herein anchor your souls, dear parents and friends. Put away all other thoughts; silence all questions and doubts by this sweet message of Jesus concerning the little ones who are not to perish. His Word is our light and our life. May it guide and keep you now and evermore. Amen.

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1. A child may die without Baptism through no fault of its parents; again, there may be neglect, carelessness, or worse. The address at the funeral may vary accordingly. The case here treated belongs to the former class.↩

2. The Heavenly Father's Way With The Little Children By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”— 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

Occasion: For an Especially Pious Child

“And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:2). It is a happy day for the family when a child is brought into its charmed circle. Fond parents hold tenderly in their arms this little bundle of humanity. They say, “This is now bone of our bones, and flesh of our flesh.” Here is physical life, always a mystery, and not less so when revealed to us in the bodies of our own children. The warm breath, the soft hands, the sweet, as yet uncomprehending eyes, the crying, after a while the cooing and the crowing, the little struggles of the hands – all these one of greatest interest to father and mother, to brothers and sisters.

And here is mental life. There is a mind within this little body. The powers to know, to remember, to reason, are all here. Possibilities of joy and sorrow are waiting in the world and will in due time awaken appropriate response in this child. The power to choose and to determine has been given and will be manifested in the course of time. What mystery! What possibilities!

And here is a soul. God has made this child for himself. The child is created for worship, for fellowship with its heavenly Father. It is possible for this child to believe, to grow into a loving and dutiful child of the dear Father above, to love, to know, and obey, to cherish righteousness, to seek

the things which are above. This child will have the opportunity to serve and minister, in the name of Christ, to father and mother, brothers and sisters, and to others beyond the walls of the home. How wonderful!

Just as great as the mystery of life is the mystery of death. The body once so warm grows cold. The eyes once so bright are dimmed. The voice which rang out in joyous laughter is stilled. Not only are loving parents confronted with the baffling mystery of death, they are sorely oppressed thereby. Some awful thing has happened to their own flesh and blood. In deepest sorrow they ask about it. How could this come to pass? Their child! Dead! They themselves, so much older, are yet living. There are older brothers and sisters. All were cared for and loved alike. This younger one has been called. O God! We did not know it could be so, Lord. We have seen other parents in mourning over their children but could not fully sympathize with them. Now we know. And yet we do not know. Be with us. Help us. We pray to Thee, who hast a Father's heart. Speak to us. Comfort us.

Listen, my dear friends. Let me try to tell you of God's great love. He wants to help you. Let us think and talk about

The Heavenly Father's Way with the Little Children

THE HEAVENLY FATHER KNOWS THE LITTLE CHILDREN'S NEED:

How bright-eyed are the little ones! How seemingly complete in themselves – body, mind, soul! But wait – they are physically helpless: they must be fed and tended. They cannot do one thing for themselves. Were it not for the ministrations of others they would perish. And these little bodies are exposed to manifold physical dangers. Illness, accident, may at any moment come on them and destroy their lives. Even more helpless are these little ones in the life spiritual. In the spiritual things they are dead. Born of the flesh, they are flesh. They are conceived and born in sin. By nature they are the children of wrath. They need to be made “wise unto salvation.” The Heavenly Father knows the little children's need.

Shall we pause to explore the mystery of sin? And especially in its relation to our children – born into the world without their will? Why should they inherit the parents' sinful nature? Why should they be brought into all this wretchedness? Why not an entirely new creation? My friends, these questions will not help us much. It is a condition, not a mere theory,

that confronts us. There is life. There is sin. All our inquiring and arguing will not change things. It is the part of wise men to know and to realize conditions, and if these are burdensome and intolerable, to seek relief from them. And there is relief from sin and from all its dreadful consequences.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER HAS PROVIDED SALVATION FOR THE LITTLE CHILDREN:

It is the Father's will that the children be made "wise unto salvation" – thus reads our text. They are to be brought to the true wisdom, they are to become truly wise, and so become "partakers of salvation."

All persons, including the children, are of sinful nature. They do not conform to the law of God. Hence all are by nature children of wrath. But it is not God's will that "one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14). God will "have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). "God so loved the world" (John 3:16)– that embraces the children. "Suffer the little children to come unto me," says Jesus (Mark 10:14). "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Verily, "the promise is to you and to your children" (Acts 2:39). How clearly and definitely the Father's love for the little ones is set before us.

God's love is always wonderful. Though we were lost and ruined in the fall, "He loved us notwithstanding all." But the divine love loses nothing of its wonderful quality when it is directed toward the children. He has regard to every little one. Let it be where it may and what it may – he knows it and loves it. At home or abroad, in riches or in poverty, in health or in sickness, in beauty or in ugliness, in silks or in rags, in Bethlehem or in Rome – he sees all the children, he loves them all, he has provided salvation for them all.

Jesus has died for all men, including the children. He is the Savior of all men. It would be passing strange if the parents were provided for, but the children were excluded. Jesus' plan is not so narrow. His work was in behalf of the entire human race. "And that from a child" – literally from a babe – "thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." There you read it. A child, even a babe, is regarded mercifully and is considered in the great plan for saving the world. Thus it was in Old Testament times. Children were to be taught God's ways. They were to be accepted into covenant relationship with Jehovah. They were to be blessed with the salvation which should afterward be revealed in Christ.

We comfort ourselves today with these thoughts about God's love for us and for our children.

THE HEAVENLY FATHER HAS BROUGHT SALVATION TO THE LITTLE CHILDREN:

“Redemption is purchased, salvation is free.” How is the gift to be had? God offers the blessing of salvation in his word. The Holy Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, they are God-breathed. They are also God-breathing because they impart God's grace. The Scriptures had been known to Timothy, St. Paul's spiritual son, and by these holy writings – the Old Testament writings – he had been saved. Much more will the New Testament Scriptures convey truth, grace, and life.

The heavenly gifts, however, are not forced upon us. “Through faith which is in Christ Jesus” we receive these treasures. The truth of the Word works in us repentance, sorrow for our sins, and then the confidence of the heart, the humble trust, in Jesus as our Savior from sin.

“We notice how, in his providence, God has abundantly provided for many of us. Timothy was born into the arms of a believing mother. Although his father was a heathen, the mother Eunice was a believer. Both in the mother and in the grandmother Lois dwelt an “unfeigned faith” (II Timothy 1:5). Timothy is exhorted to abide and continue in the things which he has learned, and he is admonished to remember “of whom” (plural – what persons), namely, the pious mother and the devout grandmother, he learned the precious things of heaven. Even when he was a babe, helpless in his mother's arms, the words of Jehovah were in his ears, prayers to Jehovah were whispered over him, he was committed to the tender care of the covenant God.

The negative, or mental, influence of a heathen father did not destroy the work of grace in young Timothy's heart.

But we are to note that Eunice and Lois were agents, that is, instruments, in God's hand. They were not themselves sources of saving power. They were God's ambassadors to the youthful Timothy. The means which they employed were means of grace – the sacred writings, the truth which makes men free. Included in the means of grace, as we understand them, are also the sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These sacraments were not yet given in the old covenant (although their types, circumcision and the passover, were then known), but we of the New Testament church have them, use them, and are blessed by them.

What an incentive to all parents to be mindful of their children's highest interests – their souls' welfare and salvation. Children have immortal souls, and it is the solemn duty of all parents to bring up their offspring in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Dear parents, it is our duty to come to you in a sad hour. You have lost a very dear child. For a number of years you have enjoyed the companionship of this bright and happy child. She has been a beautiful and fragrant flower in your lives.

What promise your daughter gave of future usefulness, even distinction. The hopes and plans and ambitions built on the promise offered by her talents and application and acquisitions have been destroyed.

But ought I to say, destroyed? Both of you are Christians. When your daughter knew not yet her name, nor recognized you, parental love, like that of Eunice, brought her to Christ in holy baptism. You remembered and obeyed the word: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Scripture reading, prayer, and sacred song created a Christian atmosphere about her. As she grew older, you taught her. Again you remembered and obeyed a divine command: "Teaching them to observe all things." How she delighted to learn these things! How she loved God's Word! The Bible stories not only interested her, they led her to ask many questions, and she tried to do the things God's Word told her to do. How great and warm was her love for Jesus! She never tired of hearing and reading about him.

Your daughter was one of our brightest and most faithful Sunday-school members. Bright and apt, full of life and vigor. But she loved and trusted Jesus too well to let evil control her. She had her faults. But she always was ashamed of these when they were pointed out to her. She repented of them, she asked Jesus to forgive her, and had the assurance that he heard her prayer and forgave her all her sins.

Do you remember the Sunday afternoon I called at your home, when a number of children were gathered, in the sunshine of a bright summer day, in your garden? Your daughter left the children and followed me into the house. We talked about many things, among them about God's kingdom. I had prayer before I left. How devoutly she folded her hands! And when I began the Lord's Prayer, she was the first to join in repeating that prayer of prayers.

All too soon, it seems to you, she has been taken away. But you are resigned, as Christian parents should be, to the will of God. And of this one thing, to comfort and cheer you as long as you live, you are certain: she died trusting in Jesus' blood and righteousness. As she lay ill unto death, in that upper room, I read the holy Scriptures. Then we had prayer together each time I called. The last time, when strength was fast failing, I asked her to fold her hands and pray her evening prayer. She did so. Falteringly, but confidently, came the words:

“Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take.
And this I ask for Jesus' sake.”

Sweetly she fell asleep in Jesus. Happy will be her waking on resurrection day.

May you parents continue to be faithful preachers of truth and righteousness in your home. Let the children, by word and deed, by love and kindness, by devotion to Christ and the church, be a comfort to the parents. Thus may you live a happy family on earth, and may you all meet in heaven, a complete and glorified family before the throne of God. Then shall we all realize fully that the Heavenly Father's way with the little children and with us all has been a right and good and saving way. Amen.

3. Saving Life By Taking Life By

Rev. C. B. Gohdes

“...God did send me before you to preserve life.” – Gen. 45:5.

Occasion: Funeral sermon for a young child which died shortly after baptism

The existence of evil in this world has been a subject of anxious speculation since time immemorial. No one can escape evil. Its pall darkens sooner or later every life, no matter how exalted, how successful, or how happy. The materialist, to escape the sting of pain, denies its existence. To him, every species of evil is only good in an incipient stage of existence. Even harlotry, dishonesty, idolatry, are to him not positive evils, but stepping-stones to future perfection. Of a continued existence beyond the dark portals of death he is unaware; of a revelation whereby the light of heaven is flashed into our darkness he is willfully ignorant. Hence his contracted view; hence his utter powerlessness to bestow and to receive solace in hours of heartbreak.

Such an hour has come into this home. We deny none of the heart-rending features of this sorrow. A bud which gave promise of fairest bloom has been broken from the parent stem by the blast of death. The sweet voice of a child has been hushed by death, this relentless creator of silence. The tiny infant life, to which every tendril of your heart clung in passionate clasp, shall sink beneath the sod before your eyes. Here is a challenge to all the powers of the created universe to impart comfort. In a grief such as this, expressions of human sympathy are meaningless platitudes. The warm grasp of the friendly hand can only accentuate the helplessness of human love, of even the most devoted and unselfish. Miserable comforters are we all! But our eyes behold another presence than that of death. The eye of faith beholds a presence which irradiates corpse and coffin with streams of celestial light, which discloses the grave as the very gate of life, which

draws you, weeping parents, into the embrace of an almighty friend. Christ is here, the God of love and life and solace. He is not a voiceless witness of your grief. He lays a comforting message upon the lips that are still. “God did send me before you to preserve life” – this is the farewell message of your child.

Our text furnishes a concrete illustration of the great evangelical truth that all things must work for good to them that love God. The reality of evil and the guilt of sin is not denied. However, it shows God at the loom of providence, weaving the woof of evil, even of sin committed in the free exercise of liberty, into the warp of his eternal, immutable plan; entwining the gold of his love with the sable thread of human woe; constantly making grief a minister to godly character, and tribulation a condition most favorable to salvation. Joseph’s brethren had sinned. They had robbed the father of his son; the son of home, of father, of liberty. A blighting, damnable, inexcusable sin had been committed. But divine love touches the evil, and it results at a time of famine in the preservation of the very family from which the Savior was to spring in the fullness of time. Love touches the sinner, and, amid tears of repentance, brother hearts are united, and sinners are reconciled to God. Your broken hearts, parents, may not feel at the present time the comfort of the truth, but as Christians you will, you must, believe the truth that God is mightier than death, that love rules in this bereavement, that death has come to your home, not as a foe, but as God’s messenger, to confer upon the child and yourselves unutterable blessings.

No doubt, when you stood with your darling child at the baptismal font, you meant to keep the promise then made, namely, to rear the child in the knowledge and fear of the Lord Jesus Christ. But are you aware of the dark possibilities of evil which gloom beneath every human life, even the most promising? The safety of that young soul was in your hands at best but relative. It is absolute in the hands of God. To you the death of your babe feels like a cruel blow, like a night dark and chill and unrelieved by a single star-beam. To the babe, however, it means the preservation from vast possibilities of evil.

You are both still young. You are still climbing the ascending slope of life where the lamp of hope burns bright and many a flower of joy blooms, but already you have tasted the stern realities of life. You have learned

“That life is not an idle ore,
But heated hot with burning fears,
And steeped in baths of scalding tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.”

Your babe, however, has been delivered from the pains of disease, and possibly from the pangs of death at a time when it would have known both the sweetness of life and the horror of death. It has been delivered from the ingratitude of men, their base treachery, their fickleness and deception. It has been delivered from the fierce struggle of existence, taking place all around us with almost brutal intensity. It has been delivered from the possibility of poverty, from the fret of care, from the necessity of grinding toil.

But this is not all. The foes mentioned are trivial in comparison with those who threaten the soul and its peace with God. We saw the boy, dedicated to God in Holy Baptism, present himself at the confirmation altar in comparative spiritual maturity, and our hearts were jubilant when we beheld the promise of future power, purity and devotion to duty. We saw the same lad attain to manhood's estate, only to forget every thought of covenanted duty. We saw him turn with Esau-like perversity from Christ and his Church, from Christ and his righteousness, from Christ and his hope. We saw heirs of God's covenant become foes of purity, victims of intemperance, base ingrates toward father, mother, and pastor. We saw them live a Christless life; we saw them die a Christless death; we saw them go down to Christless graves.

Such as these need our tears, not the lambs of Christ whom the Shepherd takes to heaven. True! nature demands her right, and you may moisten with the heart-mist of your tears the tiny marble brow, upon which the cold dew of death has scarce dried. But let the significance of your tears be not only grief over a vanished life, but also gratitude, because the angel of death has delivered your child from the inevitable ills of human life, and, above all, from the possibilities of sin, which may arouse an Absalom in the house of a David.

Then, think of the happy life to which death's hand has summoned your child after brief probation in this vale of tears. It is now in heaven. The coffin does not enclose your child. The grave shall not contain it. Coffin and grave are entitled to nothing but the tenement of clay from which the

soul has sped to the Father's house. The soul – that bit of divinity in a body created out of the dust of the earth – has not been vanquished but delivered. While you gaze through the veil of tears at the recumbent body the child's soul is dwelling in the eternal light. As Christians we have the right to penetrate the gloom of death's presence on the very field of his victory, and to rejoice in the eternal realities of the heavenly kingdom. Oh! were our sight not cramped and fore-shortened by the limitations of this earth life, we should behold a vision of beauty so entrancing that our sighs would be turned into psalms.

You would see the hills of paradise, and rolling between them, a silver flood – the river of life. You would see the palm trees of heaven, their melodious whispers accompanying the heart-stirring, soul-calming music of angelic harps. You would see the million million babes which have been transplanted by death to heaven, maturing amid the perfect conditions of God's immediate presence. Shut out is every fault that mars, every grief that singes the wings of the soul, every possibility of fall and failure. Amid fountains of perennial bloom, in scented groves whose festoons symbolize the clasp of celestial joy, by the crystal sea where the saints cast down their crowns to magnify the Lamb to whose blood they owe their sainthood and their home, the redeemed are seen in the pure, blended enjoyment of every faculty of soul and body. And there, if you exchange the vision of grief for the vision of faith, you will see your babe in the grasp of Christ, its beautiful brother, rejoicing in the love which created it for such joys as these.

Only in the transfiguring light of such a vision can you stand at your child's coffin possessed of resignation and comfort. The tiny knoll in yonder God's acre is not the end of your hope, but its test; not the end of the life whose passing you have witnessed, but the gate to a fairer beginning. The soul is set free, and beneath the hillock which you will garland with flowers and moisten with tears, the Spirit of God is weaving the resurrection body upon the loom of life; and when God's bugles announce that the reign of death is over, you shall draw into your embrace the self-same child which God has taken.

You ask what warrant I have to proclaim such a gospel of hope and joy in view of these insignia of death? My warrant is the love of God so all-embracing that the tiniest life as well as the most resplendent may find shelter from every storm. My warrant is the love of Christ, through the

shedding of whose blood your child came into the world created and redeemed for heaven. My warrant is the sacramental dew which was sprinkled upon this brow from on high in token of an eternal covenant, of which death is not the termination, but the fruition. Weep not for your child, father and mother! It has come to the kiss and clasp of its Savior; it is safe for evermore!

But is not the apparent victory of death a deliverance for you also? The holiness of your love is indeed attested by your submission to the omnipotent hand whose tenderness cannot but be felt as sternness at such a time as this. Yet, how easily does even such a holy affection as a father's and mother's love degenerate into idolatry! The child is regarded by many not as a mere trust, but as a possession. An effeminate love coddles and cossets, but does not discipline it; suffers it to play when it ought to pray, to rule when it ought to obey; permits it to neglect the holy duties of religion, instead of compelling it at once to recognize life as a school for heaven. The result is that even in the homes of Christians children are to be found who are spoiled, petted tyrants rather than lambs of Jesus' fold. From this danger, so great that it can be conquered only by the grace of God, you have been delivered. Your child has been transferred to the perfect tutelage of the heavenly Teacher from which it shall come forth lustrous with the image divine. Beyond the least doubt, your child is forever safe. What a comfort in your grief!

You have been delivered likewise for a closer communion with heaven. With longing and joy you anticipated the time when your child might fold its hands and lisp its prayers. I know, when you kneel tonight close by the empty cradle, your prayers will be sobbed rather than uttered. But purer, sweeter, more spiritual your worship will be for the transfer of the tiny supplicant to the heavenly home where every thought turns to worship. Seeing your babe on the bosom of Christ, you will feel, coming down from the supernal heights, the touch of the vanished hand, the sound of the voice that is still; and the prayers your child utters in heaven for you and the safe consummation of your pilgrimage, will secure for you a greater zeal to reach that country which now holds every treasure in which your affections center.

Viewing your loss in the spirit of faith, you will have a better and more spiritual way of communing with your child than have the people of the world. They cry to the deaf clay beneath them to answer their hearts'

yearning. At the very time of Sunday worship they are likely to be found garlanding the grave with flowers. The grave, and not heaven, is to them the place where their departed children are guarded. Your vision, however, is clearer, for it is lit by faith. You know your child is with Christ. Therefore, whatever brings you close to Christ, will bring within the range of your faith the child, which is not lost, but kept under the vigilant guardianship of the Good Shepherd for your discipline in the faith. When you worship God in the Spirit and in truth; when you drink God's peace from the communion cup, you touch the hand of Christ. In the hour of worship, whether at home or in church, your babe is nigh in Christ, to cheer you with thoughts of the upper world; to thank and to bless you for having ushered it through birth into God's redeemed world, and through the sacrament into the kingdom of heaven. Believing this, you will not endeavor to reach the silent clay with the voice of morbid grief. Rather will you in the hour of prayer, send greetings to your child through the Shepherd on whose bosom it rests, and thank God that it is so much more yours for having been surrendered to the safe-keeping of Jesus.

Lonely, weeping mother, believest thou this?

"Long months the hours were filled with hope divine,
By dainty garments silently confessed;
In toil and travail-pain I acquiesced,
And thrilled to feel thy baby fingers twine
My own, like tendrils of a clinging vine.
Once, only once, upon thy mother's breast,
Thy little hands and baby lips were pressed;
Then God recalled thee, oh, sweet darling mine.

"And did it pay, the agonizing pain,
The disappointment and the plans overthrown?
Yes, richly pay, since through my pain a soul
And that my child's, eternal joy did gain;
And as the endless ages slowly roll.
My recompense shall be to love my own."

Mother! is this thy faith? Then blessed are you. The child in heaven shall be a power to preserve your soul in the kingdom of God. Amen.

4. It Is Well With The Child By Prof. J. N. Kildahl

“...Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.”– 2 Kings 4:26.

Occasion: At the funeral of a six-year-old girl

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN had a child, a gift of God to her. And she loved that child as only a mother can love her own child. That child was the joy of her life. But now this child was dead, and her soul was vexed within her; her heart was filled with grief. And still when Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, met her and asked her, “Is it well with the child?” she answered, “It is well.” Her heart was heavy with grief. She would not have been a mother, if that had not been the case. But she knew that it was well with the child. She lifted the eyes of her faith above the little lifeless body, and saw that it was well with the child. “If thou believest, thou shouldest see the glory of God.” These words Christ spoke by a grave. The Shunammite woman believed, therefore she saw the glory of God, even at the deathbed of her only child.

The good Lord gives to parents a peculiar love for their children. We do not know how much we love our children till they are taken away from us. And it is a good thing for the children that their parents love them, for none of God’s creatures are as helpless at birth and during their early existence as the children of men, and they need that love which does not tire in caring for them. But because of the fact that God gives us such a love for our children it is hard to lay them in the grave. It seems like burying a part of ourselves. It seems as though all the fond hopes that we have cherished regarding our children are blasted.

Every time their birthday comes around, we think of how large and fine they now would have been, how far advanced they now would have been in school; now they would have been confirmed; now they would have been through high school; now they would have graduated from college; or now

they would have learned their trade; or now they would have been established in business, etc. But they are gone from us. They are under the sod. You, parents, also had a little child, a gift of God to you, and a precious gift it was; you loved your little girl. But it has pleased the good Lord to take her away from you. And grief fills your heart; it cannot be otherwise. But praised be the Lord,

It Is Well With the Child

1. She Has A Savior

It Is Well With The Child, Because She Has A Savior. We have just been celebrating Christmas.¹ We have again heard the old but ever new message of the angel of God, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” You probably do not feel as though this has been a merry Christmas to you, because your dear little girl, whom you had expected to clap her little hands in joy at the sight of the Christmas tree, lies with folded hands in her little coffin. But what has happened to you this Christmas, I am sure, will help you to appreciate so much more the good tidings of great joy. We never feel the need and blessedness of a Savior from death so much as when that from which Christ came to save us enters right into our homes. And we never learn to appreciate a Savior from sorrow so much as when sorrow fills our own hearts. As long as death does not cross our own threshold, and as long as grief is something we have only heard or read about, we may indeed in a general way rejoice in the fact that God has given us a Savior. But when death comes into our homes and takes away from us the joy of our lives, and when sorrow is threatening to break our own hearts, then the fact that we have a Savior has an entirely new significance for us; the fact that we have a Savior means something far more to us.

O praised be the Lord, that we have a Savior! “Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and death passed unto all men, for that all have sinned.” And the Lord saw all the sorrow and tears and breaking hearts that death would cause. And it moved his heart, for he is full of compassion, lovingkindness and tender mercies. He also had a

Son, an only begotten Son, a beloved Son, a Son in whom he was well pleased. But in order that our children might live, even though they die, in order that our hearts might be comforted when they are heavy with sorrow at the grave of our dear ones, he spared not his only begotten Son, but gave him a ransom for us, gave him into death.

2. She Had Been Baptized Into Christ

It Is Well With The Child, Because She Had Been Baptized Into Christ. What a blessed ordinance Holy Baptism is! Even before our children “discern between their right hand and their left hand,” the Lord through Holy Baptism takes them into his fellowship, makes them his children and heirs of everlasting life, so that whatever happens to them, whether they live or die, they are the Lord’s. For Baptism now saves us, being a true likeness of the ark in which Noah and his family were saved through water. “Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration.” “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.” Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death, into the death of Christ and all that the death of Christ has procured for us and stands for. In Holy Baptism your little girl was baptized into Christ, into the merits of the death of Christ, forgiveness of sins, righteousness before God, sonship and eternal life. Can it be anything but well with such a child, a child that was not only your child, but the child of God? No, no, for making her his child in Holy Baptism God begat her again unto a living hope. The fond hopes that you have cherished in your hearts in reference to this child are therefore not blasted. You have hope even here at the grave of your child. Therefore, in spite of the fact that your hearts are sad today, “ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope.” But joining the apostle of old in praising God we will say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

3. The Angels Have Carried Her Soul Home To God

It is well with the child, because the angels of God have carried her soul home to God, to the Savior, who bought her with his own blood, and baptized her into his death, into his fellowship, into his life. And there she is safe.

We do not know what temptations might have met her here, if she had been destined to grow up. Nor do we know what adversities, tribulations, cares and sorrows she might have had to experience, if she should have had to live in this world so full of sin, danger and troubles.

Many are the parents who have entertained great hopes regarding the future of their children, but who later have shed bitter tears on account of these same children, because they did not turn out the way they had expected. And many a child has dreamed beautiful dreams of a bright career before it, but has been sorely disappointed because it did not find what it had looked for. It is therefore well to remember the admonition of the Lord, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

We know absolutely nothing about what might have been the lot of this child on earth. But now we know that it is well with the child. We know that she is with Jesus in Paradise. And we are of good courage, because we know that being “absent from the body” she is “at home with the Lord.” Can there be anything better than to be at home with the Lord? And we do not only know that it is well with the child, but we also know that from now on it will always be well with her. The possibility of a change for anything but that which is well is forever removed. The tempter never enters the Paradise into which she has been received. Sin is not there, and therefore no sorrow and no pain. That soul which has been carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham is not only comforted, but is forever safe.

4. The Lord Will Raise Her Body From The Dead

It is well with the child, because the Lord will raise her body from the dead. We cannot deny that although we know that the souls of our dear ones are in the hand of the Lord, and that they are at home with the Lord, and that although our hearts are comforted by this assurance, it is still a hard ordeal to go through to lay their bodies in the grave. For our dear ones do not only have a soul; they also have a body, and it is through the body that the soul has been working, and it is by the body especially that we have known them while they were with us. It is then not easy to put away the dear body under the sod.

But thanks be to God! “The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they shall come forth.” “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” John tells us in the Revelation which God gave him to show him “the things which must shortly come to pass,” that he saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. “I am the resurrection and the life,” says Christ.

It looked dark and discouraging on Good Friday. I know of nothing in the whole history of this world that has looked so dark, dreary and hopeless as that which our senses perceive outside the walls of Jerusalem on Good Friday. He who had come to save us from death, and who had made the claim that whosoever believed on him should never die, he yielded up his spirit with a loud voice, and his lifeless body was committed to the grave. But there came an Easter morning after Good Friday; there came light after darkness, joy after sorrow, victory after seeming defeat. The grave could not hold the Prince of Life. A new song was put into the mouth of those who had been on the point of despair.

Our days of burial are also dark and gloomy days. Only those who have tried it know what it means to close the eyes of a dear child, and to lay the little body in the grave. It looks hopeless. But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who begat us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. As there was for Christ himself a bright and joyous Easter following the sad and gloomy Good Friday, so there is for all who belong to him. There is a glorious day of resurrection following the sad day of burial. And then shall “the ransomed of Jehovah return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon

their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

This child was through Holy Baptism grafted into Christ; she had received the sign of the cross both on her brow and on her breast as an indication of the fact that she belonged to Christ; she was a partaker of the life of Christ. She shall also have part in his resurrection. “For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.” And as she has borne the image of the earthly, she shall bear the image of the heavenly. Therefore, although the tears are trickling down our cheeks, we join in Paul’s song of triumph, “Death is swallowed up in victory! death, where is thy victory? death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Viewing all these things, we reach only one conclusion: It is well with the child. You indeed would have liked to keep her. But you will agree with me that with all your love and all your care, it would never have been so well with the child as it is now. She is far better off with the Lord. It is well with the child. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words. Amen.

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1. This child died at Christmas time.↩

5. Jesus And The Children By Rev. Albert T. W. Steinhäuser, D. D.

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.” – Mark 10:13-16.

Occasion: For a child

HERE IS DOUBTLESS the most beautiful of all the scenes in the life of our blessed Lord. In whose heart is it not engraved? Jesus and the children – painter and poet and musician have vied with one another in setting them forth; there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard, their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Especially familiar has this scene become to you, dear parents, and to you it brings today its particular message. But a short while ago it was read in your hearing at the baptism of your little one, summing up the whole significance of that blessed act in simplest childlike fashion. And now it is read again, at its burial, read with what solemn undertones of meaning. Let us seek to make clear to ourselves the message this precious Scripture brings us today, for the comforting and strengthening of our souls. We shall find that the words of Jesus, – “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not” – in which the whole meaning of our gospel is gathered up, interpret baptism, brighten death, and lighten sorrow.

I.

Luther, in his blunt way, says of our passage: “We must not look at this text with the eyes of a calf or of a cow vaguely gaping at a new stable door, but do with it as we do at court with the prince’s letter – read it and weigh it, again and again, with our most earnest attention.” He dwells especially on the sanction it gives to infant baptism. And, indeed, it has from very early times been regarded as preeminently the gospel of holy baptism. For this reason, too, it found its way into the Church’s baptismal office.

Without any speculation or the least attempt at theological theory or dogmatic definition, very simply and graphically for all to grasp, it sets forth the good news of baptism. It is to the mysterious washing of regeneration what the Christmas gospel is to the mystery of the Incarnation. Among the many passages of the New Testament dealing with baptism it stands as a little child, so simple and tender that every one can take it to his heart.

This lonely Man, his face set as a flint toward Jerusalem, halted on his way to the cross by a troop of merry children, who crowd about him, climb up into his lap, and smile into his face.

...How his eyes light up! It is the one hour of unalloyed joy in his whole life. How it takes him back to his own childhood in Mary’s arms; and farther back, with a great homesickness, to the Father’s bosom, where he was from eternity, and whither he is returning now by a new and dreadful way.

No wonder he is much displeased at the officious, dull-witted disciples who would spare their Master this trouble. It is the only time he is said to have been “moved with indignation”; for that is what the strong expression, literally translated, really means. It was but another instance of how utterly these men misunderstood him and misconceived his ministry. Indeed, there was scarce anyone who understood him. All the world was casting him out; now again, as at the beginning, there was no room for him upon earth; he was on his way into the valley of humiliation; soon he would be hanging on the bitter cross, rejected and despised of men.

But these little folk do not reject him. Naively and instinctively they understand him. They are his friends. And, holding them in his arms, he sees the beginning of his kingdom and its growth. That is why this hour means so much to him. That is why he takes these little ones up in his arms, clasps them to his breast, and blesses them by putting his hands upon their heads. And when in his hour of triumph he sent these same disciples out

into all the world to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them, surely he will not have forgotten the children who brought him such good cheer in his hour of sorrow, like a broad band of sunshine lying across his painful way. Tacitly included in the world-wide commission of the Risen Lord are the words of the Sufferer, – “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

Now, my beloved, how high a day it was in your life and the life of your dear little one, when all this became for you the most actual reality, at the sacred font. When this scene ceased to be merely a story in the Bible and a picture hanging on your walls. When you found yourselves members of that little group about the Saviour, grown through the centuries into a multitude that no man can number. When you brought your child to him, and he in this simple rite, this holy sacrament, took it up in his arms, put his hands upon it, and blessed it.

You could not help thrilling and responding to the glory, the solemn joy, of that moment. When you dared bring your child, flesh of your flesh, conceived and born in sin, and give it into his arms, for him to bless and own and adopt, and then to give back to you, spirit born of spirit, a member of the kingdom of God, loved and welcomed by him as his little brother, a child with him of God, and co-heir of the Father’s glory – surely that was the very greatest day in the life of this family, worthy to be celebrated as a most joyful feast day every year.

How that act related you to God and to his Son Jesus Christ! For your child was now both yours and God’s, and you were now fellow-parents and coworkers together with God. What a solemn responsibility that brought with it. And how you set out, with fervent prayer, to do your full parental part, so that with God’s help it might be faithfully and savingly brought up, to the praise and honor of his holy Name, and finally with all God’s saints receive the promised inheritance. Round this little one that had lain in Jesus’ arms, as it slowly unfolded and increased in wisdom, stature and favor, you heard, at every hour of the day or night, the words of Jesus ringing, so insistent, so sweet with comfort, so stern with admonition: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

II.

But one day these words assumed a different and somber meaning. There was a new and strange ring in them that struck terror to the parents' heart. They meant more than baptism now, and more than training in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They meant sickness and pain, and they meant death. And as you hear the well-known words, – "Suffer the little children to come unto me" – with what a different tone they fell upon your ear.

But she is in her grave, and, oh, The difference to me!

But, my beloved, are they not the same words of the same loving Friend of little children? And do they not, rightly understood, throw a wondrous and a heavenly light on death? Say not, A cruel beast has devoured my child, disease has snatched it away, death has reaped my pleasant flower. Death is not a cruel monster springing out at us and tearing our loved ones from our side; death is not a blind natural force lying about and striking down at random young and old. You are familiar with the Christian definition of death, Christ's own definition, – "I will come again, and receive you unto myself: that where I am, there ye may be also." Death is Jesus coming again for his own.

Look into our gospel. Does it not shed a radiant light on death? Does it not interpret death for us, the death of children, in most sweet and tender fashion? Death for them is but Jesus taking them up in his arms, putting his hands upon them, and blessing them. And since his arms and his heart are now in high heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God, – when he takes our children up in his arms, he must needs take them out of our sight and reach.

And though our arms are empty and our hearts broken, and we cry with David, "my son, my son!" we yet remember that they are in his arms, those everlasting arms that were outstretched for our advantage on the bitter cross, those tender riven hands are on their heads, and he is blessing them. Our thoughts are on them rather than on ourselves. "We will not yield to the selfishness of grief, that thinks only of its own loss and not of the lost one's gain. If you rejoiced when in baptism he took your dear one up in his arms and blessed it, how much more should a deep, strong current of joy run underneath your tears now that he has taken it up and is blessing it indeed! How tender those arms and how strong! Far more tender and strong than yours. And how loving and wise that heart against which he is pressing it –" *Er herzte sie,* [He hugged her.] so Luther puts it in his hearty! fashion. Your love and wisdom and constant care, what are they but faint, far-off

echoes, dim and broken reflections, of his? Can we not, then, enter into the spirit of that “great woman” of old Shunem, who also had lost her little lad, and who in answer to the prophet’s inquiry, “Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?” replied, “It is well.”

See, that is what he means when he says, “Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not.” We are to give them up willingly, to yield them to him not only in deed but in will. “Without murmuring or complaint, no questions, no reproach. We are not to forbid them, under pain of his displeasure.” The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." So Abraham bound his only son Isaac, whom he loved, the bearer of the promise, obediently upon the altar, and stretched out his hand with the knife in it, to offer him up to God. Forbid them not, by sorrowing overmuch for them; hold them not back from his hand and knee and heart. As we could not rejoice even as the others who have no hope, when they were ours, for we had hope, hope firmly builded on their baptism, – so now that they are gone from us, we cannot sorrow as the others who have no hope, for we have hope, hope that maketh not ashamed, the blessed hope of everlasting life. Forbid them not, for his sake and for theirs.

There is a quaint old legend that carries a profound lesson, appropriate here. It has been put into verse by the Dorset poet, William Barnes, and is entitled "The Mother’s Dream.

I’d a dream tonight
As I fell asleep,
Oh! the touching sight
Makes me still to weep:
Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Aye, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There, in train, came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily-white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh! it did not burn;
He, to clear my doubt.
Said, half turn'd about.
"Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn."

III.

But there is yet another side to our gospel, a further meaning in our Saviour's word. It lightens sorrow by setting us a holy task. "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not" – that means you, dear, sorrowing friends, one and all.

We are all God's children, made such in holy baptism, and having within us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. We are his children, ignorant, willful, wayward, – disobedient children, prodigal sons. We are all children – do we not feel it particularly today? Children, helpless before a great grief, our poor hearts broken. Well, what else have we to do than to run, like children who have fallen or been hurt or frightened, to our Father to be soothed and comforted?

Lord, to whom except to Thee
Shall our wandering spirits go –
Thee whom it is light to see.
And eternal life to know?

Suffer the little children – suffer the child in you to come unto me, and forbid it not. Come to him and let him put his hands upon you and bless you. Bless you with his words of pardon, peace and promise, with his heavenly consolation. For, "Verily I say unto you. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Mark it well; there is a stern tone in his voice. His kingdom is only for children; He can be king over none but childlike hearts. This childlikeness, this coming to him, – what is it but faith? As Luther so finely interprets it in his Small Catechism. "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or (that is) come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me." That is the Spirit of adoption, of childhood, of

sonship. And he is calling again, here and now, in this precious word of Jesus, addressing itself in the most personal and direct way to every heart: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”

O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Then, if your child is in his arms, and you also have come to him and are in his arms, why then you are not separated after all, but joined together in a wonderful and precious fellowship in him. Death has not really parted you, but has brought you more closely together than ever before. And you can wait in patience and in hope for that great day when he will once more utter this word of his and cry it to death and the grave; “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not!” And all we children shall wake up in our dark hiding places and come running across the fields to meet him, and he will take us up in his arms, and put his hands upon us, and bless us. And his word will find its everlasting fulfillment, – “For of such is the kingdom of God.” Even so, Lord Jesus! Amen.

6. Jesus' Love For Children By Rev. G. J. Troutman

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.” – Mark 10:13, 14.

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” – Matt. 18:6.

Occasion: For a child

DEAR MOURNING FRIENDS:

The angel of death has entered this home and laid his icy hand on this dear little child. We are obliged to lay its little remains in its last resting place here on earth. Sorrow fills our hearts, and intense grief the hearts of these parents. God has implanted in the nature of parents a deep love for their children; and when this bond of affection is severed it leaves a deep wound, which only God's word and time can heal. This ardent love of parents for their offspring, moves them to labor diligently and sacrifice willingly, for the child's welfare; and we cannot but appreciate and admire this innate, self-sacrificing love and devotion usually manifested by parents for their children. But there is One, whose love for little ones is deeper, and whose sacrifices have been much greater than that of a father, or even a mother, that has gone to death's door for them; that one is Jesus. We will thus consider on this sad occasion: Jesus' love for children.

Jesus' love for children is apparent from the fact that He became a child: How impressive, beautiful and elevating is the Christmas story and the brief account of our Saviour's childhood. The second Person of the holy Godhead, who existed from all eternity and whose power, majesty and glory

is unlimited, condescended to be conceived and born of a virgin, to pass through the various stages of childhood; conforming with human rules and regulations of home, church, and society, not only to be a perfect example for children, but to fulfill the law for them and to save them. This deep condescension, voluntarily undertaken, is a striking manifestation of Jesus' love for children.

Jesus bids little children to come unto Him: This fact is very plain from the words of our text, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Christ was displeased when his disciples rebuked the mothers who brought their little ones to him that he should touch them or bless them. No one, in the light of this Scripture passage, can honestly deny that the Lord wants little children to be brought to him and that he is not only willing, but anxious to touch and bestow a blessing upon them. How comforting to know that this child, over which we mourn today, was brought to Jesus and blessed by him.

Jesus planned to save children: The wondrous plan of salvation is far-reaching. It embraces the whole world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In this marvelous plan of salvation he has made ample provision for children, instituted a means efficient to reach them, namely, holy baptism. By this sacrament, our loving Saviour efficaciously washes away sin and implants faith; thus makes of the child of the world and the devil, a child of God and an heir of everlasting life. Thanks be to God, this little one, whose lifeless body we have before us, is a child of God. He was regenerated through water and the Word and has thus been fitted to dwell with Christ and the angels and saints in heaven.

Jesus warns against offending children: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). This is a strong statement of our Saviour. He commends severe punishment to be meted out to those who undermine or destroy the faith of a little child. And what an earnest warning to those who mislead children and cause them to commit crimes reprehensible to God and man. No one can read this Scripture text and question the ardent love of Jesus for little children that believe in him. No one can help but feel that our blessed Lord takes a deep interest in their temporal and eternal welfare. It is to be deplored that there are so many, who no doubt love their children,

clothe them in apparel befitting their station, give them a good secular training, try to get them into society, yet neglect the most important of all, namely, their regeneration and sanctification, which is wrought by the Means of Grace, instituted by God.

Jesus died for children: The propitiatory work of Christ which culminated in his ignominious death on the cross was not undertaken and accomplished for adults only, but for children also. These little ones conceived and born in sin need redemption from guilt and its terrible consequences. Christ, in order to make their salvation possible, lived, suffered and died for them. Children need a Saviour. They cannot enter the kingdom of glory except in and through Christ who gave his life as a ransom for all. You parents made some great sacrifices for this little child, but Christ made a greater sacrifice. You have shown great love for this little one, but Christ has shown more. You have suffered for this child's welfare, but Christ has not only suffered – he died for him. Yes, you have done much for the convenience, comfort and happiness of your child, but as Christian parents you must acknowledge that the Christ has done infinitely more for your child, when he gave his life on the cross in order to redeem him and make his salvation not only possible but certain.

Jesus takes some of these little children to himself in heaven: It has pleased the Lord, who knows all things best, to take this little boy to himself in heaven. We may wonder why one so young, just starting upon life's journey, should be taken, when so many aged fathers and mothers, that have practically finished their course and who desire to depart this life and be with Christ, are left to travel the rough road of life a little longer and farther. God, gracious and kind, knows the reason, and that should suffice. It is the loving Saviour that has taken this dear little child out of this world of trials and troubles, aches and pains, sin and sorrow, to himself in heaven. "We should not murmur, but remember he has been spared many of the difficulties and hardships of life. It behooves us to say in the words of the poet:

“O thou whose mercy guides my way, Though now it seems severe,
Forbids my unbelief to say,
There is no mercy here.”

Jesus has provided a better home for children in heaven: It certainly would not be true should we leave the impression that this little child did not have a good home here on earth. It is a great blessing to first see the light of day in a Christian home, amid comfortable circumstances and pleasant surroundings. Nevertheless every true child of God must acknowledge that the best home is only relatively good. There is much to be desired in these earthly homes, which we call ours. They are not to be compared with home that Jesus has prepared for us in heaven. The apostle Paul says: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). What a comfort it must be to you, dear parents, and to every Christian mourner, to be certain that this child is with Jesus in heaven. He has provided a much, much better home for this child than anyone here on earth is able to furnish.

“In this world of care and pain,
Lord, Thou wouldst no longer leave it;
To the sunny, heavenly plain
Dost Thou now in joy receive it;
Clothed in robes of spotless white,
Now it dwells with Thee in light.”

Dear mourners, do not grieve inordinately over the departure of this little child. Jesus, to whom you have dedicated him in holy Baptism and who loves children so dearly, has taken this little one to himself in heaven. Your family is now represented in heaven. May your attitude be like that of David of old, who fasted and wept for his child while it was alive; but when the child was dead he arose and ceased weeping and said: “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” Graciously submit to the will of Jesus and say:

“Though we loved it, as Thou knowest, Dearly though we love it still;
Greater love, Lord, Thou bestowest, And we bless Thy gracious will.”

Amen.

7. “It Is Well” By Rev. J. W. Schillinger

“Run now I pray thee to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.” – 2 Kings 4:26.

Occasion: The burial of the only child of Christian parents

DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, AND ESPECIALLY SORROWING PARENTS OF THE LITTLE ONE WHICH HAS FALLEN ASLEEP:

Our text brings before us a pious woman of Shunem who was very dear to the prophet Elisha. She had shown great hospitality to the prophet when he was in need. In return the prophet had prayed to God to grant her a gift which she most earnestly desired, viz., a son, for hitherto she had been childless. God heard Elisha’s prayer, and soon the pious woman of Shunem and her husband were rejoicing over the precious gift of a son. When a little lad, the boy went out into the field with his father on a hot summer day. Here some sudden calamity overtook him, – perhaps it was a sunstroke – and a few hours later the little one died in his mother’s arms. The poor woman’s heart was overwhelmed with grief. In her sorrow she immediately made a journey to Mount Carmel to visit the prophet Elisha, believing that he would be able to give her comfort and advice. The prophet saw her approaching, and sent his servant Gehazi to meet her with the inquiry: “Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?” The pious woman answered: “It is well.”

Dear friends, you who are sorrowing over the death of your little son, your case is so similar to the one of our text, that the words of this pious woman should this day become yours. You also should be able to say this day:

“It Is Well”

1. The Child Has Fallen Asleep

I would first call your attention to the fact that this pious mother says that it is well with the child which has fallen asleep.

The prophet Elisha sent Gehazi to her with the question: "Is it well with the child?" She replied: "It is well."

This pious woman was a true child of God. She had childlike faith in all of the promises of God's Word. The heathenish belief that death ends it all, or that death is simply an entrance into a dark and dismal beyond where there is no light and no hope, found no place in her heart. She believed that death is the end of all pain and suffering in this world and the beginning of eternal bliss in the presence of God in heaven. Her faith was, that death is simply the gateway from the imperfect life here below to the perfect life above. She knew that she had not lost her dear child. She had merely given him to God. He was now with God in heaven, far beyond the reach of all the sufferings and dangers of this earthly life. This was reason enough for her to say: "It is well with the child." You will notice that it was not mere sentiment which moved her to utter these words; it was not merely a beautiful expression of words intended to soothe the sorrows of a grief-stricken heart. No, it was the positive conviction of faith; it was a firm confidence in the promises of God's holy Word. Her confident words, "It is well with the child," reveal to us a heart which harbored no doubts.

There is a reason, dear friends, why you now, on this day of your sorrow, should join with this pious woman of our text, and say that it is well with your child. Your little one has been delivered from all of the sorrows of this world. By your own experience you know something about earthly sorrows. You have passed through seasons of affliction. Think only of the great sorrows which you have experienced in the last few days. Such sorrows your little son shall never have now. God has translated him to that land of bliss where sorrow can never enter. None of the dangers of this earthly life, dangers to body and soul, can ever threaten him. You perhaps know from your own experience something about the dangers of youth. Your hearts perhaps already trembled when you thought of your little son passing through that most dangerous period of life, the period of youth. Perhaps the anxious question already filled your bosoms: Will we be able to guide him safely through the many temptations which are bound to beset him, and

train him up to be a Christian man? Now all of these dangers are passed. God has surrounded him with a wall which no sorrows, dangers, or temptations will ever be able to break through.

God has placed him in a home where there is no sin; and sin being absent, all of the consequences of sin are also absent.

“Where he is, there is no such thing as death, no heart is ever sad, no tear ever flows.” Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which your little son now enjoys with God in heaven.

This comfort which I hold out to you today is not mere sentiment. These are not vain, empty words. The hope which I offer you has a firm foundation in the perfect merits of Jesus Christ. Your child is not in heaven now because it was such a pure, innocent creature in this world, that God was compelled in justice to grant it eternal life. You know as well as I that we are all conceived and born in sin. Your dear child also, as innocent and pure as it seemed to be, was beset with the curse of original sin. But there is another whose merits are perfect. It is our Lord Jesus Christ. By the perfect life which he led he earned heaven for your child. His merits are perfect and infinite; they are sufficient to purchase the infinite treasures of heaven. By shedding his precious blood on the cross, he fully atoned for the sins of all the world; and hence also for the original sin which beset your child. As Jesus, when he walked on this earth, said: “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” so the same loving Savior day before yesterday said: Suffer this little child to come unto me. He took the little one up in his arms. He presented it before God the Father in heaven. He said: Here, Father, are my perfect merits; here is my perfect blood which I shed; with these I have purchased heaven for this child; because of these, my blood and my perfect merits, you must give this child a place in thy heavenly kingdom. God the Father granted the request. We are certain of it; for God the Father can never resist the power of the merits of his only begotten Son. Clothed in robes of spotless white this precious little one is now in the presence of God forever.

All this was brought about by the baptism of this little one. Baptism is the means which God appointed, through which children are received into his covenant. When this child was baptized it became a child of God. In its baptism it was washed in the blood of Jesus, and thereby cleansed of the stain of original sin. Thereby it was regenerated and received the gift of the

Holy Spirit. Thereby it was made an heir of eternal life. You, the parents of this child, should be of good cheer today. You did your duty towards your little son. You brought him to God in holy baptism. You have no cause for self-reproach, for you left nothing undone which was necessary for your child's salvation. How easy it is for me to comfort you. I can simply point to the baptism of this child, and then to the infallible promise of God's Word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Here you have the absolute certainty that your beloved one is saved.

In our text the prophet Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to the Shunammite woman with the question: "Is it well with the child?" Oh, what a question for a mother in such an hour. Her heart was breaking. Grief over the death of her only child was crushing her. But her soul was filled with faith; and her faith finds expression in her answer: Yes; it is well; it is well with the child. Just so today, dear friends, God sends me to you with the question: Is it well with your child? By this question he would try your faith. Will you not have the faith to answer with the mother of our text: "It is well"?

2. It Is Well With The Mourning Parents

The faith of this mother in our text becomes more remarkable in our eyes when we consider secondly that she also says that it is well with the parents who mourn.

"Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband?" This is the question which the prophet addressed to the mother of our text. To this question she replied: "It is well." Oh, the faith which is revealed to us in these words. This poor woman had just experienced the greatest calamity of her life. After many years of waiting and praying God had finally given her the gift of a son. That son was then her joy and her crown. She loved him more dearly than anything else in this world. She loved him more dearly than her own life. In him she placed all of her hopes and fondest expectations. But with one cruel blow all of these hopes were blasted; and the poor mother's heart was crushed with grief. Even under these circumstances she answers the prophet's question with the words: "It is well"; it is well with my husband; it is well with me.

How was it possible for a mother to express such sentiment under such sad circumstances? It was possible only because of her faith in God. She

believed that God was a loving heavenly Father. She trusted that he always did everything best for his children. She believed that everything that came to her from the hand of her heavenly Father was intended for her welfare. For the child of God it is always well under all circumstances, this was her faith. She did not understand it all. She certainly was not able to comprehend that the tearing of her precious little son from her and the breaking of her heart would in some way be for her good. But she believed it. She believed without understanding. The faith expressed by the great apostle so many years afterwards in the words, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," this was the faith that filled the bosom of this grief-stricken mother.

This is the faith, dear friends, which must fill your hearts this day. You know that God loves you. "God is love." Everything that he does to you proceeds from a Being who is purest love. He finds no pleasure in your sorrow. "When you weep, he, in the tenderness of his heart, weeps with you. You know also that God is almighty." "With God nothing is impossible." Every event in your lives is controlled absolutely by the almighty hand of God. The conclusion is irresistible, that everything that happens to you who are children of God must be for your welfare. "It is well" with the child of God at all times and under all circumstances.

I am not able to demonstrate to you just how every event in your lives must serve you for your welfare. For example this sad event which has come into your lives in these sad days, how can I make you see and understand that this is good for you? But this is not a matter for sight or understanding. It is a matter for faith. You have the promises of God's Word; and you know that God's Word is true. "It is impossible that God should lie." Only believe God's promises. Believe that God loves you and does everything for your welfare. This faith will be your comfort.

Suppose that you were about to become the queen of a beautiful kingdom. Your kingdom is ready. The day of your coronation is set. A magnificent crown is being prepared for you, made of purest gold and set with many precious gems. The skillful artisan who is preparing your crown comes to you and asks you for a very costly diamond which you have in your possession. He would set it in your crown, and on the day of your coronation return it to you in the crown, the most beautiful jewel of them all. Would you refuse to give it to him? Oh, no, you would gladly place it into his hand; and joyfully look forward to the day near at hand when the

crown would be placed on your head, and this your precious diamond sparkle most brightly in it. This is not a mere supposition. It is an actual fact. God has prepared a throne for you where you shall sit and reign with his Son in heaven. He is now preparing your crown, and such a crown as it will be has never adorned the brow of any earthly queen. In these sad days he came to you and asked for your most precious diamond, your dear little son, in order to set it in your royal crown. Surely you will not refuse to give it to him. You will cheerfully place it into his hands, knowing that it is in safekeeping. You will joyfully look forward to that great day when it shall be returned to you set in your royal crown; and then you shall rejoice in its presence forever.

Certainly then you will join with the mother of our text and say: "It is well." It is well with the beloved child who has fallen asleep. It is well with the parents who mourn. Amen.

8. The Two Sides Of God's Providence By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“...What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” – John 13:7.

Occasion: Preached at the funeral of a boy who died from a contagious disease. Memorial service

Christian Friends:

On the twentieth of last month God called E — G — out of time into eternity. For some weeks previous he was afflicted with scarlet fever and while he recovered from that disease, it left other troubles behind which ended his life. On account of the contagious nature of that disease, many friends were timid about attending the burial and it was thought proper to hold a memorial service here today. We are here to call to mind this only child and to praise God for what he did for him; to comfort the parents and all others who mourn with the sweet comfort offered believers in the Scriptures.

Death is always sad; but not every death is sad in the same degree. When an old man full of years and satisfied with life takes his departure, we look for it. It is according to the laws of nature. It must be so. Like ripened fruit the time comes when it must fall to the ground. Like a shock of fully matured corn he is gathered into the heavenly garner. But when God calls a child away, the case is different. We say: Why was this life cut short? why was it not permitted to run its course? The death of a child is always sad; but the death of an only child is doubly so. When the Lord takes one child from among a number, the parents have others which may receive their

affection and to whom they may cling. But when an only child is taken from a household the loss seems irreparable.

While we extend to this family our sympathy, we are forced to say: “How wonderful are the ways of God!” If it were not for the revelations which we have in the Bible we would be led to doubt God’s goodness and wisdom and we might even despair. But the Scriptures give us light concerning God’s ways. This text shows us that God’s providence has two sides – the dark side and the bright.

The Two Sides of God’s Providence

1. The Dark Side

Jesus and his disciples were gathered around the festive board. He had instituted the Holy Supper and thus had shown his fervent love for them and his entire church. When supper was ended he girded himself with a towel and began to wash the feet of the disciples. When he came to Simon Peter he was surprised that the Lord should render him such a lowly service. Ordinarily in a Jewish household this devolved on a servant or a slave. So Peter who recognized Christ as the Son of God was disinclined to accept such a humble service from his Master. But our Lord prevailed upon him and gave him this explanation: “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Our Lord acknowledged that there was a dark side to the act, but he held out the prospect of a bright side.

Christ’s words apply not only to Peter, but to all his disciples. We find it difficult to submit to him, because we do not understand what he is doing. God himself says: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

God’s will in the present case is mysterious. Here was a home that was brightened by the gift of a son. It was a good home for him. There was abundant provision for all his temporal wants and there was a bright prospect for the future. Christian influence was being shed upon him and he was being raised in the narrow way. The boy’s whole life was developing in a normal way. His mind was unfolding. It was absorbing not only secular

knowledge, but the great truths of the Scriptures. Why should God take him, when so many around evidently will grow up to become a curse to their parents and society in general? Certainly there is a mystery about it that we cannot understand.

Because we cannot understand the ways of God is no proof that they are not right and good. Let us not forget that man is finite, while God is infinite. The finite cannot possibly contain the infinite. How can we grasp his thoughts and see through all his leadings? Is a father wrong because a child cannot comprehend the correctness of his actions? How often in childhood we are mystified by the actions of our parents, even at times doubting their love for us; but now having grown to man's estate how different all looks and how sure we are that in all their dealings with us they meant only good and in everything were actuated only by love. The same hand that blesses, also smites; but in both blessing and smiting it is the same hand moved by the same will and tempered by the same love.

Then after all, could you believe in a God whom you could comprehend? If you could fully comprehend him, you would be his equal. When a boy understands all the acts and motives of a man, he is no longer a boy, but has developed into a man. He is the man's equal. Would you care to entrust the direction of your life to one who is your equal? Do you not feel the need of a God who in wisdom and power infinitely surpasses you? A God who is so great that you cannot grasp his ways! A God who is so wise that you can just blindly follow and rest easy! The Bible tells you that that is the kind of a God you have and your experience agrees with this revelation. Then take your reason captive. You cannot answer all its perplexing questions. Then turn a deaf ear to all the wicked doubts raised by godless men. The God that you have is the very kind that you need. Nothing else could satisfy your soul. You could lean on no other. You could follow no other. This God who is as much above you as the heavens are above the earth will do some things that will perplex and mystify you. But the creature must not call the Creator to an account and must not question his leadings. God will speak again and in time or in eternity he will dispel the mystery that now surrounds you.

While we cannot understand God's leadings we can submit to them. There is probably no petition in the Lord's Prayer so hard for us to pray in the proper spirit as the third one. It is easy to say, "Give us this day our daily bread." It is comparatively easy to pray: "Thy Kingdom come." But,

oh, how vastly different it is for us fallen, self-willed mortals to say in the right spirit: "Thy will be done." We say the words in times of prosperity, when all is bright around us, when we are blessed with health and work and opportunity, when the heart is merry and life is one sweet song, when there is not a minor note nor a discord in the melody, when the rose is steeped in dew, when the fruits are luscious and when the sun arises in a blaze of glory. Thank God these days and occasions come and the heart wells over with joy. But God knows that there are other days. They must come in a sin-cursed world and they do come. And when they come, can we still say: "Thy will be done"? When adversity, poverty, sickness, pain, dishonor, shame, back-bitings and the whole troop of sin's children come into the house and soul, what then? When death comes, and the chair is empty, the patter of little feet is heard no more, when the encircling arms have turned icy and the luster of the eye is gone and the heartbeat is stopped, what then? Can you still say, "Thy will be done"? Or do you say with the furrows growing deeper in your brow, with emotion smothering the voice and inexpressible pain in the heart: "Is this the will of my God? Yesterday he brightened my home with one who was the image of myself. I know that that was his will for I was inexpressibly happy. But today, his face has turned from me, the joy has gone out of my life, and my heart is breaking." In your weakness you say, "O God, thy will be done, but not today, some other time, in some other way, in some other home." How hard it is for frail, sinful man to pray, "Thy will be done."

The Spirit of God comes to our aid and assists our weakness.

He sets before us the perfect example of Jesus and he gives us that spirit of resignation which the Master manifested. Behold him in Gethsemane. He lies prostrate. Drops of bloody sweat ooze from his forehead and he utters those words: "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me. But not my will, but thine be done." Was it hard for the Holy One to bear the cross? Did he tremble and shrink back? He did; but yet he submitted. Knowing full well that the race could be redeemed by blood alone, that that was the will of his Father, that divine justice must be satisfied, he denied his own will and wrestled with himself until his will conformed to that of the Father. That was the darkest, the most trying hour of his life, but he prevailed. With that example before you and with his Spirit in your heart, submission will come, resignation will follow, your prayer for strength will be answered and this sorrow will not crush you.

That Spirit teaches you that all things serve for good that love the Lord. “All things.” Hold fast to these words. Then not only the blessings of life, but its trials and crosses will serve for good. No one will be able to show you how this dispensation will fit into your lives and helps to accomplish God’s ultimate purpose, the salvation of your soul, but it will. It takes faith, and having that you are planting your feet upon an immovable foundation. God’s design in your life will be accomplished. You take a watch and look into the mechanism and you see large wheels and small ones; some moving forward and others backward; some rapidly and some slowly, and you say, “This is all confusion, there is no design here.” But just turn it over and you will find that every movement of every wheel fits into the one purpose of driving the hands forward. Confusion on the one side and design on the other. No matter how confusing the mechanism may be to an untrained mind, it is all plain to a trained mind. The maker of the watch understands every movement and fits every part to one purpose. So says Paul: “All things serve together for good.” If you will hold that fast and remember that God is love, that he loves you, that not a sparrow falls from the housetops nor a hair from the head without his knowledge, you will believe his promise, however dark the providence of your lives may be today.

God’s providence has a dark side. We are walking in it now. Thank God it also has a bright side.

2. The Bright Side

Even in this present life the time frequently comes that the Lord leads us to know and understand his ways.

It was so in the life of his disciples. After Jesus was crucified and arose from the dead and ascended into heaven and the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost how different all the life and work of Christ appeared to his followers. Then they understood what before puzzled them and Jesus was glorified before them as never before. When the Lord talked to them of his crucifixion they tried to dissuade him from such a fate. They thought only of his suffering and humiliation; but after the redemption of the race was accomplished and the Holy Ghost had enlightened them, how their view was changed and how they glorified God for what his Son had done. On the night that Jesus washed the feet of Peter and the rest of his disciples,

they did not yet understand the lesson of humble service that he was giving them by his example; but by and by they understood the spirit of his work and themselves tried to exemplify it.

When Joseph of old was sold by his brethren into Egyptian bondage, things must have looked very dark unto him and he certainly did not understand how that was a step in the fulfillment of his two dreams. When God gave him the vision of all the sheaves bowing down to him, he no doubt understood that he was to be highly exalted. But when the caravan took him away, when he was sold and enslaved in Potiphar's house, when he was cast into prison for three years, he must have had great difficulty in fitting the promise and fulfillment together. But when he was exalted next to Pharaoh, when he collected the grain of Egypt and especially when his brethren came to buy grain and when at last the whole family were located in Goshen and saved from famine, then the bright side of God's providence appeared unto him. It was then that he said: "Ye meant it unto evil, but God meant it unto good."

In the life of Abraham the bright side of God's providence appeared. Jehovah called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and told him to go into a land that God would show him. The Lord took him into a strange land. He separated him from all his country and its people. Think of the dark days that Abraham lived through. Was it plain to the patriarch how Jehovah would fulfill his promise to make of him a great nation when he called upon Abraham to offer his only son, Isaac? It must have been confusing. But he obeyed in spirit. But when we look back over the patriarch's life how gloriously Jehovah fulfilled his promises. We see the seed of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth were blessed. In the light of the New Testament we see what a truthful God Abraham was following and we enjoy the salvation that the Lord prepared through the patriarch. The darkness has been changed to light.

Suppose that in this present life this change from darkness to light would never come. Remember that death does not end all. There is another stage to human existence and there the problems of earth will be solved. Our God is eternal, with all eternity before him why should he be in haste? Unlike ours, his days are not like a hand-breadth, his life is not like a vapor, nor is he like a blade of grass that flourishes in the morning but is cut down and withered before night. His years endure and in that after state there will be plenty of time to unravel what has mystified us here. When life is

completed and the will of the Lord is accomplished, when we are saved and are over on the other side singing the song of redemption, when we shall no longer see fragments of his ways, but the whole completed design, then we shall understand what God has done and we shall look up to him in adoration and praise.

Even now amid the gathering gloom it is possible to see the bright side coming.

Suppose that this dispensation of God should call the attention of these parents so forcibly to the life to come as to make it a reality. To most people the unseen world is not real. To many it is a dream, a theory, a mist. It is so far removed from all their thoughts and deeds that it is left out of all their reckoning. Some day death comes. A friend is translated. The question comes. Where is he? Can I go to him? Can I see him and be reunited with him? And there is born a heavenly longing that develops into a homesickness. Now, for the first time, some realize that heaven is a reality and that it may be reached.

An old man lived fifty years on the banks of a stream, but he never crossed over. All his possessions, all his family, all his activity were on this side. One day his son was married and settled on the other side. Then the old man developed an interest for the other side. He began to inquire about it. He stood on the river's bank and looked over and one day when his longing could no longer be suppressed, he went over to the other side to see the land where his boy lived.

The world is so real. It appeals to our senses. We set our feet upon it. Here we build our homes and raise our families and fight for a living and try to realize our hopes. There is great danger that we may lose sight of heaven. Certainly a great many do. Then some day God takes a loved one over to the other side. We understand that such a one will never return to us and then there is born that inexpressible longing to follow. The follies of life no longer appeal to us. A sobriety and seriousness hitherto unknown creeps into life, and we follow the vision glorious until it leads us home.

Now we walk in the dark side of God's providence; there is often a gathering gloom and an uncertainty that is oppressive. Hold fast his hand. The clouds will roll away and when the light of another world breaks upon you, when you are walking in the bright side of his providence, you will say: "He hath done all things well." Amen.

9. Death And Sleep – A Comparison And A Contrast By Rev. George J. Gongoware

“He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth...” – Matt. 9:24.

Occasion: For a child

IN THE DEATH AND RESTORATION of this child we have both a parable and prophecy. As a parable it illustrates the resurrection of the body. As a prophecy it predicts the resurrection of the body and testifies to the reality of the life to come. “The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.” The chief work of the devil is death. “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

Death and life are opposites. Where death is, taking the word in its full sense, there life is not. Where life is, taking the word in its complete meaning, there death is not.

But while death and life are opposites, they are very closely connected, or rather related. They are the opposite sides of the same wonderful mystery; the mystery of being. Where life ends death begins; where death ends life begins. And yet it is impossible to note the exact point where the one ends and the other begins.

It is like the succession of day and night. The day dies, and the day dawns. But who can note the exact instant when the day finally sinks into night, or when the morning is born?

Death and life are both in our world. We know that life came first. We understand that death, in the full sense of the word, came as a result of sin, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” “Sin bringeth forth death.” Sin, in its very nature and essence, is death.

Now, if we look at the matter from one point of view, in this world death everywhere pursues and assails life. If we look at the matter from the opposite point of observation, life everywhere pursues and assails death.

Finally, life will triumph over death everywhere, except in the heart of him who refuses stubbornly and persistently to believe in Jesus Christ. It is not death that finally swallows up life, but the contrary. Paul says: "Death is swallowed up in victory." That thrilling announcement, in substance, is made in several places in the Bible.

Even in the world of inanimate nature the same life rises to higher forms and conditions through what looks very much like death, as when the buried seed reappears in the form of flower and fruit, or when the creeping worm entombed in its cocoon breaks forth as a beautiful winged creature. This portrays the distinct aspiration of man for higher and fuller life – the aspiration and the faith of the Christian heart which the poet expresses with such intense ardor and impressive beauty:

"O Love, that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light, that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be."

It even seems that, under the benevolent and beneficent omnipotence of God, death actually ministers to life, and is a condition or a process through which life is assisted and promoted.

If death is like sleep, or if, in any sense, death is a form of sleep this is obviously true. And from the text and from many other scriptural passages this is certainly clearly established. Jesus said, "The maid is not DEAD but sleepeth."

There is no question about the fact that she was dead. The ruler had reported the fact of his daughter's death when he first came to the Master, "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live."

"When they came to the house they found that preparations for the funeral had already begun.

The minstrels are there playing their plaintive dirges. The hired mourners are uttering their wailing cries.

It was directly to these that Jesus said: " Give place, the maid is not dead."

They ridiculed such an assurance. They were too familiar with many forms of death to be mistaken.

There can be no doubt, then, that the ruler's child was dead; and that Jesus did not intend to be understood as saying that she was merely in a faint, or in a deep, torpid sleep induced by her disease.

An exact parallel, almost, to this incident is the case of Lazarus.

"When Lazarus died, Jesus, who, at the time, was some distance away, said to his disciples:"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."

His disciples misunderstood him. They supposed he meant that Lazarus had fallen into a natural sleep, and they were pleased, for they knew that was a favorable and encouraging condition. Then Jesus told them plainly: "Lazarus is dead."

No possibility of mistake. In that case certainly Jesus spoke of natural death as a sleep.

In Deut. (31:14, 16) we read: "The Lord said unto Moses, Behold thy days approach that thou must die." "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers."

In I Kings (2:10) it is recorded: "So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David."

In one of Paul's sermons, preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, we find this peculiar statement: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption" (Acts 13:36).

Here the process of death or dying is simply described as falling asleep; as gently sinking down upon the soft pillows of unconscious slumber.

The same word is used to describe the violent death of Stephen. While his persecutors stoned him, and while, like his Master, he was praying God to forgive them, Stephen "fell asleep."

There are two other passages which in a very forcible manner and connection speak of death as a sleep.

I Thess. 4:14. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

1 Cor. 15:20. "But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep."

We find, therefore, that one of the most frequent, and certainly one of the most gentle, beautiful and comforting figures under which the Scriptures speak of death, is this of sleep.

We are not to understand that death IS __ A SLEEP, EITHER AS TO THE BODY OR THE SOUL, BUT THAT DEATH IS __ LIKE sleep so much so, that we may learn a great deal about death from what we know and observe of sleep.

Similarities Between Death And Sleep

Let us note some of the most obvious of these points of similarity between death and sleep.

1. The Outward Appearance

The poets and others who have compared death to sleep doubtless were led to do so first of all because those who have just died and those who are sleeping, to the casual and often to the close observer, appear much the same. The same quietness; the same peacefulness; often the same expression lingers upon the face of the dead which we have seen playing through the features of the living sleeper.

Little children cannot comprehend the difference between sleep and death. To them the one is as the other.

This outward resemblance, of course, lasts only for a little while. Death soon disintegrates and destroys the earthly tabernacle of the body. As death withdraws the soul from the outer courts of the body, so it soon withdraws the body itself into the sphere of the invisible world. But until that takes place, or begins to take place, death and sleep look like sisters and counterparts of each other.

2. Unconsciousness As To The Outer World

When we fall asleep the soul retreats to the inner places of our being. The doors of the senses are closed; the curtains of the sense-windows are drawn, as we close the doors and draw the curtains of the windows in our houses when the night falls and we retire to rest.

So in death, the life does not go out with the breath, but it goes back into the deep places of its own being; goes in the same direction, if we may so speak, as it does in falling asleep; and enters into the spiritual world from that side of our being which is turned toward the spiritual world, and which really, even while we live here in this outward world, lies within that spiritual realm.

In sleep we are unconscious of the outer world, except in so far as this world presses upon our dulled and inactive senses in a dark and confused way, and thus holds us, as it were, on the borderland of wakefulness.

So, in death there can be no direct consciousness of this outer world. For the dead there is no possibility of consciousness through the bodily channels of sense and sensibility. These have been destroyed.

But as in sleep the soul has a kind of consciousness of the world of sense, so in death the soul retains its impression of the material world; a memory of it, and of all that came into the soul's experience while it was passing through the material world. So too in death the soul carries within itself a consciousness of the continued existence of the world; of the activities and developments that go forward in the world as it moves toward its divinely appointed goal.

Thus the dead in Christ hope and look, and wait for the full salvation which will be attained at the end of the world; at the resurrection and glorification of the body.

But the dead have no direct communication with or immediate knowledge of what takes place in this world.

If they ever have such knowledge it must be by the special permission of God; and it must be effected in and through Jesus Christ. Because they abide in Christ in a most intimate and peculiar way until the resurrection of the body.

3. Release From The Labors And Cares Of The World

They that sleep rest from their labors. They are released from all cares and burdens, and sufferings of life.

The sorrowing are at peace in sleep, and the sick are well. Even the wicked, in sleep, are withdrawn from their wickedness, and held in the kind and merciful hand of God away from the consequences of their transgressions.

To them that are in the Lord death brings a far more complete deliverance from the burdens of outward life. "They rest from their labors," and "they enter into the joy of their Lord." They lay aside the weapons of their earthly warfare. Their conflict is ended. Their victory is won. Their crown no man taketh from them.

To those who do not die in the Lord, and who therefore do not sleep in him or rest in him, there will indeed be a discontinuance of actual sin, since they have no longer power to actualize their evil principles in external performances, but they are separated from God, and shut up to the companionship of their own evil natures. Their condition is one of darkness and of indescribable wretchedness.

4. Sleep And Death Continue, But Look To An Awakening

We never think of sleep as a destructive condition. On the contrary, it is constructive. It builds up. It refreshes and restores. The sick, the weary, the exhausted do well when they sleep.

All this, we are fully persuaded, is eminently true of what we call death, viewed from the Christian standpoint.

God keeps us in death. Keeps the body; not the corruptible body that is, or that dies, but the body that shall be. Each one his own body; his own, proper, identical body.

The interim between death and the resurrection of the body is not a period of stagnation; not an absolute cessation. But it is a time of life; a condition of inner growth; of positive development; a state of preparation and progress for both soul and body; a movement of the whole being toward the goal which will be reached in the resurrection.

5. Sleep And Death End In Awakening

All natural sleep ends in awakening. The soul flows back into the outer courts of its tabernacles. The doors of the senses are opened; the curtains are drawn aside from the windows; the inner life looks out upon the natural world, and enters into the enjoyment of it.

Every awakening from natural sleep is a beautiful parable of the resurrection.

Thanks be to God that in this respect especially death is like sleep. Death does not end all. It does not end anything except certain outward conditions. Be sure that you learn this thoroughly. Death is simply transition. First a going from the outer to the inner; then a returning from the inner to the outer again. An awakening, a coming forth. Not a coming back into the same conditions precisely as was the case with this maid of the text, but a going forth into new and higher condition of real, outward, objective life.

Oh, what a thrilling thought is this of the resurrection! What a wonderful thing it is to awaken from sleep! How vastly more wonderful to awaken from death!

This we shall do, too, as certainly as we do the other.

When the Master says of this maid, "She is not dead but sleepeth," he says the same of every child of man. Not dead! not dead! no one is dead, any more than the ruler's daughter was, or than Lazarus was!

Our loved ones who have gone from us are not dead. They sleep. And if they sleep in Jesus they will awaken to eternal life.

This is the sweet lesson we learn here at the house of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. To prove his word, Jesus took the little girl by the hand! told her to arise, and she was restored to life!

It is an exceedingly important thought that the death-sleep must be either in Jesus or out of him.

If it is in him, the awakening will be to life and blessedness. If it is not in him, the awakening must be to a condition that is death; to a living condition the misery and wretchedness of which we cannot even conceive, much less describe; but this seems to be a feature, or characteristic, of that death to which the lost awaken from the death that is like sleep, from it sleep is forever banished.

They that reject his love, and disregard the overtures of his mercy, and live unto themselves, and imagine that they are sufficient unto themselves, are doomed to dwell in darkness without sleep, but “God giveth his beloved sleep.”

10. God Is Love By Rev. W. E. Schramm

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.”— I John 4:16.

Occasion: For a child

Beloved Brethren, especially dear Parents of this Sleeping Child:

Among all the temporal gifts which God bestows upon us, there is none to which our hearts cling more fondly than to the children with which he has blessed us. Dearer far than wealth dearer even than our health, are these little ones in our homes! And when these precious treasures are taken from us, how it tears at the heart to give them up! Your loss, my dear brethren is a grievous one. In this sore affliction which you have sustained, you have the deep sympathy of your brethren and friends. We feel for you, we sorrow with you, we share your grief. The sympathy of brethren, in the day of trial, is not to be lightly esteemed. This fellow-feeling has indeed a soothing effect. But I am glad that I have something still more effective to offer you in this hour as a balm for your bleeding hearts. I bring you not human sympathy, but divine comfort. Heaven has the only real remedy for earth's real sorrows, and this remedy in all its blessed fullness, God gives us in his Word. From this unfailing source I bring you a message of consolation:

“God Is Love”

It is doubtful if there are three words in any language which convey a greater wealth of truth than is contained in this brief text. Familiar words they are; so familiar that they are in danger of being regarded as

commonplace and treated with a lack of appreciation. May the Holy Spirit enable us to delve below their mere surface in order that our souls may taste the sweet comfort which lies therein.

There are two thoughts concerning the love of God which I shall try to impress upon your hearts in this hour of sorrow: The first is that God loves you; the second, that he loves your child.

It would not be strange if, in this time of gloom, you should be harassed to some extent by temptations to doubt the love of God. Perplexities doubtless arise in your minds, and human reason cannot dispel them. A score of questions may clamor for answers which human wisdom cannot give. "If God loves us, why does he take from us our dearest earthly treasure?" "If God loves us, why does he break down the one barrier which separates us from a childless old age?" When such questions thrust themselves upon you, you grope in vain for an answer. You cannot explain these "why's" and "wherefore's," and I frankly and freely admit that I have no explanation for them. God has not called me to explain the mysteries of his providence, but, my brethren, he has called me to declare his infinite and abiding love. "God is love." This is faith's response to every question of an anguished and perplexed soul. "God is love." In this mighty ocean of truth you may drown your every troublesome doubt. "God is love." This is the only proper antidote for the poison of Satan's insinuations. Therefore when the grief within us is bitter, and the gloom about us is heavy, let us hold the more firmly to the precious truth that God loves us.

The evidence of the great love which God bears to us is by no means meager or uncertain. Amply sufficient are the proofs upon which faith may lay hold. Both in God's Word and in his works we find abundant confirmation of this truth. Through the mouth of his holy prophets, God declares that he loves his people with an everlasting love. The life and death of Jesus show forth God's love with marvelous plainness. Every page of the Gospels is therefore eloquent with this truth, but it seems to have remained for John, the great apostle of love, to bring to a climax all these declarations and affirm that "God is love." He is not only loving but he is love. His very essence, his very nature, is love. Love is necessary to his existence. Without love he would not exist as God. This is a grand truth. It is a comforting doctrine.

And now, my brethren, I wish to impress upon your hearts the fact that it is this God of love who rules and reigns over us. It is this same God of love

who permitted sickness to enter your home, and who has now taken your child unto himself. If it were an enemy who hates you, who has brought this sorrow upon you, I would feel that there is little that I could do but to sit down and weep with you, but it is the hand of infinite love, which has smitten you. That thought will remove the sting from your sorrow; it will take the bitterness out of your tears. If your loving Lord has done it, then he must have some good and wise purpose in view. Our eyes cannot see that purpose, “for now we see through a glass darkly”; but faith trusts God’s love, come what may and will continue to trust until we stand in his presence and see face to face.

And now permit me to dwell for a moment upon the thought, that God who loves you, loves also your child. When the disciples of old, deeming it inconsistent with the dignity of their Master to notice children, forbade the parents who brought their babes to receive his blessing, Jesus expressed his indignation at the disciples’ interference. He then showed how precious these little ones are in his sight, by taking them up in his loving arms, putting his hands upon them and blessing them.

God also showed his love for children when he ordained a sacrament by which even the babes may become partakers of his grace. He still earnestly desires that our little ones shall be brought unto him and he has given us Baptism as a means whereby they may receive his blessing. By this sacrament the children of men become the children of God. Cleansed from sin, they are planted in Christ and made heirs of all the riches and joys of heaven. It is your comfort, dear brethren, to know that your child was thus blest. In her tender infancy she was made a lamb of the Good Shepherd’s flock. You need have no misgivings as regards her place in eternity. You have a positive assurance that she rests in the arms of the Lord who loves her, for “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” In the home on high she is delivered from all evil. In the presence of her God she shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. His love for her is your guarantee that it is well with her.

Therefore, dearly beloved, the assurance of God’s love must be to you a solace in this your sorrow. Hold fast to this knowledge with an unfaltering faith. Let neither the tears in your eyes nor grief in your hearts obscure from your vision the infinite love of your Heavenly Father. I pray that this conviction may temper the sadness of your parting. May the grace be yours to wait patiently for the consummation of God’s plans. In a little while we

shall join our loved ones and in the courts of heaven our voices shall mingle with theirs in everlasting praises, and the theme of our song shall be this, that “God is love.” Amen.

11. The Savior's Word Of Comfort To Sorrowing Parents By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said unto him. Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman said unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then enquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him. Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him. Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.” – John 4:46-53.

Occasion: The death of a child

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD:

Our friends are in deep sorrow today. Their once happy home has been turned into a house of mourning. When in sorrow, we look about for someone to comfort us. It does the poor, bleeding heart good to know that someone sympathizes with it. But a Christian friend has more than mere sympathy to offer when the gloom of sadness overshadows a home; he has words of comfort. Let me today lead you to our best Friend, the Lord Jesus, our blessed Savior, that you may hear from his holy lips a word of sweet comfort which shall act like healing ointment on the painful wound which the death of your beloved child has inflicted.

The Savior's Word of Comfort to Sorrowing Parents

1. The occasion on which it was spoken.
2. The word itself, and
3. The spirit in which it was received.

I. The Occasion On Which It Was Spoken

In the city of Capernaum there lived a nobleman. He was married and had a family. God had made him a happy husband and father. He enjoyed the blessings of home. A happy home is the fittest type of heaven on earth. There are no sweeter joys than those which a child of God enjoys in the bosom of a Christian family. The family is the most precious thing which sinful man has saved from the shipwreck of the fall.

But sorrow came to this happy home. The sun of prosperity was darkened by the clouds of adversity. Sickness with all its anxiety made its appearance. There were days of weary labor and nights of anxious watching. The clouds grew thicker and blacker until the very shadow of death hung over this once happy home. Every effort was put forth to stay the hand of the fell destroyer. What human wisdom and skill could do was done to relieve the little sufferer, but to no avail. Day after day and night after night the anxious parents hoped and prayed and waited, but hour by hour it became more and more evident that nothing but a miracle could save the child. Who can describe the anxiety which lies in the words: "Sir, come down ere my child die"? The child's life hung by a thread. The sands were fast running through the hour-glass and any moment might mark the passing of the last grain. If the child had once closed its eyes in death all hope was gone. Only where there is life is there hope.

It is needless for me to remind you of the fact that this home of the nobleman at Capernaum is a type of your own home. How happy you were when by the word of God himself you were united in the bonds of holy wedlock. As husband and wife you were happy in each other's love. There was no dearer spot to you on earth than home, sweet home. And then when God blessed you with a child the cup of your joy seemed full to overflowing. You experienced the feelings of the psalmist when he says: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Ps. 127:3). You shared the joy which God promises them that fear him when he says: "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh

in his ways... . Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table” (Ps. 128:1, 3).

How happy you were when in the sacrament of holy Baptism you could lay this child into the arms of the Savior; when you had the assurance that he had received it as a lamb into his fold; that it was now a member of his spiritual household, the church, and was in the possession of all the rich gifts which the Son of God died to secure for fallen men; that having been conceived and born in sin it was now regenerated by water and the Spirit and made an heir of God’s everlasting glory. Yes, it was a happy day when your child was carried by its sponsors into the house of God to be given and dedicated to the Lord and his service forever.

But your joy was seemingly to be of short duration. Only too soon were you to experience the sad fact that there is no perfect joy on earth, that this world is a vale of tears. Your once healthy child took sick, and with its sickness came days of anxiety and nights of watching. At first you hoped that it might be but a slight ailment, but only too soon it became evident that the trouble was serious. You did all in your power to save your child. But all medical attention and all human skill could not stay the hand of the fell destroyer. Your child’s last hour had come. With bated breath you heard its last expiring sigh. The little heart no longer beat. Its bright eyes were closed in death.

Its little form, once aglow with life and a thing of beauty, now rigid, and the pallor of death has been laid upon the rosy cheeks. Sorrow soon trod on the heels of joy and your happy home was turned into a house of mourning. Yes, the home of the centurion is a picture of your own home not only in its happiness, but also in its sorrow. This is the occasion on which the Savior speaks his word of comfort to sorrowing parents. Let us listen to this word.

II. The Word Itself

“Thy son liveth.” This word occurs three times in our text. A strange word indeed! When the father left home his child was at the point of death. He scarcely hoped that it might live until he could fetch the Savior, the great Physician, who had helped so many in their afflictions and healed them of their diseases. And now he hears a word which by far exceeds his fondest hopes, yes, his most fervent expectations. If the Savior, who knew all

things, had said: "It is too late, your son is now dead. If you had come earlier I might have helped him," the sorrowing father would not have been surprised. But he hears the very opposite.

"Thy son liveth." The disease has left him. He is saved from death. He is restored to health and strength. The clouds have dispersed and the sun of happiness again shines over your home. Your tears of sorrow may be turned into those of joy. Sighs and groans may give place to shouts of exultation and peals of laughter.

Can you imagine these words of the Savior spoken to you on this occasion? "Thy son liveth." And they are true in the case of your child, just as true as they were when spoken of the child of the nobleman. The soul of your child has not died. It has only been temporarily separated from the body. It is with the Lord in glory. Jesus has taken your child to himself. "Where I am there shall also my servant be" (John 12:26). He is the good Shepherd of whom the prophet says: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: and shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom" (Isa. 40:11). When the soul of your child left its tenement of clay it was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. Death is no more death to those who die in the Lord. When they die they in reality only begin rightly to live. We are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The sting of death is sin. Sin is really what makes death terrible. But where sin is forgiven why should we fear to die, or weep and lament when our loved ones die? Death only removes them from a world of sin and sorrow to one of holiness and happiness. You have every reason for thinking of your child as being in heaven, in Paradise. Oh, if we could but realize how happy they are in the presence of God, in the company of angels and saints, how soon the fountain of our tears would dry up.

And even with reference to the poor, wasted body of your child these words of the Savior: "Thy son liveth," have a comforting meaning. In due time this body shall rise again. It also shall eventually live, though for a time it must return to dust and ashes. We look for a general resurrection of the dead at the last day. Then shall the dead in Christ arise in glorified bodies to life and immortality. How beautiful our children will be on that day when their resurrected bodies shall be fashioned after the glorified body of the risen Savior! There is nothing so lovely in this world as a little child, but how much more lovely will they be on that day when they stand before us in the renewed image of God both as to body and soul.

The Savior said to the nobleman: “Go thy way.” Go home, go back to your family. Cease your fretting and lamenting. There is no longer any reason for mourning. Go about your work as though nothing had happened. The cause for your anxiety has been removed, let the effect also be gone.

And to you also he says: “Go your way.” Do not give way to over much sorrow. Dry your tears. Do not act as though all were lost. Let not despair take hold of your sorrowing heart. Weep not as those who have no hope. Think of your child not as in the grave but as in heaven, not as a prey to corruption but as it will appear on the glorious mourn of the resurrection.

III. The Spirit In Which It Was Received

And now let me show you in the third place the spirit in which this comforting word of the Savior was received. This word of the Savior sounds foolish to human reason. The nobleman had just left his child a few hours ago at the point of death. It was a question whether in the mean time it had not passed away. Jesus did not even offer to go with the anxious father and lay his hands upon the dying child. Much less did he give him medicine, salve or ointment to use for its betterment. He simply spoke the word: “Thy son liveth.” Had the nobleman followed his reason he would have said to himself at least, if not to the Savior: I am sadly disappointed. The Master will not even condescend to go with me to look at my dying child. I will go home and submit to the inevitable.

Much the same way you must regard this word of the Savior if you simply follow human reason. When you hear the word: “Thy son liveth,” your reason says: I know better, my son is dead. I saw him close his eyes in death. I watched his last expiring breath. I felt his ice-cold hands. I laid my hand on his brow on which stood the death sweat. I kissed his lifeless lips. There is no doubt about it: he is dead and we must bury him for his body will soon begin to mortify and decay. Everything that your eyes see and your hands feel and all your senses perceive indicates that your child is not alive but dead.

And yet what do we read of the nobleman? He took reason captive under faith. “And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and went his way.” His faith clung to the Savior’s word in spite of human reason. He based his hopes not on what he had seen with his own eyes but

on what the Savior told him. Jesus' word was surer to him even than the evidence of his own senses. His eyes or his hands might deceive him, but Jesus could never deceive him. He was positively sure that his son was alive and well because Jesus said so.

Oh, that you might also have such a faith in the truth of the Savior's word in this sad hour. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5). We Christians are to live by faith and not by sight. "Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). He trusted God against reason and was not disappointed. "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18).

The nobleman's faith made him happy. Even before he reached home he had the joyful assurance that his child was alive and in good health. How much happier he was on his way home than when he left it. The clouds of sorrow were gone. His heart was full of cheerful hope, of blessed assurance. He surely went on his way rejoicing. And so your sorrow will give place to joy if you believe the Savior's word and put your trust in his promises. The firmer your faith the greater your joy. The comforting words of the Savior will avail you nothing without faith. At first the nobleman's faith was weak. He felt that the Savior must come down to his house and lay his hand upon the dying child if any good was to be accomplished. Jesus rebuked him for this weakness: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." But the man's faith grew in his intercourse with Jesus. If you feel that your faith is weak ask God to strengthen it. And here also will be fulfilled the promise: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

Then finally let us note that what the nobleman believed, he in due time also saw with his own eyes. Even on his way home his servants met him with the joyful message: "Thy son liveth." And when he reached home his eyes saw what he had so firmly believed. He saw his dear child restored to health and strength. He took him up in his arms, kissed him and thanked God for his wonderful deliverance.

And you too shall at last see what you now believe. Yes, our faith shall in due time be changed into sight. AWe hope to see our loved ones again and this hope will not be disappointed. They have gone before and we shall follow in God's own time. Oh, what a joyful reunion that will be when we meet before the throne of God in the New Jerusalem, to be forever with the Lord!

“Why should I shrink at pain and woe.
Or feel at death dismay?
I’ve Canaan’s goodly land in view,
And realms of endless joy.”

Amen.

12. Jesus Loveth Little Children

By Rev. M. R. Walter

“He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them In his bosom...” – Isaiah 40:11.

Occasion: For a child

The loving Saviour tells us that he is the Good Shepherd. He calls all the true believers his sheep. As the Good Shepherd, he loves his flock. He knows every sheep in his flock by name. There is not a single one that he neglects; he loves each one and leads it upon green pastures and besides still waters. He watches over its welfare; cares for its wants and when the day of life is spent, will take it to his fold above.

There is comfort for us in this assurance, that we are not left to our own strength and resources, but that the Savior who plans and executes his gracious will for our eternal good does all this through his love for us. He watches and renders care over us. He guides and leads us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. When trials beset us, even to the passing through the valley of the shadow of death we need fear no evil because he has promised to be with us to sustain and comfort us, to fill our souls to overflowing with his gifts of Grace. Many are they whom he has led through the Gospel by the Holy Spirit up the narrow path, through the heavenly portals into the Father's house. Prophets, Evangelists, Apostles and all the other saints of the past, of the old and the new covenants, have entered into eternal bliss through the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost.

For you too, dear parents, there is comfort in this dispensation of God by which your little daughter was taken from you. True, her history is short. Only six short months were you to keep your firstborn, your little Leonora. Your plans and anticipations and hopes entertained for her future, have been

shattered. Yet as Christian parents, the one great hope is yours, hope that present in a believer's heart, becomes a certainty by faith in God's "Word, which assures us that Jesus loveth little children, for he has said, of such, like little Leonora, is the Kingdom of Heaven. Those little saints have a far better future than we can plan and construct.

When your child was but a few days old you gave her to Jesus in Holy Baptism. You laid her in his arms for him to bless. Again he has come to your home and has gathered her in his arms to carry her in his bosom to the fold above where she shall, with the bright angels, worship God forever more.

From the words of the text it is clearly shown that:

Jesus Loveth Little Children

1. It Is A Certainty That Jesus Loveth Little Children

Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd." A good shepherd loves every sheep in his flock and cares for it. But he takes special interest in the lambkin. While it is still young and weak he carries it in his arms; when it is hungry, he feeds it; when it is cold he warms it in his bosom, just as the text here says that Jesus does for the child given to him.

Look at the example recorded in the Gospel. "And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and the disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them. Suffer the children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." It was the same assurance, dear parents, that Jesus gave you when you brought little Leonora unto him in baptism – "of such is the kingdom of God."

Although your hearts are sad and depressed, yet you know from the Gospel that this is a blessed truth that Jesus loves the little ones, so that as Christian parents you know that your child is in the care of a loving Savior.

In the old covenant God claimed the children of the Hebrews dedicated unto him as heirs of promise and possessions of the covenant grace. How well Hannah understood a parent's duty when she dedicated her infant son unto God. God received the child as a son in the kingdom of Grace. So today, God receives every child dedicated unto him through Christ in Holy Baptism; which applies by the promises of God, the grace of regeneration in the little one's soul, making it fit for heaven. Our baptized children are members of our congregations, and saints in the great church of Christ.

In reply to the disciples' question: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said: "Verily I say unto you. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Of such little ones Jesus also says: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." God takes special care of his little saints. He lovingly watches over them to bless and preserve them. In speaking of these blessed children in God's Kingdom on earth, Christ admonishes: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." With such testimony of Christ, how can we doubt that Jesus loveth little children and that he came to be their Savior too? Whatever assurance is given for the love of Christ toward adults is also to be applied to the little ones in the Christian home. The promise of eternal life to us is also a promise to our children. God does not want only grown people in his church, but like a good shepherd that he is, he wants the lambs of the flock to be gathered into his fold.

On the great day of Pentecost when the disciples were preaching the Gospel of Christ, the people cried out in anxiety for their souls' salvation: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For this promise is unto you and to your children." To our children, too, the washing of regeneration in Holy Baptism is given as the promise on Pentecost declares, and to our children, too, the love of Christ is revealed. True, loving, Christian parents realize their obligation to dedicate their babes to Christ and to strive to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Christ had the little ones in remembrance just before he ascended to

heaven, for he gave this commandment of love: “Feed my lambs!” That command is given to us. It means that we should give our babes to God in baptism and that we also promise to lead and guide and instruct them in the precious truths of the Gospel as they increase in age that they may grow in grace’ and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that when God calls them from us into eternity we may have the assurance that,

2. It Is A Comfort That Jesus Loveth Little Children

Were death to end our existence and the grave to be the only future, then life would not be worth living. There would be no comfort to dispense at funerals, no pointing to the heavenly home where Christians shall meet and never part again. There would be no hope for bereaved parents as they stand beside the empty cradle with hearts well-nigh broken, because a loved child has died. What a terrible situation to have no God nor hope of heaven!

But we thank God who has revealed himself unto us in his Word, and that he has given us the assurance of the immortality of the soul and promise of everlasting joy and bliss to all those who die blessed in the Lord. Yet we are so constituted that we mourn and weep when death comes to our homes and the life of a dear one is taken away. This is because death is the wages of sin. Although we are assured that Christ has taken away the sting of death and has won victory over the grave, yet in our weakness we mourn when our friends die. But as children of God “we mourn not as others, which have no hope.” God does not censure us for weeping at the grave. Jesus in sympathy for Mary and Martha wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus, although he was about to recall him to life. God would have our mourning and lamentation to be tempered with the sure hope in the promises of his word that speak to us in sure tones of the redemption in Christ and the eternal home where the blessed dwell with Christ forever more. He has said, “I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.” Jesus means by “ye” you and your children. He has prepared mansions for us in heaven that cannot be compared to things of this world. The beauties of the kingdoms and empires of this world shall all fade away, but the glories of heaven shall remain forever. The habitations of God’s saints above are founded on the Rock of Ages. To those mansions,

the heavenly fold, Jesus carries in his arms, pressed to his bosom, the little children, the lambs of his fold that he takes out of our homes through death.

Oh, what glory! Oh, what bliss! Oh, what joy to be a babe in Jesus' arms to be borne away to where there is no sickness, pain nor sin; where there is no darkness, woe nor death, but where all is perfection and perpetual happiness in the presence of God, It is there we hope – and it won't be long – to meet those who have gone before, for you, dear parents, to meet your little daughter among the blessed. From whence do we receive such comfort? Not from the world, for the world knows not God. Not from our works, for we are sinful and cannot merit salvation. The love and merits of Christ alone is the ground of our hope for redemption. But on what is our hope for the salvation of this little one based? Sentimentalism will claim that she was innocent, hence is saved. But if innocent why did she die? Was she too not born in sin and iniquity, a heritage of our sinful race, and hence an heir to death as the cold form before us proves? No! No, we don't want sentimentalism for our comfort here. We want the truth, the consolation of the Gospel, that sweet story of old, that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save all the human race. We want the comfort that is found in the wounds of Jesus. We want the comfort that is based on his love. It is this comfort that the word brings you today. We believe that little Leonora is saved, but saved by the love of Christ by which he redeemed her by his death on the cross and has arrayed her in a robe of his own spotless righteousness. Such comfort is no idle guess work, but the clear declaration of the Gospel. There is not one salvation for grown people and another kind of salvation for infants. All the blessed, old and young, are saved by the same loving Savior, with the same costly price, not gold or silver, but the innocent suffering and death of our blessed Redeemer. Our comfort is this, that Jesus cleanses the souls of our children with his redeeming blood, washing away all guilty stains from their souls. Could we ask for greater comfort than this today, that Jesus so loves little children that he died for them that they might be in his kingdom? This is the consolation tendered you now. It is this one salvation that is offered to all, for Christ died once for all.

This salvation is assured to those that have Christ by faith, faith like that which a little child may possess through guidance of the Holy Spirit by the Word of God. The Word of God in Holy Baptism gives the promise to the little ones. God's Word then is our comfort, showing us how Jesus takes the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom. Would we have a share in

that hope of life eternal, then we must be saved, just as little babes are saved, by the love of Christ. He says: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein."

May God grant us hearts and minds like unto little children in things pertaining to our salvation; that we may put all our trust and hope in the loving Savior, that we may share in his love for little children. Then when our last hour shall come we may with childlike faith look unto Jesus to gather us in his arms and carry us in his bosom as a child of the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

13. The Sorrow Of Christian Parents Over The Death Of A Beloved Child By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said. For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. And the Midianites sold him (Joseph) into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and a captain of the guard.” – Gen. 37:34-36.

Occasion: On the death of a child

Mourning Friends:

St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians in his first epistle, chapter four: “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.” A Christian may mourn when death robs him of his loved ones. He is still flesh and blood, and it is not an easy matter to give up our dearest treasures on earth. It is but natural for us to weep when we bury our own flesh and blood. But in this sorrow a Christian should not act as though he had no hope. "We should not act like the heathen who know not God and the life of the world to come prepared for us in Christ.

But it is often hard for a Christian to rejoice over the blessed hope which the Gospel offers. Gladly would he bid adieu to all sorrow and thank God for his wonderful mercy which enables him to hope for the salvation of those who die in the Lord; but ever and anon he is downhearted when he looks upon the pale countenances of the dead, and touches their icy hands.

The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. The clouds of adversity are constantly overshadowing the sun of God's grace. This, no doubt, my beloved, is your experience today beside the coffin of your beloved child. Gladly would you wipe away your tears, cease your weeping and rejoice over the blessed hope of eternal life; but it is difficult for the poor heart to compose itself. Your experience is like that of the patriarch Jacob in our text. Let me on the basis of the story of Jacob's sorrow for his child which he mourned as dead speak to you of

The Sorrow of Christian Parents over the Death of a Beloved Child

Permit me to show you: I. How Jacob mourned over the death of his child and yet it lived. II. He mourned over the unsearchable providences of God and yet it was all for his good. III. He mourned over the pangs of separation and yet there was in store a joyful reunion.

I. How Jacob Mourned Over The Death Of His Child And Yet It Lived

You know the story of our text. Joseph's brethren, moved by envy and hatred, had sold him into slavery. They sent his coat of many colors, blood-stained, to their father with the message: "This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no." From this Jacob could not but conclude that his child had fallen prey to some ravenous beast. He mourned his son as dead.

"It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph without doubt is rent in pieces," are his sad words. "And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." Yes, so great was his sorrow that he refused to be comforted. "All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." This awful loss seemed more than he could bear. Every effort to assuage his sorrow proved fruitless. Yes, he seemed to have lost all interest in life, and only waited for death to reunite him with his child.

And who can describe your sorrow, beloved friends, as you today mourn the death of your promising child? Only a father or mother who have themselves experienced such losses can realize your suffering. Our children are our heart's treasures, and it is like giving up a part of our very lives when they die. Who can depict the anguish which pierces the hearts of parents when death as a ruthless foe before their very eyes crushes the life out of a dear child and they stand by unable to prevent the awful calamity. Step by step the work of destruction goes on until life has been extinguished.

And yet Joseph was not dead but alive in a far-off land. The sons of Jacob had practiced a cruel deception upon their father. His favorite son whom he mourned as dead was hale and hearty. God was with him. Even if at first he was compelled to suffer much shame and abuse, hatred and slander, yet the almighty God led him through darkness to light, from slavery to liberty, out of prison to a seat of honor beside the king. Oh, if Jacob could have surmised this; if he could have cast but one look upon the future glory of his child, how soon would his sobs have been hushed, and his tears of sorrow turned into tears of joy.

And is not your case much the same as that of the despairing patriarch? You mourn your child as dead and behold it lives! Does not the Savior say of our children whom we have brought to him in holy Baptism, "of such is the kingdom of heaven"? But God's kingdom is not temporal but eternal. Does he not say: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"? Your child too was baptized "for the forgiveness of sin." In Baptism it put on Christ. Through this holy sacrament it was regenerated and made a child of God and an heir of glory. The difference between you and Jacob is this: he did not know that Joseph was yet alive, but you know that your child lives. Oh, if you could but cast one glance into that blessed life into which your child has entered you would no longer mourn its loss but rather rejoice that it so soon reached that perfect heavenly glory for which God designed it.

II. He Mourned Over The Unsearchable Providences Of God And Yet It Was All For His Good

What a severe affliction to Jacob was the separation from his child. It must have appared to him about the worst thing that could have happened to him in his old age. Joseph was his favorite child. He was the son of his old age, the son of his beloved Rachel. No doubt the pious disposition of Joseph was a great source of pleasure to his father. Amidst all the heartaches and provocations which he experienced on the part of his other boys, it was a great comfort to him that this youngest did not walk in the footsteps of his wicked brethren. No doubt the rich measure of the Spirit of God which was given Joseph showed itself early in him and Jacob's whole heart clung to the child. And now he was called on to give up this very boy. How much easier it would have been to lose any other one of his children. "Why must it be Joseph, the treasure of his heart?"

Add to this the supposed manner of his death. If the child had died at home in the arms of its father it would have been easier to bear, but the fact that he died, who knows where, was too much. If he had died a natural death, but to have him torn in pieces and devoured by a ferocious beast, oh, how horrible! If Jacob had had the privilege of giving his child a decent, honorable burial, but that now his bones lay bleaching in the sun, God only knows where, how terrible! Jacob may in his sore distress have thought and said: Why does God allow such an awful visitation to come upon me in my old age?

And no doubt many similar questions to which reason gives no answer crowd in on you today. Why must we suffer such a loss? Why must this child die? Why must it have so painful a death? Why was it taken from us so suddenly? In short the whole providence of God in this occurrence is beyond comprehension. We sing in that good old song: "What God does ever well is done." But this is not the sentiment of our sinful flesh. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and would rather say: "What God did in this case is all wrong." It should have been otherwise. We had planned differently. You think of all the plans which you have laid for this child, all the hopes which you expected to realize, and now all lies in ruins. All your plans have miscarried. With one blow all is brought to naught. "Man proposes, but God disposes."

But all this mysterious providence of God is a blessing in the end. Of this both Jacob and Joseph are proof. Joseph's lot seemed the hardest that could possibly befall him. His brethren indeed spared his life but only to sell him into slavery. It would have been more tolerable to kill him outright.

Henceforth he was to be counted as chattel property. He would have no rights which his master was bound to respect. But what was the result? Joseph rose to the highest honors in Egypt. He afterward said to his brethren: "Ye thought evil against me but God meant it unto good" (Gen. 50:20). It was his greatest good fortune that he was sold into Egypt; that Potiphar bought him; that he was cast into prison innocently. All these sad experiences were only stepping-stones to his future glory.

And his father's experience was similar. What he mourned as his greatest calamity, was in reality his highest good fortune. What would have become of him and his house in the famine if God had not sent Joseph ahead into Egypt to store up the surplus grain for them and the whole land? God had cared for his people in advance, and prepared for them a refuge. Oh, how Jacob must have thanked God after his wise plans were once revealed! And you, beloved in your sore affliction, are also under God's merciful providence. The Savior says to you as he did to Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7). We must say with the apostle: "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:24). And yet we know that all things must work together for good to them that love God. You may be assured that "This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in council, and excellent in working" (Isaiah 28:29). Therefore the Psalmist says: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance" (Ps. 42:6). Therefore suppress all thoughts as though God had visited you in his wrath, for whom the Lord loveth him doth he chastise. Let us rather say with the poet:

"What God does ever well is done!
His will is just and holy;
As He directs my sands to run,
My spirit shall keep lowly.
He is my God; though sore the rod,
His care doth e'er enfold me:
Then may he guide and hold me."

III. He Mourned Over The Pangs Of Separation And Yet There Was In Store A Joyful Reunion

Jacob mourned over the fact that his child died before he did. No doubt he had hoped that Joseph would be the staff of his old age. And now everything turned out so very differently. The ideal relationship between the God-fearing old man and his pious son was ruthlessly torn asunder. If Jacob had died, it would have been no more than one might expect at his age. He was old and naturally his end was not far off. How gladly would he have lain down to die in the arms of Joseph. But now his favorite boy must die before him. Without a word of farewell, hearty and hale he left home and now this bloody garment is returned. Jacob never hoped to see his child again in this world. How lonely would his life be from now on. How he would miss his child! Everything that reminded him of his child would tear open the wound afresh, and especially in old age such wounds are slow to heal.

And your hearts too bleed today over the death of your child. O how terrible it is that we are compelled to hasten the burial of our loved ones after death. In spite of all the skill of the embalmer we can protect their corpses but a few days from corruption. How soon they return to dust and ashes! Yes, “As for man his days are as grass: as a flower of the field so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more” (Ps. 103:15, 16). How awful are all thoughts of the grave with its corruption. We lower the corpses of our loved ones into the grave and cover them with earth, in order to remove them from the eyes of all men; for there is nothing more terrible to the senses of man than a decomposing corpse. Yes, we must part from our loved ones. Not even their corpses dare remain with us.

And yet the separation of death is only temporary. It was not long until Jacob heard the good news: “Thy son Joseph is yet alive and lord over all Egypt.” And though he could scarcely believe the message yet the presents which Joseph sent convinced him that it was true. Overcome with joy he said: “It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die” (Gen. 45:28). And in a short time he rested in Joseph’s arms. Joseph fell upon his neck and wept tears of joy. This was a reunion such as the

patriarch had never dreamed of. New life ran through his old heart. How his eyes sparkled with joy! Now all sorrow was banished. Now his sighs and groans were changed into songs of praise. The storms of trouble were over, and there was bright sunshine and calm.

And, my beloved, for you there is in store even a more glorious reunion. Your child will meet you at the last day in its risen, glorified body. Or you may die before the Lord's appearance and meet your child in heaven. That will be a glorious reunion. You shall meet to part no more. The few years that you may have to spend in this vale of tears will soon be over. With every day you are one step nearer the end of your earthly pilgrimage. The New Jerusalem already looms up in the distance. You may hope soon to be within its golden walls. Then you will realize the blessed fact that your loved one was not lost but only gone before.

“Jerusalem! My happy home!
My soul still pants for thee;
Then shall my labors have an end,
When I thy joy shall see.”

Amen.

Part Two

14. Jesus Christ Is The Conqueror Of Death By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” – Luke 7:14.

**Occasion: At the death of a college student who had the
ministry in view**

Members of the Faculty, Students, and Friends:

It was at daybreak on the twenty-second of December that the soul of R S winged its flight from earth to heaven. On that day many of us were still steeped in Christmas joys. We had sung the praises of the Christ-child and the echo of the Christmas hymns had not yet died out in our hearts and homes. In that death chamber in Grant Hospital there was but one external sign of Christmas. There hung on the wall two holly wreaths, the gift of his classmates. These wreaths were to suggest to the departed the joys of the season. They may have done so; but possibly not, for those who watched around his deathbed felt that the gaze of the departed was fixed upon the face of the death-angel, which once having been looked upon engrosses the attention. The messenger of the Most High beckoned. No mortal has yet refused obedience. God took our brother and so the festive season became infinitely greater for him than for us. While we sang of the heavenly choir

and attempted to imitate their strains of “Glory to God in the highest and peace upon earth, good will toward men,” he went to join the angelic choir and to pour out his enraptured soul at the feet of the Christ-child. It was a merry, a blessed Christmas for him.

We could not at that time hold an appropriate service and so we gather here tonight to discharge a debt of love. We wish to speak of what God did for him in life and in death, to exhort you to imitate his virtues, to beg of you to throw the mantle of charity over his faults, to ask you to keep green his memory and to pray to God to make both his life and his death a benediction to our school.

Death is always sad, but not always equally so. When an old man has filled up the measure of life and like ripe fruit drops to the earth from sheer mellowness, we say: “It must be so.” We wander through the orchard in the fall and we see the matured fruit lying on the ground. We express no surprise or sorrow. We know that this is after the course of nature. But to pass through the orchard in early summer and to see the green fruit torn perforce from the tree, this is a disappointment and we ask: “Why is this?”

Here was a young life cut short. It seemed to be developing in a normal and satisfactory manner. It gave promise of usefulness. It was consecrated to God and so far as we could see was much needed in the Christian ministry and could it have been spared would have brought untold blessings to many. It was just passing into the greatest cycle of human life, the period of mature manhood. The grim reaper has cut it down. Involuntarily there arises the question: Why? Human reason is confounded and admits that it cannot give a satisfactory answer. There comes a quasi answer from the Word. “My ways are not your ways.”

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” The providence of God has two sides, the dark and the bright side. We are wandering in the dark side now and must content ourselves with believing that “all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.” He will by and by reveal his will to us. We must comfort ourselves in the meantime with the revelations given in his Word. One of them we have in this text. It is this: Jesus Christ is the conqueror of death. This truth has comforting power. Let us address ourselves to it.

Jesus Christ is the Conqueror of Death

I. He conquered Physical Death:

Jesus and his disciples were about to enter Nain. A funeral procession was coming out. As death was the wages of sin, no dead could be interred within the city limits. At the gates of the city the Prince of Life and the Prince of Horrors meet. It was a pitiable case. Death loves a shining mark. So here – a widow was bereft of her only son, bowed down with grief she follows the bier and that the case was unusually touching is shown by the multitude that follow.

At no place in the gospel is Jesus represented as tenderhearted as here. Elsewhere he was asked and even importuned to help, but here unasked he commands the bier to be set on the ground and he steps up, touches the bier and issues his divine command: “Young man, Arise.” And the dead obeys. There dwelt in Jesus all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. His divine power manifested itself and so he conquered physical death.

But this is not all. He raised the daughter of Jairus. He stood at the grave of Lazarus after he was dead already four days and was stinking and called him back to life. But the crowning miracle of our Lord was his own resurrection. They nailed him to the tree. He bowed his head and gave up the ghost. His friends buried him and his enemies sealed his tomb. But on the third day invisible hands rolled back the stone that the world might look in and be convinced that the grave was empty. Jesus had fulfilled his own promise: “I am the resurrection and the life.” He raised himself from the dead and so he proved himself to be the conqueror of physical death.

He will raise all the dead. “The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

The last enemy, which is death, shall be put under his feet. His work of redemption is complete; but his work of victory is incomplete. He will triumph over death and not until the dead have arisen will his victory over physical death be complete. Christ will raise our departed brother. That is our hope and our comfort.

The world finds great difficulty here. When the body returns to its original elements, “How can it arise?” they say. The chemist may dissolve a lump of silver in an acid; but by a chemical process he may collect it again.

Should the chemist who merely follows the laws of nature be wiser and mightier than he who made them? God, out of dust, before our very eyes, is every day making the bodies of men. The food which we eat comes from the earth and contains the substances found in the soil. By the process of digestion and assimilation they are converted into blood and flesh and bone. So our bodies are daily being constructed out of the dust. Why should that God who made man from the dust and who upholds him from the dust not be able at last to take the dust and quicken it?

The Christian says: "I believe in the resurrection of the body." He knows that the victory of Christ will be complete. It has been prefigured by Christ's power over death in himself and others. The believer even now looks beyond the coffin and the grave to the great resurrection morning and his heart is comforted because Christ has triumphed over physical death.

II. He conquered Spiritual Death:

When Jesus raised the young man from the dead "there came a fear on all and they glorified God saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us and. That God hath visited his people." There was a spiritual awakening in that throng. They believed on him and that was spiritual life.

Death is always a separation. Physical death is a separation of soul and body. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. The soul may be estranged from its Maker. The Scriptures teach that a man may be dead even while he lives.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." To be ignorant of God's saving will, to be in rebellion against his righteous will in opposition to his holy will, – this is to be spiritually dead.

From this state a man can no more save himself than he can raise himself up from bodily death. Help must come from without. Just as Jesus was the Helper of the dead, calling him back to life by his Word, so Christ through his Word enlightens the intellect that we see our sinful condition, and influences the will that it is no longer perverse. This call comes with much force in the Word. There, he instructs and pleads and persuades. There the Spirit draws, and by his power the soul is born again. When we know that Jesus is the Savior and trust in him for forgiveness, new life has come to the soul. Then Jesus has conquered spiritual death.

Our departed brother led the life that is hidden in God. Amid much weakness he still gave evidence that Christ was his master and that he was trying to do his will. He did not allow his flesh to rule him, but tried to crucify it. In the choice of a calling he did not consult with flesh and blood but was willing to deny himself the comforts and luxuries of life to spend his strength in the service of the church. He was not seeking to do his own will but that of another. These evidences of the spiritual resurrection are a comfort to us today.

Young men, his classmates and fellow-students, this occasion forces upon you a very solemn question: Have you passed from death unto life? Has the Master said unto you: "Young man, Arise?" And have you heard and obeyed that voice, or are you still holden of death? Are you resisting the drawing of his Spirit and leading a life of the flesh which begins and ends in death? Or can you truthfully say: "I have felt the power of his Word and have the new life in my soul? I have yielded my heart to him." Blessed are all they who have experienced the new life.

Come now in the prime of life and yield yourself to this gracious influence. Let not the call of God be heard in vain. Some of you are evidently halting between two opinions. The world and the flesh with their temptations have beset you and you are saying: "Not now, not now. Some other day when I have a convenient season."

Do not spend your strength in the service of the flesh, bringing at last only the wreckage of life to God. No! come now, with all the powers of your bodies and souls at their best and lay them down at the feet of Jesus. This life in Christ, this service of the Master, will afford you no heartache, no pangs of conscience, no regrets, no bitter taste in the mouth, no suffering from abused members, but rather peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

If the death of this young man should make you more thoughtful, or lead one of you into the Christian ministry, or win you away from the world and its service and direct your feet heavenward, then both his life and his death would have been a blessing to our school. May God grant it!

III. He has conquered Eternal Death:

Death always signifies a separation. Physical death signifies a separation of body and soul. Spiritual death signifies the separation of the soul from God

in this life. Eternal death signifies the separation of the soul from the beatific vision of God in the next life.

There will be such an exclusion in the life to come. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The Bible knows nothing of universal salvation in the life to come. How could it? Can God force a man into heaven? Can he consistently coerce the human will? And if he saved men against their will could they be happy? There is a law of affinity. If God is not the affinity of a human soul, if sin is its delight and it hates holiness how could such a soul be happy amid the perfection of heaven! Judas "went to his place," because by the law of affinity he belonged there and would have been out of place elsewhere. Just as the magnet attracts some metals and repels others by this same law, so souls naturally gravitate toward heaven or hell because of their relation to Christ. And this state of eternal rejection the Bible calls "eternal death."

The temporal effects of sin are largely left upon us in spite of the redemption in Christ; but the eternal effects are altogether lifted from us by his vicarious sufferings upon the cross. Jesus suffered the torments of hell, appeased the wrath of God, satisfied his justice and merited eternal life and now offers this great boon to all who accept it in faith.

Life, both now and hereafter, is the supreme desire of the human soul. Job correctly says: "Whatsoever a man hath will he give for his life," because nothing on earth may be compared to it. How we struggle to keep it! How we shrink from surrendering it! How dreadful is the thought of annihilation! How pleasing the prospect of an eternal existence in a state of perfection! We have that prospect if we are in Christ Jesus, because he has conquered eternal death.

"In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." I know not where heaven is; I only know that it is "in thy presence." Jesus said: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." What matters it if we do not know where heaven is? If we can be with Jesus who is enthroned high above the heavens all will be well. Every longing of the human soul, every righteous aspiration of the human breast he will satisfy. And we shall live with him world without end.

Let us bow in submission to the dispensation of God, believing where we cannot understand and looking forward to that time when we shall meet around the glory-seat of him who has conquered death in all its forms. Amen!

15. Jesus Is Lord Of Our Dead

By Prof. G. J. Zeilinger

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” – Rom. 14:7-9.

**Occasion: A young woman visiting with friends in the city,
found dead in her bed in the morning**

Mourning Friends:

It is winter now, winter bleak and dreary, and not the season of harvest. But there is a reaper that pays no attention whatever to times or seasons. Winter and summer are all alike to him. He does not care for meadows of golden grain and gardens of beautiful, sweet-scented flowers; but men, and women, and even lovely children he would cut down with a merciless and unrelenting hand. And when he swings his gleaming scythe, friends, does not the burnished steel seem to enter our very souls, when we but think of it! When he swings his scythe, they fall – not only “the bearded grain at a breath, but also the flowers that grow between”: for “all flesh is as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.”

And when we thus see them fall all about us, one by one, and twice here in our little congregation, twice within the short cycle of twelve months, without warning, life extinguished like a candle by a sudden gust of wind, – who would be so hardened as not to be touched to the quick? Who that is a Christian would not lift his face, and if it be a tear-stained one, to the mountains from whence cometh help, and pray: “Lord, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!”

This true wisdom God would teach us, oh, we all know where, namely, not in woods or fields, not in the pursuit of our own desires, not where the lord of this world holds sway, but (and there is only one place where God teaches wisdom) in his Holy Word! There also you sorrowing ones will find light and an answer to the question which doubtless weighs heavy upon your hearts and minds, the question: Does God's Word say anything about such a death as our dear departed one suffered? Clear and firm, like the tone of a full-tongued bell in perfect tune, the answer peals forth from our text: "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived that he might be Lord both of the dead and living!"

Therefore, as Jesus is the Lord of our departed sister, 1. We need not sorrow over her end, as though she had been left alone in the hour of death; 2. We ought to be comforted in view of her present state.

"What makes death, in whatever form it may appear, so awful that a good many people would rather not hear the word mentioned at all, is the incontrovertible fact, that the road leading through the dark valley of shadows must be traveled by each dying person all by himself alone. There may be friends, and those who are near and dear to us, by our bedside when we pass away; but not even a mother can go with her child, – every soul passes out of this world by itself and alone.

Yet we, that are left behind, feel more comforted, if we can be with those we love, when they breathe their last. We do everything we can possibly think of to brighten their last moments and to smooth the way they must go. We pray for them and with them: we comfort them with the rod and the staff of our Good Shepherd, Jesus, i.e., with his holy, precious Word, and, if at all possible, with the blessed sacrament of his holy Body and Blood. When then those we love depart in the silence of night, while no eye watches over them, and no one hears their last faint whisper, we feel as though there is nothing sadder on earth; and when we must add to this the thought that, perhaps, our departed ones passed away so suddenly that they themselves never realized the event, and, therefore, every opportunity of preparing for the moment of departure was cut off, – we feel as though there is no comfort for us.

And yet, my friends, he that said to Israel: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," has already prepared true, perfect, abundant, and more than abundant consolation for us, even before we were in need of it. If we turn to this word of God, our text, it seems as though

God himself were saying to us: you foolish children, what are you troubling your hearts for? Just as though anyone of my own could ever be left alone! Just as little as any child of mine, i.e., any true Christian, lives to himself (and no Christian lives to himself; all Christians live to Christ. Paul says, “For me to live is Christ,” and again, “Now live not I, but Christ liveth in me”), yes, just as no Christian lives to himself, so, of course, none dies to himself, for, “whether they live,” our text says, “they live unto the Lord, and whether they die, they die unto the Lord.” In other words, as the Christian’s life is devoted to God in Christ, so also his death is devoted to Christ. And why? Because Christ is the Christian’s Lord, his Lord, not only in life, but also in death. Christ is always his Lord!

If, however, we are always his, what difference can it make, whether we are sleeping or waking, living or dying? We are always his, and he is always ours. Having become your father’s child, unless you voluntarily renounce him, do you ever cease being his child? Can you ever cease being your Heavenly Father’s child, if you do not run away from him, nor despise his fatherly love and your Savior’s grace? No, and therefore as a father will take care of his child, so our dear Father in heaven will never leave nor forsake his own. “Lo, I am with you alway,” Jesus says, “even unto the end of the world.” “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and no man shall pluck them out of my hands.” That is what he said who is the Truth and who never told a falsehood, and therefore the soul of his faithful child replies with David: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me!” ... Therefore, if Jesus was her Lord, she, over whom you are sorrowing today, was not alone, when she seemed to be forsaken by all; and though no soul watched the departure of her soul, he, to whom she had lived and to whom she died, was with her and did for her what neither friend, nor brother, neither father nor mother, nor even her only sister could have done for her, – Jesus took her home!

(AND, THEREFORE, MY FRIENDS, YOU SHOULD BE COMFORTED ALSO IN VIEW OF HER PRESENT STATE.)

For, if Jesus took her home, he did not leave her again, but he is with her and she is with him even now. But is this true? Does Jesus actually take care of his own in the, other world, and are they really with him even after death? Does his interest in them not cease when he has brought them safely

to the other shore? friends, what does God's Word of our text say? "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and living!"

Does it not seem strange that the dead are mentioned first, even before the living? To be Lord of both, the dead and the living, he "died, rose, and revived." Yes, that is why he redeemed us poor, sinful and condemned creatures, that is why he purchased and won us from all our sins, from death and the power of the devil, – (not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent sufferings and death), in order that we might be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead, liveth and reigneth to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

And that is precisely what our blessed dead are doing now; they are not only resting from their labors in the beautiful home beyond, they are not only enjoying the happiness and beauty of Jerusalem, their happy home, Jerusalem, the golden, with milk and honey blest, – but they are serving their Lord, as they served him on earth, only with this difference, that now there is no sin to mar their service, no sin to spoil their best words and deeds.

And they are serving in the company of all the angels and saints in heaven, and in the company of all our blessed dead that have gone before, singing praises, and offering glory, honor, and thanksgiving to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, to whom be glory and honor, world without end. And this is most certainly true. Amen!

16. Jehovah Hath Put A New Song In My Mouth By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God . . .”—Psalm 40:3.

Occasion: For a young woman, of no little musical talent and culture, who delighted in opportunities to use her voice in God’s service

MUSIC is one of the greatest and most beautiful gifts of God to man. In the highest sense music is one of the fine arts. What a revelation here of God’s power and wisdom, what a reflection of the beauty and nobility of the divine nature! Man’s deepest being is moved by sweet concord of sounds. There issues, from instrument or voice, a refining influence. Brutish and savage indeed must be the soul which remains unresponsive to music’s tender call.

From earliest times the world has echoed the strains and harmonies of uplifting music. Jubal is known as the father of those that handle the harp and the pipe (Gen. 4:21). “Moses and the children of Israel sang unto Jehovah” a song of victory (Exodus 15:1). Miriam, the prophetess, sister of Moses and Aaron, led the women in a chant of victory: “Sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously; The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” (Exodus 15:21.)

The Bible makes mention repeatedly of music and song in the service of the Lord God. Witness the Levitical chorus and orchestra (I Chron. 15:16-24) and the impressive ceremonies connected with the dedication of Solomon’s temple (II Chron. 5:12). Never does music, or any other art, attain to loftier heights than when employed in the cause of religion. The noblest music in the world today is that called forth by religious emotion.

It is altogether fitting that we should speak, in this home whose walls have so often echoed to the sacred songs which poured from our sister's lips – lips now silenced by death – of the happy experience of the psalmist so exultantly expressed in our text:

Jehovah Hath Put a New Song in My Mouth

The psalmist sings the new song in The Church on Earth – The Kingdom of Grace. A great deliverance is celebrated in this psalm. What the exact nature of that deliverance was, we are unable to say. It has been suggested that the nation – Israel – is thought of as the beneficiary. Another school of interpreters take the psalm as a record of the personal experiences of the author. I believe, with the latter, that the writer had personally experienced a great blessing and in this psalm gratefully and exultantly proclaims the divine power and goodness which intervened in his behalf.

The author intimates, in the first verse of the psalm, that he has been in a hard situation, and tells of his patient waiting. "I waited patiently for the Lord."

This patience in waiting was rewarded: "And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

The seriousness of the situation is more specifically referred to in the next verse – "a horrible pit," a pit of destruction or of desolation; "The miry clay," where the foot slips and slides. The exact historical background of this thrilling experience is unknown to us. But we have here a vivid description of danger and difficulty. And out of this pit and from this miry clay Jehovah, the God of covenant and mercy, delivered his servant. "He brought me up," is the grateful record. "And set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Then was the psalmist glad and sang for joy. "The psalmist did not need to be bidden to praise; a new song welled from his lips as by inspiration. Silence was more impossible to his glad heart than even to his sorrow. To shriek for help from the bottom of the pit and to be dumb when lifted to the surface is a child's part."

Hard and gloomy is the life of the man who lives after the flesh. He is down in a pit of horror, his feet are fast in miry clay. There may be periods of seeming joy – but joy only after the flesh. There may be times of singing – but the songs will be worldly. Oftener, at least for the soul striving

upward, there will rise shrieks of pain and cries for help from the pit of sin. “Have mercy upon me, God,” will be the prayer of a heart truly realizing its sad plight.

God does, in mercy, hear the repenting sinner’s cry for help. He delivers the soul of the lost. He reaches forth. He takes hold of the prisoner in the pit. He brings him out, and sets his feet in a rock and establishes his goings. It is the Lord on whom we are patiently to wait: it is he who will incline unto us and hear our cry. And when the plea for mercy has been answered, the new song wells from the lips of the saved.

This is the song men sing in the Church, in the kingdom of Grace. It is a song of praise unto our God. It is not a song in praise of human merit and achievement. It is not an epic beginning with words like these: “Arms and a hero I sing.” The new song magnifies the Lord, Jehovah, and his gracious power. “He hath redeemed my soul” is the burden of the song. And when a man has experienced the redeeming power, how can he keep still? His soul overflows with joy and praise. “Bless the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.”

Endowed by nature with a splendid voice, spending time and money on the culture of her voice, your sister had advanced far in the heavenly art of song. She not only enjoyed natural advantages, but made use of these, and was ambitious to rise. You encouraged her in this laudable ambition. You did all in your power to make possible the realization of her dreams. At last the time came when she was privileged to give pleasure, with the voice of song and praise, to hundreds. Not only did she sing the songs which are considered classic by the world, but she took delight in the songs of Zion. Never was she happier than when she had opportunity to help swell the song of praise and thanksgiving in the sanctuary. And never, I am certain, were you happier than when you heard her in the choir loft, rejoiced with her in the congregational singing. Even here the song would be spoiled unless sung in the spirit of the psalmist. But we believe that your sister really felt the joy of the redeemed, and caught something of the inspiration that comes from the Spirit of God. Sincerely could she pray and sing:

“O may Thy love inspire my tongue;
Salvation shall be all my song,
And all my power shall join to bless
The Lord, my Strength and Righteousness.”

The sweetest songs this world knows are those sung in praise of the Name that is above every name – the name of Jesus, our Savior.

I cannot refrain from mentioning one incident which always gave your sister and yourselves so much satisfaction. She never forgot the day of the present pastor's induction into his office here. She sang a solo at that service. How heartily and gladly she sang! She counted it a happy privilege to have a part in that solemn service. Up to her dying day she remembered it. May God graciously have rewarded her for her service in Jesus' name.

And now, shall we not join with her to "bless the Lord, our Strength and Righteousness?" You do not understand why your heavenly Father has permitted this sorrow to come unto your home? You cannot see why he should remove one so young and talented? why the voice of this daughter of music should be silenced? why all the song and gladness should have gone out of your home? Oh, remember the days of pleasure you have had; be assured of your sister's presence in "the choir invisible"; take upon your own lips the new song, the song of the redeemed. Sing that song where she sang it – in the home and in the courts of God's house. The echoes of the voice that is no more you will seem, sometimes to hear; the silent instrument will call up tender memories; and you will be heartsick because of all this. Turn the more earnestly to him who inspires us with songs of praise. The deeper note has come into your life. That is music too. Perhaps, as the days pass, you will find that God can use you, in the service of his church, in service to your fellow-men, all the better because of the sorrow that has come into your lives. You are still in the Church on Earth – the Kingdom of Grace.

"Praise thou the Lord, who thy life has so visibly guided.
Streams of free grace, in his Son, for thy sin hath provided;
Plain to thy view,
God, the Almighty and true,
Ne'er from his child is divided."

Does the new song of praise unto our God end at death? It would be more than a pity, it would be a real tragedy, if that were true. There are those who try to satisfy their minds by saying that the beautiful art of music is age-long, practically eternal, in duration – that it will be transmitted from generation to generation; but the singer will not live on – his lips will be silenced forever. Such claims cannot satisfy the longings of our souls. We

believe that the new song will be sung in THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN – THE KINGDOM OF GLORY; and it will be sung by those who sang it here and died with the song on their lips.

In Revelation 14:3 we read: “And they sung as it were a new song before the throne.” In the chapter following, verse three, we read: “And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying. Great and marvelous are thy works. Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” As glory to God was sung centuries ago in the heavenly heights, so it has always been since angels struck their harps and lifted their voices in praise to God. And so it will always be. Only, the angelic choir will be augmented, and is continually being augmented, by the saints who have passed or are passing from grace to glory. They that have gotten the victory over the beast (Rev. 15:2) will celebrate their triumph when they have crossed the sea and have entered the land of promise.

What will be the character of the song in glory? It will still be a song of praise unto our God. There will be remembrances of the mercies experienced while the pilgrim was on the way. The tongue of the redeemed will never tire of telling the story of grace. God’s way of saving men – a God-man, our Saviour; put under the law; suffering the penalties of the law; raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father; believed on in the world; received up into glory – this old, but precious, story will not have lost its charm. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10). That joy will not grow less with the advent into glory of the redeemed sinner. The song of praise will be the greater for the presence of the great choir of the saved.

The new song in glory will commemorate the last great struggle and the believer’s triumph in that event. The terrors of death are enough to make the strongest tremble. Satan’s attacks will keep on to the very end. The song of the sirens luring men to destruction will be heard until death intervenes. But then, what an outburst of triumphant song: “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality,” then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. death, where is thy sting? grave, where is thy victory? ...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54, 55, 57). When we, through Christ and with Christ, have “overcome the sharpness of death,” when we shall be numbered with

the saints “in glory everlasting,” we shall join in the “Te Deum Laudamus” – “We praise thee, oh God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.”

The new song in heaven will be employed in praising and worshiping God in his ever new revelations of himself – his love, his majesty, his power. “We worship thy name, ever, world without end.” As God’s mercies in this vale of tears are every morning new, so on the mountain heights of glory will every hour, every moment, disclose to us some new wonder from among his infinite perfections. The “Holy, Holy, Holy,” of the seraphim will sound forth in heavenly places. Endless alleluias will ring down the corridors of the skies. What a prospect! “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor. 2:9).

Sister, thou art today in heaven, singing with the choirs of angels. Ah, that we were with thee! “In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” didst thou in earth sing with grace in thy heart to the Lord. Now thou hast joined “the choir invisible,” and with cherubim and seraphim continually dost cry before the throne: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy Glory.” We strain our ears to hear “voices from heaven, intoned with mighty joy, and attuned to golden harps,” engaged in a new song “fit to be sung before the throne and all the celestial company.”

Saints on earth, sing on! Sing the new song – the song of Jesus, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Above the fears and the doubts, above the tumults and the strivings of this wicked world, let your song of praise unto your God ring out. If, sometimes, the tears come into your eyes while you sing, this will only mean that greater tenderness and sweetness will come into your voices, and you will sing, as never before, the song of “love divine all love excelling.”

"Awake, my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise;
He justly claims a song from me,
His loving-kindness, O how free!
He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate,
His loving-kindness, O how great!

“Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale,
Soon all my mortal powers must fail;
O may my last expiring breath
His loving-kindness sing in death!
Then let me mount and soar away
To the bright world of endless day,
And sing with rapture and surprise.
His loving-kindness in the skies.”

Amen.

17. A Group Of Godly Men As Mourners By Rev. W. E. Schramm

“And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.” – Matt. 14:12.

Occasion: For a Christian Young Man

It is a sad dispensation, my dear brethren, which has brought us together today. We are called upon to weep with those who weep. As we contemplate the loss which these, our friends, have sustained, we feel the sting of sympathetic tears in our own eyes. As we consider this great sorrow which has come into their lives, we experience a sympathetic ache in our own heart.

It is, therefore, not a morbid curiosity which has drawn us hither in this hour. If we had come with a curious desire to see and hear, it were better had we left our friends alone in their grief. No, our eager desire is to serve. Our ardent wish is to be helpful. To this end we tender our sincere sympathy. To this end we offer our earnest prayers. But, dear sorrowing brethren, far more important than our human sympathy is the heavenly counsel and consolation which we would bear to you today. We would bring you a soothing, healing draught from that fountain of comfort which our loving Lord has given us in his Word.

You will notice that the text I have chosen is a very brief account of a funeral which was held many centuries ago. John the Baptist had died a violent death, and when the news of this outrage reached the ears of the men who had been John's disciples, they came and rendered the last honors to the body of their revered master.

The details of John's funeral are not given us in this record. Nothing is said of the burial customs which obtained in those days. No mention is made of any ceremony of any character. Of the hour and place of burial, no hint is given. All that is said touching this funeral of long ago is expressed in two very concise statements. But these two statements I regard as being in a high degree profitable for our meditation. Let us study this funeral. Let us scrutinize the mourners. Let us carefully observe their conduct in their day of mourning, not, of course, from any idle curiosity, but with a desire for helpful instruction.

These mourners were godly men. No other class of men would have been attracted to such a leader as the Baptist was. Additional evidence of their godliness is given us in the fact that some of these same men became the chosen apostles of the Lord Jesus. The example of such men is always worthy of study and it is usually worthy of imitation. Even as mourners these men are teachers. I am directing your attention to this incident, at this time, because I desire you to study

A Group of Godly Men as Mourners

I. It is evident from this incident, and multitudes of others bear similar testimony, that godly souls are not exempt from bitter grief.

If any man believes, like the friends who sought to comfort Job, that only the wicked have real sorrows in this life, such a one shows that he has comprehended neither the declarations of the divine Word nor the lessons of divine providence. We dwell in a world of sin, and no degree of piety will shield us from those tribulations and sorrows which must abound where sin reigns.

John the Baptist was a man of heroic type. He was one of God's true noblemen. Jesus the Lord bears him the testimony that "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." If faithfulness to God were a guaranty of a life free from suffering and sorrow, then certainly the life of John the Baptist should have been a bright and

happy one. And yet, as a matter of fact, this faithful soul encountered a goodly amount of tribulation. He had hardships to face, he experienced all the discomforts of poverty, and finally he had persecution of a most cruel character with which to contend. Sorrow and suffering were his lot especially in the closing scenes of his life. It is a pitiful story. It moves us to sadness every time we read it. Because his faithfulness had offended a weak and vicious king, John was cast into a vile dungeon. To gratify the hatred of a fiendish woman, this great and good man was cruelly murdered.

We can imagine, at least to some extent, what must have been the grief of John's disciples when they came and bore the mutilated body of their dear friend away for burial. Intense grief mingled with deep perplexity must have filled their hearts. To have their beloved teacher taken from them was sufficient to make mourners of them, but the manner in which death had come to him must have added greatly to their sorrow. To know that John had been dealt with as though he were a vile felon when he was in truth a pious, faithful servant of God, that must have made deep and heavy the gloom which oppressed them.

So then we have here an example of a noble, God-fearing man, who during his earthly life drank repeatedly from the bitter cup of suffering. And at his funeral we behold a group of devout souls. True-hearted followers of God they doubtless were, and yet they were mourners. Nor are these exceptional cases. On the other hand they are very common. Satan may come to us in the hour of sorrow and hold up our suffering to us as an argument that we are not in truth the children of God, or that God does not love us, but every such insinuation emanates from the father of lies. Holy Scripture assures us that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and this assurance is daily confirmed in the experience of men and women of whom we know that the Lord is their God. It is vain to expect that our life shall be immune from sorrow in a world of sin. We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. We, that is, we Christians, even the most godly among us, must enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation. None is exempt from sorrow and grief.

II. But, my dear brethren, my chief desire on this occasion is not merely to impress upon your minds the universality of sorrow.

I desire especially to hold up for your imitation the conduct of these devout mourners to whom allusion is made in this text. These mourners went and told Jesus. And this suggests the second chief thought of my message to you today: Godly souls, in the day of their sorrow, will go with their burden of grief to Jesus. And his disciples came and took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

Just how Jesus dealt with these mourners when they came to him is not revealed to us. Yet we can conjecture with a fair degree of accuracy the consoling truth which he would impart to them. We know the counsel which divine wisdom dictated on other occasions. We know the comfort which divine love offered to other mourners. We know the peace which divine grace imparted to other souls in the time of their affliction. We know, too, that divine truth and divine attributes are unchanging. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Accordingly it is perfectly safe to assume that the Savior applied to these mourners the same soothing balm which he used for the healing of other anguished hearts.

I am confident that he spoke to them of the significance of a believer's death. John was a child of God, steadfast and loyal. John had exhorted other men to behold in Jesus the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. He himself had embraced the world's Sin-Bearer as his personal Savior. Of such it is written: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Herod's soldiers had slain the body of John, but his spirit was with the Lord; alive forever more. The executioner's sword, ghastly though it seemed, had in reality severed the lock from a prison house, and opened the way for John's captive spirit to go home to God. The Baptist's body had suffered violence, but it was well with his soul. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.

Perhaps Jesus told these men how blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. It would be a source of sweet comfort to these mourners to be assured that this dispensation, which meant bitter sorrow to them, meant liberty and rest and perfect peace to their beloved friend. It would remove the sting from their grief to know that while they had lost a friend, heaven had gained a saint, and John had gained a fadeless crown. To hear the Master speak of the Father's house of many mansions where the saints mingle with the angels of God around the throne of glory, and to know that their friend had

entered this state of bliss and into this goodly fellowship, surely that would be a soothing lotion to the aching hearts of these mourners.

Whatever may have been the exact words which the Savior spoke to these men, you may be sure that he gave them a message of true comfort and of real strength. After they had poured their tale of grief into his sympathetic ear, and after they had listened to the words of compassion and consolation which he imparted to them, you may be certain that they left his presence with lightened hearts and with brightened hopes. He spoke a "Peace, be still," to the tumult in their souls.

My dear brethren, I commend these disciples of John for going with their burden of grief to the Lord. I cannot conceive of any better thing they could have done, in their day of sorrow, than to go and tell Jesus. Therefore I commend the example of these men to you for your imitation today. Let these godly mourners be your teachers. Go with your burden of sorrow, as they went, and tell Jesus.

You may have earthly friends who will not seek your society to any extent while you are mourners. Either because they have a horror of trouble or because they feel their helplessness in the presence of sorrow, some of your earthly friends may actually avoid you in the day of adversity. But it is not thus with your Heavenly Friend. He invites us to come to him at all times and he is particularly careful to assure us that his invitation holds good in a time of adversity. Yes, it sometimes appears from his words as though he welcomes with special tenderness the soul that comes to him with a burden. Call upon me, he says, in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Cast thy burden upon the Lord and he shall sustain thee. With such commands and such promises to encourage us, we can go into his presence with any sorrow, it matters not how great it may be, we can go, confident that we shall find relief there. Dear brethren, I counsel you today, and whenever the remembrance of your sorrow becomes oppressive to you. Go, and tell Jesus.

But it is needful also that we tarry in the Savior's presence sufficiently long to hear and ponder the gracious words of comfort which he would address to us. The divine Word is the channel through which the peace and consolation of Jesus are conveyed to us. I am always grateful when, on a funeral occasion, I can quote the splendid promises of God without reserve. That is, I am thankful when I can use those blessed promises which apply to

the Christian dead, feeling reasonably sure that the deceased actually died in the Lord. I rejoice today that for your consolation I can draw on all the comfort which the Gospel of grace has to offer. Your loved one died in the Lord. He gave us every evidence that he lived in the faith of Jesus, and there is every reason to believe that he died in that faith. I confidently believe that when he closed his eyes here below, he opened them with Jesus in Paradise. Is it not written: Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord? On the strength of this divine guaranty we shall lay his body in the grave, in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection to eternal life. Such is the comfort which the words of Jesus impart to us.

Therefore I entreat you, my dear brethren. Go and tell Jesus. Pour out your sorrow in prayer to him and he will grant you sweet relief through his Word. Tarry in his presence till he speaks to you as he once spoke, in the days of his flesh, to his sorrowing apostles: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear.
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer.
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear –
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a Friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness.
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Amen.

18. Come Unto Me By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” – Matt. 11:28.

Occasion; Used at the funeral of a pastor’s wife, who had suffered long and patiently. Text selected by her.

The beauty of this invitation has compelled the admiration of the world: its tenderness has touched the world’s heart. These words have made special appeal to those bowed down with care and grief. Like thirsty pilgrims gathered about a fountain of refreshing water, the heart-broken sons and daughters of men have come to this word of Jesus that they might be refreshed. Who of us has not in some more than usually earnest, responsible, burdensome moment of life, turned to this priceless promise for encouragement? Who of us has not sought to help some sorrowing friend by calling to his remembrance these sacred words?

To appreciate fully the wonderful person of our Savior as revealed in the text, and to get the full significance of the words themselves, some account must be taken of the various incidents related in this chapter. The first thing to be noted is John the Baptist’s anxious question: “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” John the Baptist in doubt! Things don’t seem to be turning out auspiciously for Christ’s program. John himself is in prison. He, the forerunner, who was sent to prepare Messiah’s way, has suffered persecution. Surely, the prospects for the coming of the kingdom are not bright. John’s fears and doubts were only temporary. But they were real while they lasted. In sending to Christ, he made inquiry of the right one. But what a discouragement to the cause when one of its leaders comes, if only for a short while, under the cloud of doubt.

A second thing is the fickleness and the unreasonableness of the people. Christ likens the contemporaneous generation to children sitting in the markets. They want first one thing, then another. When their first demands are met, they show their displeasure, and immediately make new demands. Of John they say, "He hath a devil." Concerning the Son of man they say, "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." How discouraging to be subjected to the shallow and merciless criticisms of the fickle crowd!

The third thing of note is the unbelief of the cities. Though witnesses of most of his mighty works, they repented not. Christ pronounces a woe upon Chorazin and Bethsaida and adds: "If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." When one puts forth his utmost endeavor to help men, with what base ingratitude one is often repaid!

And how does Jesus meet this unhappy, disheartening situation? He does not lose faith in himself or in his mission. He sends an illuminating and encouraging answer to John; he meets with decision the superficial criticism of the vacillating; he rebukes the unbelieving.

Maintaining a heavenly calm and composure, conducting himself with a dignity which exhibits rare self-control and unfaltering confidence, Jesus thanks his Father, because these things have been hid "from the wise and prudent" and have been revealed unto babes. The proud, self-righteous and self-sufficient have utterly failed to appreciate the blessings offered them: the simple-hearted, the lowly, the over-burdened have been waiting for just this hour of privilege. They shall not be denied, even though powerful influences have worked against them and have oppressed them. A friend and champion appears, whose voice, so severe in denunciation of selfishness and Pharisaism, grows more tender than a mother's in the utterance of the unforgettable words,

Come Unto Me

(JESUS GIVES THE INVITATION:)

And who is Jesus? One who utters the most tender of invitations; who speaks as never man spake; who makes the most astounding claim, "I (emphatic) will give you rest"; who issues the most remarkable invitation, "Come unto me." Can he be a mere man?

Jesus invites. And he has just spoken to one he calls Father, has spoken in terms the most intimate. And he makes the claim that the Father has delivered to him all things, and that “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” He who speaks is he concerning whom the Evangelist John testifies (1:14): “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.” “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” God, who appeared in human flesh, gives the invitation.

Jesus invites. He is the Son of man. He himself assumes and uses that title. Though innocent of all sin – “which of you convicted me of sin?” is his bold challenge – yet is he touched by our infirmities, and is sympathetic in a sense which must appeal to everyone, for he has lived in poverty, has suffered the trials, has borne the burdens of life, has endured temptation and persecution, and has tasted of death and its pains for every man. A man of wide and deep experience, of genuine compassion, speaks the word of invitation. Yea, it is the God-man who invites.

This God-man is our Savior. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He gave his life a ransom for many. This is he whom the Father delivered up, that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Wonderful Person! Wonderful Savior! Wonderful invitation!

The invitation has its quality, its meaning, its power, from the person who extends it. From some lips an invitation of any sort would have no meaning at all. It would be presumption, it would be an insult. Not so in the present instance. When Jesus speaks, we grow intent to hear what he has to say. When Jesus invites, it behooves us to accept the invitation when Jesus seeks to comfort and to help, we know that we may draw near in the full assurance of faith. O sweet comfort in this hour of grief: Jesus says, “Come unto me.”

(THE WEARY AND THE HEAVY-LADEN ARE INVITED:)

Not for oppressor and dictator, not for tyrant and slave-driver, not for rich and prosperous as such, not for strong-minded, self-assertive, self-confident, is this invitation. Folks are invited – plain, toiling, tired, hungry, down-trodden, over-burdened folks. God wants the others too. All souls are precious in his sight. But the domineering Pharisee needs warning and

rebuke more than comfort, until he comes to see himself as God sees him and cries out for mercy.

The weary and heavy-laden are invited. Here are seekers after the truth – surely they will find. Here are men knocking at the gate of life – no doubt but that the gate will be opened. Here are folks asking, “What must I do to be saved?” and the answer will be given then. What striving to do the right thing! What efforts to appease God! What have learned rabbis advised? What have exacting, unfeeling Pharisees imposed? Anxious souls are inquiring as to how peace with God can be obtained, and the law, in all its vigor and fearfulness, has been read to them. And still there is no peace. Then traditions of the elders are unearthed, and commandments of men are taught as if they were doctrines from heaven. Do these things and ye shall live. Martin Luther was, for a time, in a plight similar to that just described. It is said of him: “He observed the minutest details of discipline. No one surpassed him in prayer, fasting, night watches, self-mortification ... But he was sadly disappointed in his hope to escape sin and temptation behind the walls of the cloister. He found no peace in all his pious exercises.” In a letter to one of his friends, Luther writes: “Now I would like to know whether your soul, tired of her own righteousness, would learn to breathe and confide in the righteousness of Christ. Many seek to do rightly themselves, that they may have courage to stand before God as though fortified with their own virtues and merits, which is impossible.”

The weary and the heavy-laden are invited to come unto Jesus. Physical approach is not meant. To see Jesus in the flesh would be counted a great privilege. To know and to appreciate his person and work must be regarded as of infinitely greater importance. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Coming to Jesus means to draw nigh spiritually, to approach the Savior in repentance and faith. The weary and heavy-laden are exhorted to use profitably the occasion and the opportunity created by their deep sense of forlornness and helplessness. Their cry and confession must be: “God, be thou merciful to me a sinner.” Their plea must be: “Jesus’ blood, and righteousness.” For there “is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” except the name Jesus. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “Come unto me,” says Jesus. To him as Savior, to him – for he has kept in man’s stead the law which man has broken; to him – for he has

paid the' penalty of man's transgressions; to him – for he who was delivered up for our trespasses was raised for our justification. Jesus is the heart of the Gospel, Jesus is the Gospel.

Not only of infinite tenderness, but also of priceless value to us poor, burdened sinners, is this Gospel call, "Come unto me."

(REST IS PROMISED TO ALL WHO COME TO JESUS.)

Not immediate immunity from persecution; not instant physical relief from illness; not, forthwith, abundance of money and substance. Rest is promised – not physical rest; not surcease from labor and toil; not exemption from large duties and grave responsibilities. Rest is promised: rest for a harassed conscience; rest for the mind once perplexed and ill at ease; rest for the worried heart. Rest is promised: the rest of those who are in Christ – the rest of faith, the rest of those who abide in Christ, the rest of happy and contented fellowship; and the rest of the new life, not fully developed, and Oh! so sadly imperfect, but nevertheless a new life, better than the old life of sin and of alienation from God. Rest is promised; the rest which now we have in hope, – the rest of the heavenly home. And hence we read: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1); and, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven (II Thess. 1:7) there remaineth "a sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). Like those who have slaked their thirst, we shall be refreshed and shall press on to the goal.

Let us not come short of this promise, but hear and heed the loving invitation, "Come unto me," then shall we indeed enter into the rest of God's people.

Our sister loved this word of God. She filled her soul with the sunshine of this Scripture passage; she drank the refreshing water of life at this fountain; what a comfort during the long months of patient suffering and waiting. She came to Jesus. Weary, heavy-laden, at times deeply concerned for husband and children, saddened at the realization that she must leave this world after only so short a time in it, grief-stricken because she could not help her husband who was called to be a minister of Jesus Christ, yet refreshed beyond the power of language to tell because she brought her burdens and cares to Jesus. And how tenderly he cared for her! Her burdens became his; he took them all on himself; he sustained her faith; he supported her in the last trials; and finally he gave her rest – heaven's never ending Sabbath-rest.

Dear brother, a heavy blow has fallen on you. With your little children you mourn today the death of a beloved wife and mother. Your loss has shaken your whole being. A great joy and comfort and help has gone out of your life. You have so often comforted others: we seek today to minister comfort to your sorrowing soul. Let the word which upheld your dear wife be your stay. You and she together have thought and talked over this sublime word. You have both found in it the eternal promise. You have been enabled, by this sweet word, to bear more patiently your burden of sorrow, as you foresaw what was coming. And now that your dear wife's sufferings are ended, her life, her faith, her hope, and her dying request point you and your motherless children to the consolations of this great Gospel word: "Come unto me." Surely you, who have admonished others to repose their faith in Christ, will not fail to lay your hand confidently in his, will not hesitate in humble faith and tender love to come unto him. And he who has not forsaken those who truly called on him, will not now forsake you as you draw nigh, the tears in your eyes, but triumphant faith in your heart.

Members of this Christian congregation: your pastor's bereavement is also yours. The parsonage has become dear to you. That building housed precious lives. Parents and children lived there: your pastor and his family. What a happy home it was! And death has invaded this home. You mourn with your beloved pastor. How indifferent congregations often are to the needs, the burdens, the sorrows of faithful, self-sacrificing pastors. Such a crime is not laid to your charge, thank God! Yet there are, doubtless, some among you who are not deeply concerned about the ministrations of the Gospel, nor particularly interested in the welfare or the worries of the parsonage. If there be any such persons here today, may this visitation be to them an earnest admonition. Ye hardened souls, prepare to meet your God! Seek to be, in humble repentance and faith, like your pastor's wife. Come to Jesus! Perhaps it is for you the last call. Come today, this moment, before the night of death falls. God's blessing on you, dear people, who in the spirit of Christ have done what you could. Faithful and sympathetic women among you have gone to the parsonage and have helped. Some of you have spoken earnest, comforting words – words that came straight from the heart and went to the heart. Others of you couldn't say much, but your tears, and your silent tokens of love, have spoken louder than words. Oh, don't forget your pastor and family in the dark days to come. Brighten, as much as you can, the lonely hours. And may each of you remember, not only the

bereavement which your pastor, his children, and yourselves have suffered, but also the word which peals out like a church-bell during this service: “COME UNTO ME.”

Immediately upon entering one of the largest and finest hospitals of America, one stands before a statue of heroic size. It is an image of the Christ. The head is slightly inclined toward the observer, the arms are extended, the hands are open. The whole attitude is symbolic of tenderness and sympathy. On the pedestal are recorded these words: “Come Unto Me.” How appropriate that in a building, dedicated to the relief of painful human ills, this picture and symbol of divine love should be placed! What a lesson to preacher, physician, and nurse! What a sermon, what a message of hope, to the suffering who came there in quest of healing! Ah, my friends, through all the world rings the message of our text, message of divine love and sympathy, of inspiration and hope! Where men are faint and ill, where eyes are sightless and ears are deaf, where tongues are paralyzed and arms hang helpless, where sin and Satan have done their dastardly and deadly work, where gloom and despair sit enthroned – wherever men have any sort of need or trouble, stands the Christ (how often unseen and unheard), inviting in accents full of pity and mercy: “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Amen.

19. The Way To A Happy Home

By Rev. H. P. Dannecker

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” – Ps. 119:9.

Occasion: For a Young Man

DEAR MOURNING FRIENDS:

The way of a young man has been cut short by death. For twenty-six years he trod this earth. For twenty-six years the path of his life was more or less visible to you, and though you lost sight of it now and then as he was absent from your immediate circle, you could take it up again as often as he returned into your midst. Man's footsteps radiate from his home. He goes out from his home and returns to his home, and happy is he if he has such a home to which he can always return. It stands like a light-house by the sea with the lamp of love casting the light of welcome across his benighted path. What a boon to your boy was his home when disease had fastened its iron grip upon him and he dragged his weary footsteps toward that home where he knew that loving hearts and willing hands would take him in and help him bear his burden to the full extent of human ability. Oh, there is no place like a home to die in. There is no nurse like a loving mother. There is no counselor like a loving father.

“Mid pleasures and palaces, tho' oft we may roam.
Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home.”

It certainly must be a source of comfort to you to know that your boy died at home.

But his earthly way has been cut short. There will be no more footsteps of his leading out from his earthly home and back again. We carry him out,

and no one will carry him back. He has no further need of such a home. But what has become of him? What has happened? Where has he gone? Will he never come back again to tell you where he has gone? Alas, no; his pathway has left the earth; no mortal eye shall see the tracks of his wandering feet, no mortal ear shall hear their silent tread. They call this death. But what does it mean? Does it mean annihilation? Is there no such thing as immortality? Are these earthly homes our only, our last abode? Is our last gasp of breath an eternal farewell to life and existence? Is your son nothing now – like a last year’s flower, or is he something still, a living being whom you shall see, and know again as you knew him here on earth? Out of his earthly home here below he looked forward and upward to another home – the home of his Father in heaven. Was that a delusion, a dream? Come, dear friends, this is a question for you, and never was there such a time to answer it. Where is the son, the brother, the young man whom the icy hand of death has dragged out of his warm, loving home on earth?

I believe that he has found another home. I believe that he is still living. I believe that you may see him again. I believe what Jesus said: “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25. 26). “In my Father’s house are many mansions” (John 14:2). There is another home for us poor mortals, a home not made with hands, a home to take us in when earth will cast us off. And there is a way that leads to it, which all may find who seek. Let me speak to you of that way.

(THE WAY TO A HAPPY HOME AFTER DEATH)

Our text points out: 1 What that way is, 2 How it may be found.

The way that leads to the heavenly home of peace and rest with God can only be a clear way. Why does the Psalmist ask the question: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” Because it is of the greatest importance for a young man to have a clean way. Because all depends upon such a clean way. Because a clean way is the only kind of a way that will lead him safely home to God. Because an unclean way, a godless life, a sinful career leads to hell, to the eternal prison prepared for the devil and his angels. It is not a question of mere taste; it is a question of life and death. It is not only a nice and an expedient thing for a young man to have a clean way, a clean, a sinless, a blameless, a holy life, but it is the only way that leads home to heaven. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). “Be ye holy; for I am holy,”

says the Lord our God (Peter 1:16). “Be ye therefore perfect” (Matt. 5:48). “Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee” (Ps. 5:4). An unclean way, a sinful life does not lead to heaven but to hell.

But now then can any man get to heaven? Does any man on earth lead a perfect, a sinless life? Can any man stand upon the threshold of eternity and look back over a perfectly clean way – a sinless and spotless life? The Scriptures say: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). No honest man will ever say: “I never failed; I never did wrong; my way is clean.” It is only the hypocrite who dares to spread out his hands to God and say: “They are clean.” An honest man will smite his breast like the publican and say: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” This deplorable condition, this uncleanness before God, is not confined to the old. “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” says Isaiah (Isaiah 64:6). “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth,” says Moses (Gen. 8:21). And David, looking way back to his very conception, says: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). And what does the question in our text mean: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” if the young are sinless? Why advise young people how to cleanse their way if that way is clean? Oh, it is a fatal delusion, with which the devil blinds so many young people and makes them feel carnally secure – this notion that one must be an old sinner before he has any cause to fear the wrath of God and pay any serious attention to the salvation of his soul. It is not God nor his Word, nor his people, but it is the frivolous world and its reckless followers who excuse the sins of the young as harmless ebullitions of youthful spirit, or as wild oats that all must sow and can sow without jeopardizing their immortal souls. It is a delusion of the devil to imagine that God does not hold young men and women accountable for every transgression of his law of which they become guilty. God’s Word says: “Rejoice, young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Eccl. 11:9). Far from excusing the sins of his youth, David specifies them in his prayer for forgiveness and says: “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions” (Ps. 25:7). Let us then have done with this popular deception that a young man’s way is not polluted by the

sins of his youth and that the young are not under divine condemnation on account of their transgressions." There is no difference: for all have sinned," the young and the old, "and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22). And the soul that sinneth has not the promise of life and a home in heaven, but must die.

Remembering now that the only way that leads to heaven is a clean way, and that no man's way is clean by nature, what hope have we poor sinners of ever entering a happy home after death? None at all, if left to our own resources, to our own righteousness. None at all, unless God, in his infinite goodness and mercy, prepares a new way. And blessed be his name for evermore, he has found a new way to bring the sinner home. He has found and provides us with that which will cleanse the sinner's way, which will take away the pollution of sin. You cannot brush sin off your soul as you brush the dust from your clothes. Sin stains: it stains deeply and all the cleansing preparations of man will never take it out. But I am glad that it can be taken out of a soul. I am glad that we have reason to believe that the ugly stain was taken out of this young soul whose mortal clay lies before us in this coffin. There is an acid that will take away the stain of sin: there is a laver that will cleanse a young man's and an old man's, a young woman's and an old woman's way, that will leave a sinner as white as snow though his sins be red like crimson. It is the precious blood of Jesus that trickled down the cross on Calvary. It is the blood of God's own Lamb, that was shed for the remission of sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Who are they that have reached the beautiful home and stand around the throne of God in garments so clean, so white? "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14).

Jesus is the only way that leads to a happy home after death. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). No young man and no old man will ever be able to cleanse his way, purge his conscience of guilt, escape the penalty of his transgressions except through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). What a reason to find this one way! What a reason to make sure that you have found Jesus and his salvation! Jesus is our only Savior and only way to heaven and home!

“Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee:
Leave, oh, leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring:
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.”

How may Jesus, the sinner’s only way to heaven, be found? How may we become partakers of his salvation to our poor, sinful souls? “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word.” The answer is simple and to the point. God’s Word must be your guide, if you would find the only way to heaven.

It is a fatal error when men expect to be saved without the atoning blood of Christ. But it is just as fatal an error when they expect to find Christ and become partakers of his salvation without the Word of God, the divinely appointed means of grace. When the Bible declares that “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6), and that “he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16), it does not only drive men to Christ as the only Savior but also to the Word of God and the sacraments as the only means through which they can become and remain believers in Christ, or Christians. Faith in Christ is essential unto salvation; but the Word of God and the sacraments are just as essential, because they are the only means given unto us, through which faith can be wrought in our hearts. As without faith there is no salvation, so without the Word of God there is no faith. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). “Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:28). “They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them,” said Abraham to the rich man in hell, when he prayed that Lazarus should be sent to his brethren on earth, to warn them lest they also come into the place of torment (Luke 16:27-29). The rich man and his brethren on earth had an aversion to Moses and the prophets: they had no faith in the Word, but despised and neglected it as a worthless thing. But Abraham insists on Moses and the prophets, and declares that if that does not warn and save them from the torments of the damned, nothing else will. It is not only one way out of many, but it is the only way in which a young man can cleanse his way, by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word.

God's Word alone can bring men to Christ as they must come to him if they would be washed clean by his precious blood. That wonderful change, the new birth without which no man can enter the kingdom of heaven, is wrought by the power of the Word in baptism. No true conversion takes place without the Word of God. There is no spiritual light and life, no true repentance and faith, no nourishment on which faith can grow, no strength to fight sin and temptation, no gratitude for divine favors and blessings, no love for the Savior, no desire to do the will of the Lord, no joy in his service, no consecration to his cause, no fidelity to his Church and people, without the regenerating, strengthening, inspiring grace that flows from the Word of God. If you want to get into communication with God, in touch with God, into saving covenant with God, you must use the Word of God, and the sacraments. It is true, some men are saved "as by fire," through a weak faith, but even there it is the blood of Christ that saves them; while those who have a strong faith, who strive after holiness and are zealous in good works, you will always find to be readers of the Bible and regular attendants at Church and the Lord's Table. Oh, the Word, the precious Word of God, if we would use that more faithfully, how clean would be our way, how richly adorned with all good works, how bright in the hour of death!

What a blessing that you mourning parents could say to your dying son what Paul wrote to Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15). You may well thank God that you had not failed to teach him the saving Word of God. He knew where salvation was to be found. He knew how his way could be cleansed, and in the anxious days of his sickness his best, his only comfort was the blessed Word of God. It seems to me that this blessed Word ought to be more precious to you now than it ever was before. It cleansed your son's way: it brought him the saving blood. It was the only remedy that helped him. If in your anxious search you had found a medicine to cure your boy's consumption, I am sure you would have published it, your mouths would have been full of praise, you would have recommended it everywhere. Why not recommend the Word of God now, treasure it more highly; trust it more implicitly and resolve to use it more faithfully? It did more for your boy than any medicine could do: it saved his soul, it gave him a home in heaven.

Is there a young man or a young woman here today, who is indifferent to God's Word, who has become a stranger in church and at the Lord's Table,

who no longer reads his Bible nor breathes a prayer to God – let him take warning, let him heed the lesson of this solemn hour. What a sermon this young man, now, that he has entered into a full realization of all that God’s Word can do for a poor sinner, could preach if he could open his lips and speak to you. He would tell you how he was tempted to drift away from the saving Word, and to cast himself into the seductive arms of the world, as young people are so sorely tempted to do in these materialistic times. He would tell you how his sickness was a very Godsend to bring him back again to the blessed Word and its Savior. I remember well how he came to me last Christmas, just before going to Denver, and announced himself for communion. He had not been at the Lord’s Table for a good while, and it seemed that he was afraid there might be some objections to his communing. But when I noticed the tremor of his lips, the tears in his eyes, the stamp of death upon his brow and the expression of a serious purpose on his face, I had not the heart to reprove him, but said to myself: “This young man is in dead earnest; he wants to get near the Savior with his heavy burden, and thank God he still knows where to find him.” Oh, how he would preach to you if he could speak, and tell you that the only way for a young man to cleanse his way, is by taking heed thereto according to God’s Word. God help us all to heed the lesson and find the way to the eternal home in heaven. Seek that way, ye mourning friends, and you will meet your loved one again in that blessed home after death where God wipes away all tears.

“Let countless thousands choose the road
That leads the soul away from God;
This happiness, dear Lord, be mine,
To live and die entirely Thine.”

Amen.

20. The Silver Cord Is Loosed, The Golden Bowl Is Broken By Rev. J. H. Kuhlman

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; while the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: in the days when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall how themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows, be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher: all is vanity.” – Ecclesiastes 12:1-8.

Occasion: Funeral Sermon on the Death of a Young Married Woman

Death is always dreadful. When he enters our homes, we try to hide that dreadfulness as much as possible. We try to conceal his hideous face, his ghastly countenance. We try to make our dead as beautiful, as life-like as we can. We clothe them in white shrouds. We lay them in caskets with silken lining. We heap flowers upon the bier. But, after all, death remains dreadful, and we cannot deny it.

We also speak of death in beautiful terms, so that we may forget his terror. We invent sweet names for him. We summon to our assistance all the practical expressions in our language. We speak of our dead as those who have departed, those who have fallen asleep, those who have gone to the

farther shore. But, after all, it amounts to very little. He remains death, death the dreadful one.

Only the Christian can really comfort himself with sweet names for death. Only the Christian, who has a risen Lord, can rightly use the comforting Scriptural names that describe death. Only the Christian uses life aright, preparing for death, heeding the injunction: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not ... or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken." Beautiful, poetical words of Solomon concerning death! They are part of the word of our God, and as Christians we may use them. As Christians we look down today upon our dear young sister, so white and still upon her snowy-white bed, and say in sorrow and yet with joy:

The Silver Cord is Loosed, the Golden Bowl is Broken

I. The Silver Cord is Loosed:

The silver cord that held this young life, that mysterious silver cord which bound together body and soul, is loosed. The dust shall "return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." But it is only loosed, not severed, not torn asunder; but merely loosed during the night of the grave, loosed long enough to let the soul slip out of its bond for a season and leave the body lie alone. But when the morning comes, the morning of that great resurrection day, the silver cord shall bind them together again, this body and this soul, bind them together forever and forever.

The silver cord is loosed, that silver cord of love, that bright bond of pure affection, which bound you together, as husband and wife, on your marriage day, but which was destined to hold you in its tender bonds for, alas, so short a time only. The heavenly Bridegroom came and called her. Listen, how Solomon describes this coming to the church: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." So it was with your bride. When the winter was past, when the flowers began to bloom and the birds began to sing, the Bridegroom came and called: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." But for Christians the silver cord is only loosed, not severed, not forever torn asunder. It is loosed long

enough to allow your dear wife to slip out of it, for a season, to leave you, husband, alone for a little while – but only for a little while. There in heaven the silver cord will be bound around you both again, and hold you heart to heart forever and forever.

The silver cord is loosed, that silver cord of tender love and sweet affection, which bound you, parents, you, brothers and sisters, to your departed one. For you, too, has come the time of which our text speaks: the evil days, the years “when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” For you the sun, the light of the moon and the stars seem darkened. “Man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets.” But mourn not as those who have no hope. Courage, Christians! Death has not broken the silver cord forever. It is but loosed, loosed long enough to let this dear one rise up and slip quietly out of the family circle – for a little while. So shall you all pass out, one by one. But what was bound by God on earth, shall be bound in heaven. There the silver cord will be drawn tight again and hold this family circle together, hold them, without parting, forever and forever.

The silver cord is loosed, that silver cord which bound her, together with us, in the bonds of the Christian church. 'Tis the silver cord of the love of Jesus Christ, binding us together in the one faith, in the one hope of eternal life, binding us all together in one great family here on earth. The cord is loosed – not broken – to let one member go from the lower part of the encircling bond to the upper. For, lo, this silver cord reaches from the valley of tears into the heights of Paradise, enclosing in its silver strands the very angels of God.

“The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make:
Joined to their Lord, in bonds of love,
All of his grace partake.”

Again and again the cord is loosed to let one member rise up and go before. But there in heaven the blessed bonds shall be drawn tight again. There the silver cord of the love of the Lamb shall bind us and unite us into one great family before the throne of God, bind us and unite us forever and forever. The silver cord is loosed.

II. The Golden Bowl is Broken:

She who lies before us was beautiful like a golden bowl. Before disease and death ravaged this body it was particularly fair, and graced with a mind and temperament peculiarly sweet and brave. Yes, as we knew her in the days gone by, she was like a golden bowl, a masterpiece of the Creator's hand. Alas, it is broken. As it lies here before us, you would scarcely know it for the golden bowl it once was, though some of the fairness and fineness remains. Oh, how death, dreadful death, had to hammer it with his hammers of pain and disease, how long he had to beat upon it till it broke, how long it withstood his stoutest blows. At last it gave way. In the language of our text, the evil days came, when "the keepers of the house trembled, ...men bowed themselves" – these lithe limbs gave way; when "the grinders ceased" – these small, white teeth refused to act: "when those that look out of the windows were darkened" – these bright eyes closed in death.

The golden bowl is broken, but mark well, my brethren, the contents of the bowl are not poured out. The contents of the bowl, the immortal spirit, God has preserved in his heavenly kingdom. In the moment of death were fulfilled the words of our text: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto the God who gave it."

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Our dear sister remembered him, who created not only her body but also her soul, and whose will it was that this soul should return unto him. She remembered her Creator in the days of her youth, in her baptism, in her confirmation, in her daily life, in the services at her church. But especially when the evil days came, the days of sickness and weakness, she remembered her Creator and Redeemer. It was he who gave her strength to face so bravely, so cheerfully, so patiently, so unflinchingly, as few can, that dire disease, that dread white plague, which annually slays its thousands and ten thousands. It was his comfort that sustained her in death's darkness, particularly those words of the psalmist that seem to apply so well to her malady: "He shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." All the time, while death was battering the golden bowl of her life, she strove, by the grace of God, to give the contents of the bowl, her spirit, unblemished into the keeping of her Lord Jesus Christ.

Though now the golden bowl is broken and the fragments must return to the dust, yet out of that dust, on that great day, God will fashion a vessel far

finer and fairer, a body glorious, like unto the glorious body of Christ. In heaven this new and golden bowl will contain forever the sainted spirit, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

But for you, too, mourning friends, and for us all, dear congregation, sooner or later, the silver cord of life shall be loosed, the golden bowl of the body shall be broken. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." The vain world passeth away. Soon we must all go to our long home. When that time comes, do you desire that this cord be bound again, this bowl restored in beauty? If so, "remember now thy Creator." Now is the time. Do not put it off until the evil days come, and "the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Do not wait until sun, moon and stars are darkened, until "the keepers of the house" tremble and "the strong men bow themselves," and "the grinders cease," and "those that look out of the windows be darkened." Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: "fear God and keep his commandments": and this is his greatest commandment: "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name."

Then, when the last hour comes, we can face it as bravely, as did this patient soul. Then we shall not fear, but shall go rejoicing to meet our dear ones on the other side. Though death and all his dreadful following of sickness and disease hem us in on every side, we look up to the Lord of Life and say in faith:

"I fear no foe, with
Thee at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight,
and tears no bitterness."

The silver cord is loosed, the golden bowl is broken. Lord, do thou bind again the silver cord! Do thou restore the golden bowl in heavenly beauty! Amen.

21. Be Thou Faithful Unto Death

By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”– Rev. 2:10.

Occasion: For a comparatively young woman, active and faithful in Christ’s service. The text was her confirmation verse.

This text is familiar and precious to everyone who has been instructed and confirmed in the Lutheran Church. The earnest pastor takes frequent occasion to impress on the heart of his catechumens the admonition, “Be thou faithful.” These words are often used as a text for the confirmation sermon, and the list of memory verses employed in the rite of confirmation invariably includes this word of Scripture.

The appropriateness of this passage for the solemn confirmation season will at once be admitted by anyone familiar with the Bible and in sympathy with the beautiful customs of the Lutheran Church. The catechumens are assuming obligations of more than ordinary importance. To themselves, their parents, their friends, this is an impressive moment, one they will never forget.

"Ye men and angels, witness now,
Before the Lord we speak;
To Him we make our solemn vow,
A vow we may not break.

“That long as life itself shall last,
Ourselves to Christ we’ll yield;
Nor from His cause will we depart,
Or ever quit the field.”

The custom of using the memory-verse, spoken by the pastor at confirmation, for a funeral text, obtains in some places. This custom cannot, for obvious reasons, be followed invariably. But surely, on this occasion, when we preach on the special verse used some years ago at the confirmation of our sister in Christ, no one will question the appropriateness and rightfulness of the choice.

Be Thou Faithful Unto Death

The text forms part of a letter addressed to the pastor of the church in Smyrna. In the words, "Be thou faithful unto death," we have

(AN EARNEST ADMONITION:)

Smyrna has had a long and eventful history, extending back hundreds of years before Christ. It has figured in many wars and battles, and has often passed from one power to another; but, notwithstanding its checkered career, it still stands, under the modern name of Ismir, a Turkish corruption of the ancient name; and, with its population of 250,000, is noted as the largest city in Asia Minor.

We are told that in Roman times Smyrna was the "most brilliant city of Asia Minor, successfully rivaling Pergamos and Ephesus." It was a great trading-center, situated as it was in an excellent harbor, and at the head of one of the main highways leading to the interior. To this "city of life," this "queenly city crowned with her diadem of towers," came at an early time the greatest opportunity that can come to individual, city, or nation. The Spirit of God came there in the Gospel. What a day must that have been when Smyrna heard for the first time about "the unsearchable riches of Christ"!

The letter to the church at Smyrna is from Jesus Christ: "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead (became dead), and lived again" (verse 8). The epistle is written, not in "cold admiration" but in "warm affection." The church has already suffered tribulation, its poverty is known, the presence of a bitter enemy, in the Jews who form a synagogue of Satan, is recognized. The past has been one of suffering and trial. The immediate future offers no relief from persecution. "Fear none of those things which thou art about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten

days.” With these things in prospect, how suitable the word of earnest admonition: “Be thou faithful unto death.”

Some of you, says this letter, are to be cast into prison. You will be condemned. You will suffer for your faith’s sake. Even death will be the sentence imposed. Be faithful to the point of suffering death. Don’t surrender your faith in Jesus, your Savior. When the fiery hour of trial comes, think of him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, who died the shameful death of the cross that you might live forever. Be faithful; persevere; hold out.

With these things in mind, what importance and solemnity should attach to our text when we use it at our confirmation services. The day of confirmation was, for our deceased sister, one of the great days of her life. When she promised to renounce the devil and all his works and ways; the world with all its pomp; the flesh with all its evil desires – she meant what she said. She took no idle vows, no empty words upon her lips. When she confessed her faith in the Father, who loved her and made her; in the Son, who loved her and redeemed her; in the Holy Spirit, who loved her and was day by day sanctifying her – she understood what she was confessing and with confidence and joy gave utterance to her faith. When she promised to continue steadfast in the faith she had confessed and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by a godly life, even unto the end, she realized what she was doing, and gave the promise with her whole heart. And when her head was bowed and her hands devoutly folded during the act of confirmation, she received this word of earnest admonition: “Be thou faithful unto death.”

Our sister did not receive this word in vain, but accepted it as it was in truth, a message from God to her soul. She did what she could. Humble duties were faithfully done. Larger tasks were performed with equal fidelity. She was conscientious. Never boasting, either before God or men, she modestly went her way. She confessed, “Lord, have mercy on me.” In this contrite, believing spirit she discharged her duty. Whether in the home or at her daily work, whether in the Sunday-school or in the Luther League, she had but one thought: to be faithful.

“Unto death.” Even today it costs something to be a Christian. Yea, to be a genuine confessor and follower of Christ, means persecution. It does not mean literal death, perhaps; but often the trial is almost as severe. The deceased was a popular young woman. Her beautiful face, lit with the joy and peace of heaven; her happy disposition and gracious manners, won her

many friends. But when these friends sought to take her away for a Sunday's outing, she told them that her place was at Sunday school and church. When other interests and arrangements would interfere with her attendance at Luther League meetings, she refused to be turned aside from the path of duty. This faithfulness cost her some friends; it even exposed her to criticism and ridicule in some quarters. She was often a victim of modern forms of persecution. But she proved faithful.

We pray that this spirit may be more general amongst us, and that our young people may not be seeking "the life of mere ease or mere pleasure," but may know and experience that "the life of duty" makes the "great man as it makes the great nation." Let the spirit of Polycarp, the venerable Bishop of Smyrna, be in you, my dear young people. Polycarp refused to deny his Lord and Saviour, whom for six and eighty years he had served, and from whom he had experienced nothing but love and mercy. He went joyfully up to the stake, relates the historian, and amidst the flames praised God for having deemed him worthy "to be numbered among his martyrs, to drink the cup of Christ's sufferings, unto the eternal resurrection of the soul and the body in the incorruption of the Holy Spirit."

The other portion of our text awaits consideration: "I will give thee a crown of life."

(A GRACIOUS REWARD)

is here promised: The language of this letter seems to have been chosen with special reference to the situation and the experiences of the Smyrnaeans. The idea of faithfulness would appeal to them, since they prided themselves in their fidelity to the Roman government. Their "singular fidelity" was praised by a Roman historian. Cicero lauded them as "the most faithful of our allies." And they well deserved the encomiums bestowed on them. Smyrna "had established its historic claim to the epithet 'faithful' in three centuries of loyalty. The city had been faithful to Rome in danger and difficulty. The citizens had stripped off their own garments to send to the Roman soldiers when suffering from cold and the hardships of a winter campaign."

Similarly, the reference to a crown would at once be recognized as a singularly happy thought. " 'The crown of Smyrna' was a familiar phrase with the Smyrnaeans." Travelers describe the hill Pagos, at whose foot and on the lower skirts of which rose the buildings of the city. On the rounded top of this hill, we are informed, were stately public buildings. Standing in

conspicuous place and orderly array, these structures formed a crown to the city. But the inhabitants of Smyrna were, on one occasion, reminded that “it is a greater charm to wear a crown of men than a crown of porticoes.” And so, when this immortal epistle was addressed to them, the Smyrnaeans were reminded that the crown of everlasting life is to be preferred above the crown of civic charm and beauty.

“A crown” – symbol of victory. Coronation follows conflict. To obtain this crown one must fight the good fight of faith. Sin, Satan and hell are the foes which must be met. From the cradle to the grave they beset and assail us. With a thousand arts and wiles, with threats, with every conceivable weapon they seek our overthrow. “But thanks be to God. which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Through the power of him that loved us we come off more than conquerors. The crown is a gift – a pure gift of grace. We have not merited it. “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” When we were yet in our sins God loved us and planned our redemption. Christ fully gave himself a ransom for many and himself earned our release. The Holy Spirit comes to us with the offer of salvation, bidding us buy without money and without price.

"Grace first contrived the way
To save rebellious man;
And all the steps that grace display
Which drew the wondrous plan.

“Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone
And well deserves the praise.”

“A crown of life” – wonderful gift! Not money! Not fame! Not honors! Not lands! But life! Glorious life! Eternal life! Life in fellowship with God, with angels, with saints! Life free from every sin and blemish, from every taint and imperfection! Life in holiness and purity before God forever! Kings cannot give it, nor can they take it away. It cannot be bought for money, it cannot be achieved by human effort or merit. It is the free gift of a loving God. St. Paul exults in the prospect of this reward of grace. He calls it “a crown of righteousness” which the Lord will give him in “that day,” and not to him only, but to all them also that love Christ’s appearing.

Our sister wears today a crown. Here is a crown of life. Parents and friends, rejoice in this – your loved one has gained, through Christ, a great victory. By the grace of God she has conquered selfishness, false ambitions, the allurements of the world and the invitations of false friends. She has remained faithful and upon her brow now rests a crown of life. See to it that you abide faithful. “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. You have work to do. God calls you. He bids you labor in his vineyard. He admonishes:”Be thou faithful.” He warns you of danger, temptation, and persecution – “unto death.” He promises the victors a reward whose glory is indescribable – “a crown of life.”

There’s a crown for you, for me. What comfort! “And when the chief shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away” (I Peter 5:4).

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free?
No, there’s a cross for every one,
And there’s a cross for me.

“The consecrated cross I’ll bear
Till Christ shall set me free,
And then go home my crown to wear –
For there’s a crown for me.”

Amen.

Part Three

22. The Comfort Of Christian Mourners In The Hour Of Affliction By Rev. H. P. Dannecker

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" – Rom. 8:31, 32.

Occasion: For the Funeral of a Husband and Father

DEAR MOURNING FRIENDS:

The great affliction which has befallen you has caused us to assemble in the house of God at this unusual hour. The cause of your afflictions and present grief is not hard to find. It lies before us in that somber casket, which contains the remains of a loving husband and father. He was taken from you when his soul took its sudden flight on Monday morning, and now you are on your way to give up the body also by laying it away in the silent grave. And we, your friends, have come with you to mingle our tears with yours and to offer you what consolation we can give. For this purpose we bid the departed one our last farewell at his grave. God grant that this sojourn at his house will do you good.

Look about you. It is the church, your heavenly Father's house on earth, the place where he has promised to meet you and bless you. "Where two or

three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). He is here now. He is looking down upon you. He sees that coffin. He sees your tears. He knows just how it happened and how you feel. You need not tell him anything. Only lean your weary heads upon his loving bosom and let him comfort you.

He will comfort you. He will comfort you as a mother comforteth her child. He will comfort you with the sweet sound of his voice in his holy Word. He speaks to you in our text: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?” Oh, let the blessed, assuring words find entrance into your hearts. They will comfort you. They will give you strength to bear up under this heavy blow, this trying affliction. I know that they will do you good if you will only listen to the sweet voice of your heavenly Father that speaks through them. Let me help you to catch the sweet sound and grasp the comforting assurance that is in them by pointing out to you:

The Comfort of Christian Mourners in the Hour of Affliction

Let me show you: 1. Its necessity. 2. Its nature. 3. Its ground.

1. Mourners, and even Christian mourners, have great need of comfort.

Because we are God’s children by faith in Jesus Christ does not exempt us Christians from the sickness and sorrow and pain and death that fall to the lot of every mortal being in this sinful world. These things come from sin, and “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). But what then is the advantage of being a Christian? There is a great advantage. While we Christians must suffer pain and sickness and death in this evil world just like the ungodly, we know “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). We Christians have a comfort and consolation when these things befall us, while the ungodly have no comfort. The ungodly suffer more under the trying afflictions of this present life than we

Christians do, because they have no hope, no peace with God, no assurance that all things work together for their good. To them death, the culmination of all human ills, is nothing but sorrow, an irreparable loss, a mysterious horror, with no redeeming feature whatever, with no use, no advantage and no gain.

“What shall we say to these things?” to them is a question that admits of no cheerful, hope-inspiring answer. What shall we say to these things? “Why nothing,” say the ungodly, “we can say nothing; all that we can do, is to suffer them as best we can; they simply cannot be helped.” What would an unbeliever say to this present calamity which has befallen these our friends? What could he say, except that it could not be helped, that they must bear it, and not take it so hard, but think that it is our common lot and forget it as soon as they can. This is all that he could say honestly. But what kind of comfort would that be? You have lost a dear father and your mother is lying sick at home, and your hearts are sore and your tears are falling fast. Forget it! Simply think that it had to be! Oh, what miserable comfort is this stoical indifference, this blind fatalism of the world. If I had no better consolation than that to offer, I would keep still at least, and not insult such poor, afflicted hearts, the widow and the orphans, by adding to their cup of sorrow the bitter poison of despair. Oh, there is an advantage in being a Christian, a child of God, a believer in Christ and his Word, in the hour of such affliction. A Christian can give and receive comfort, the very best of comfort, comfort that will bind up the poor, wounded heart, that will take the poison out of the wound and assuage its greatest pain and make the affliction at least bearable. Aye, a Christian can give and receive such comfort that will cheer and gladden the heart in the midst of its great sorrow. This certainly makes it an advantage to be a Christian, and I am glad that we have that advantage.

But we Christians have no advantage over the godless in being exempt from such afflictions. “Ye shall weep and lament,” said Christ to his disciples (John 16:20). Temporal prosperity is no criterion by which God’s children may be recognized. The best of them, like Daniel and Job and poor Lazarus and the Apostles and martyrs, endured the greatest hardships and sufferings of this present life. God’s children are subject to sickness and death and have need of comfort. We, also, my Christian brethren, must suffer and die; we, also, must mourn and weep like our friends who mourn and weep today, and that makes it necessary that we should be comforted.

Our hearts sometimes cry out in sorrow and pain: “What shall we say to these things?” and we want an answer, a good, comforting, reliable answer.

2. And Christian mourners shall have that answer.

They shall not cry out in vain. They shall not struggle on through the deep sea of trouble without a chart and compass, without knowing whither they are drifting. They shall not stand in stupid, speechless sorrow before such an affliction like this, and not know why it was done and whether it bodes them good or evil. They shall be told. They shall be assured that all is well, that God watches over them and their dead and will turn all this sorrow, all this black, distressing darkness into sunshine and joy. They shall know and be assured that their dead who die in the Lord are not dead, but sleep for a brief space only to rise again in glory and perfect health. They shall be assured that their own death will be an inestimable gain, the happy exchange of a vale of tears for a pure and blessed home in heaven. “If God be for us, who can be against us?” This is the Christian’s triumph over all evil, over all sorrow and death. God is for us.

He loves us. We need not fear his wrath on account of our sins, for he has forgiven them. We need not fear that everlasting debtor’s prison, the infernal pit, because he has wiped out the debt. The fear that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in this body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10), does not disturb the peace of our dying hour, even though we know that “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccles. 7:20) . But we are not afraid of the judgment to come, not of the sentence of condemnation which we have deserved because he who sits upon the judgment seat has forgiven all our sins, and is no longer against us, but for us; and if God be for us, who can be against us? Oh, how sweet the knowledge, the assurance that God is for us, and will befriend, yea, justify us in the dreadful judgment toward which all the world is hastening. This assurance is the very best cure for all our fears and sorrows. It strikes at the root of all our ills, it removes the cause of our greatest trouble, which is sin. What a glorious thing, what a sweet comfort

it is for us Christians to be able to say: God is for us! It means that God will save us from everlasting death.

But it also means that he will protect us in this present life. He is our dear Father in heaven who takes care of his children in time and in eternity. As surely as you are Christians, my friends, you know that God was with your father on that fatal Monday morning when he fell back upon his pillow with a single gasp and was dead. You know that that did not happen without the will and consent of your and his heavenly Father. You know that God is with your mother at home, and that not a hair shall fall from her beloved head without the will of your Father in heaven. You know that God is with you now, that he will go with you to the grave which is awaiting the remains of your lamented father, that he will support you and give you strength to perform this sad duty, not as such who mourn without hope, but as firm believers in the divine promise of a glorious resurrection. You know that if you let him, he will turn this very affliction into a blessing by drawing you more closely to himself and his holy Word. He will strengthen your faith and give you courage, patience and hope to bear this trial and every burden that may yet be laid upon your shoulders. As gold is purified in the fire, so will he use these sorrows and afflictions to remove from your hearts the natural love for the things of this world and to move you to set your affections upon the things that are eternal. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Cor. 4:17, 18). Have you ever read that sweet, comforting promise: “All things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28)? It means that God watches over his children and will turn their losses into glorious gains, their weeping into jubilant songs, their fears into shouts of triumph. This is the sweet comfort of every mourning Christian. He is assured of the love and protection of his God. He knows that God is for him, and if God be for us, who can be against us?

3. This comfort is sure and reliable.

The Christian's belief that God is for him, and that nothing, therefore, can harm him, is not a dream, a delusion. It is a trust, a hope that is built on good, solid ground. It is based on the rock of God's Word. That is a good foundation. "The Word of the Lord is right and all his works are done in truth" (Ps. 33:4). Believe what the Scriptures say and your faith will stand. And what do the Scriptures say to Christian mourners? Listen! "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" That is Scripture. That is God's Word. And what does it say? It says that with Christ, that is, to those who have Christ by faith, to us Christians, God will give all things freely. Mark that word "freely." It means without cost, impartially, abundantly, in good season. And mark the expression "all things." It includes the best, the most needful, the most precious, bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings. God will "freely give us all things." What a promise! What a rock to base our trust on! Surely, God is for us, and you may well commit your present sorrow to him and patiently, trustingly wait for his deliverance.

But we have another reason for believing that God is for us.

"He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." It is God's Son who makes our faith good. He is our Savior, whom God delivered up for us all, that by his innocent suffering and death he might purchase for us the forgiveness of sins. "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34). For Christ's sake God is for us. For Christ's sake he forgives all our iniquities, heals all our diseases, redeems our life from destruction and crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies. Oh, if we only have Christ, if we only cling to him with believing hearts, God is for us and will freely give us all things. Put your trust in him, dear friends, and you will not be disappointed, for your faith will be grounded on a rock.

But Christ is also an earnest, a pledge of God's good and gracious will. How can we doubt that he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, should not with him also freely give us all things? What are all the other things that we may need in time and in eternity when compared to that greatest gift of divine love, God's own beloved son? Can you not trust in the good will, the love and grace of him who sacrificed his own dear child to save your soul? Oh, how can we yet doubt that he who gave us his Son for a Savior is our Friend and everlasting Protector? It will not be near

as hard for God to raise up your father again, to restore your mother to health and to keep you from harm as it was to give up his dear Son to be hung upon the accursed tree.

Go then in peace, dear Friends, and perform the last sad rites for your dead. Commit his body to the ground and then go bravely forward to face whatever the future may have in store for you. God is for you: who can be against you? With him for a Friend, what need we fear?

“I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death’s sting! where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.”

Amen.

23. I Am The Resurrection And The Life By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” – John 11:25, 26.

Occasion: For a brother, the last but one – she a sister and constant companion – of a singularly refined and devout family. Brother and sister had been close and congenial companions for many years

“I am the resurrection and the life” – one of the most wonderful utterances the world has heard! These are words of overwhelming grandeur and majesty – words “that have pealed through the ages.” Other sentences, striking and impressive, have fallen from the same lips, proclaiming the mighty prophet who spake as never man before or since has spoken. We are overawed by such declarations as these: “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9). “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). “I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). All these sublime utterances are made without a trace of assumption or hauteur: they come with perfect naturalness from the lips of Jesus Christ.

There was, in the little town of Bethany, a small family circle of brother and two sisters: Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Jesus loved this family and found comfort in their midst. He seems to have visited often at their home.

Now Lazarus felt sick and died. When Jesus, to whom the sisters had sent word of their brother's illness, came to Bethany, Lazarus had been in the grave four days. Martha, on learning that Jesus was coming, went out to meet him. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," she said to Jesus. "Thy brother shall rise again," Jesus said to her. Martha replied: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then said Jesus the words that will never be forgotten; the centuries cannot obscure them; the tumults of the nations cannot silence them:

"I am the Resurrection and the Life"

WORDS SUBLIME! What do they tell us about Jesus Christ? They tell us that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life. Lazarus was dead. Martha had heard, "Thy brother shall live again." Doubtless well instructed in the teachings of the Old Testament, she had assented to what seemed to her to be in Jesus' mind. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

"I am the resurrection," came the startling and withal thrilling words from Jesus' lips. Martha was thinking of the future. Christ was speaking of the present.

"The resurrection." We are witnesses daily of death and its consequences – the burial and the decay of the body. Myriads of graves are around us. The tombstones stand mute witnesses of death – sentinels over the dead. But Jesus said: "Thy brother shall rise again." He declared: "I am the resurrection." Ere long his body was to be shaken by the tremors of death. His body would be prepared for burial, and would be laid in the tomb. He knew what was to befall him, and notwithstanding proclaimed: "I am the resurrection." He who had power to lay down his life, also had power to take it again. "The third day he shall rise again." By his own power would he come out of the tomb on the glad Easter morn. And as he would come forth from the tomb, so had he the power to bring others out of the tomb. Death and decay must yield before his matchless power. And at any time he might decree. At this moment, if necessary for the glory of God: "I am the resurrection."

"The life." O blessed messenger! He came to heal a sick world. He came to lighten a dark world. He came to quicken a dead world. He came to save a lost world. He himself was, and is, life. Life in its absolute sense, life

apart from us and from the world, life independent of parent and cause, of food and drink. Life in its most perfect physical expression, life in its highest intellectual experience, life in its noblest, yea, infinite spiritual being. As he had life in himself, so he could and did give life to others. He came that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. He declared himself able to bestow that life at any time – now, this moment, if need be. “I am the life.”

On this bright, beautiful spring day, and in this saddened home, from which has been taken the last but one, Jesus is saying as certainly as he said to Martha: “I am the resurrection and the life.” Today, as then, he is thinking of the brother who has been called away. Today, as then, he is speaking to a sister: “I am – the resurrection – and the life.”

COMFORTING WORDS! They were not uttered for the mere personal satisfaction of the speaker. They were not a piece of boasting. They were meant to do good, to convey peace and comfort. “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” Martha was to be helped and comforted. She was in sore distress over her brother Lazarus’ decease. Christ, at this juncture, gave assurance that whosoever believeth in him, though he had died, should live, yes, should live forever – in the enjoyment of the only life worth naming, life in everlasting fellowship with God.

The condition of enjoying such a life was named. “He that believeth in me.” Jesus was demanding much. He wanted men’s confidence. It wasn’t confidence in his ability to engage in business honorably and profitably; it wasn’t confidence in his power to depose the contemporaneous kings and emperors and set himself up in their stead. He asked for confidence in himself – absolute, complete surrender of the heart to himself. He had come to give men light and life. He had appeared for the purpose of saving men from darkness and death. It was his aim to save men from their sins. Men were to believe in and acknowledge him as Savior. They were invited to have faith in him, to entrust the matter of their salvation into his hands. Men were not to trust in themselves for their salvation; they were not to rely on nor boast of their own works; attendance upon the synagogue services and membership in some synagogue congregation were not to be offered in satisfaction of sin. Jesus Christ, who was and is light and life and truth, came to offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was and is the Son of God. Without blasphemy and without the slightest presumption he

could claim to be the resurrection and the life. And he made most precious promises to men – on condition that they believe.

The promises? Life, life forever, life with him who was the perfect, transcendent, absolute life. The grave is not our goal.

“We were not made for death. God meant that we should live, live forever. A most convincing argument is offered in the sequel of our text.” “I go,” Jesus had said to his disciples, “that I may awake him out of sleep” (verse 11). “Thy brother shall rise again” was the promise to Martha (verse 23). How literally that promise was fulfilled! “Where have ye laid him?” “Come and see.” “He hath been dead four days.” “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” “They took away the stone.” “Jesus lifted up his eyes,” and had communion with his Father. And then – he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” “And he that was dead came forth.” Oh, what comfort! He that was dead is alive again. He is restored to his sisters. Precious promise – though he were dead, yet shall he live – shall never die. And all because Christ spake truly: “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Dear sister, you and your brother were congenial companions. From childhood on you had enjoyed each other’s company. You both delighted in intellectual pursuits, you both loved art and music. You were one in your spiritual aspirations, attending the same Sunday-school, worshiping together in the same church, communing together at the same altar. Ideal and happy was your life in the home which you both loved and enjoyed so much. And now your dear brother has gone. No one but yourself can fully realize what that means. But listen! The promises! “Thy brother shall rise again.” “He that believeth – shall live – shall never die.” It might be – it certainly could be – at this very moment. But we have no assurance that this will come to pass either today or tomorrow: but it will be some day, some sweet day, some rarely fair day, bye and bye. But again: it is today, in some sense. Jesus lives. He was dead, but, behold, he is alive forevermore. In him your brother lives and moves and has his being at this hour. In this same Jesus you have your being, your all-in-all. Through the agency of Jesus, through his blessed person, you then have fellowship with the brother whom you no longer have with you in the flesh.

However, the great comfort to you is not in the companionship and fellowship you enjoyed and still enjoy with your brother, but in the

communion you have with Christ through faith – “he that believeth in me.” Because you believe, you too shall live, shall live forever, in joy and glory.

“BELIEVEST THOU THIS?” I do not ask because I have any doubt as to the answer. I ask to draw out your faith, to bring forth your confession. Martha answered clearly and firmly: “Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” I am assured that this is your confession. And I am convinced that your bereavement will bring more definitely, more emphatically before your mind, this question so supremely important. At the same time you will weigh carefully and prayerfully the answer here given; its terms will become clearer and more meaningful. You will find much in this answer from Martha’s lips to engage your thought. And as you meditate, your soul will grow and expand, yours will be a richer faith, a more abundant experience. Remember, too, that there are other brothers and sisters, not so near, indeed, after the flesh, as was he whom you mourn, but to whom, nevertheless, you will be called to minister, and in whose presence your confession of the Christ will have deep meaning and great influence.

Friends, you have heard the sublime words uttered by your Savior: “I am the resurrection and the life.” “What think ye of Christ? What think ye of his teaching? Do you believe all this? Happy are ye, indeed, if your souls are at rest today in Jesus Christ. Your friend and neighbor needs you now. Your expressions of sympathy, your help in many ways, will be a comfort to her. But she has already the best comfort of all – the Prince of Life, the Savior. You will do well by yourselves, probably it will be the greatest Godsend to her, if you will let her testify to you what God has done for her soul, how in a great trial of affliction God asserted himself very emphatically, yet tenderly, in her life, as the resurrection and the life, and gave her promises abundant and exceeding rich and comforting – promises concerning her brother, concerning herself, promises for today and for the great hereafter.

Brother, farewell! We have lived many years together in our earthly father’s house. Here are the rooms where the loved ones used to gather. I see the trees under whose shade we sat. Here are the well-remembered books, and here some poem we loved to read. And here – the Book of books. Let me reverently, tenderly touch it! We went together to the Heavenly Father’s house. There we sang the songs of Zion, there we heard the Word – so rich in truth and blessing, there we communed with him who

died for us – and who rose again. Today thou art in thy Father’s house above. I am still on earth. Some day I will meet thee there. Together shall we and our loved ones be, and forever with the Lord. Brother, I will remember that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. In him shall be our trysting [appointed meeting]place, and in him shall both our lives be completed, for – is he not the Resurrection and the Life? And shall not he that believeth in him rise again, and live, and never die? Do I believe this? With all my heart I believe, Lord, that “thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” Amen.

24. What Comfort Do The Scriptures Give Us Concerning Our Dead? By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” – 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

Occasion: For a Theological Professor’s Wife

The Creator has given us affections and so it is natural to love each other. We are happy in the exercise of our affections. To be surrounded by congenial spirits, by wife and children, to love them and to see them love each other is one of the purest forms of human enjoyment.

But who will describe our heartaches when these bonds of affection are violently sundered by death? Tears flow unbidden. They are our only natural relief. Whether men be believers or unbelievers, they feel this pain; yet there is a vast difference in their mourning. St. Paul is not a stoic who, in stolid indifference, gives up his weeping. He does not seek to restrain us from weeping. He knows that we cannot refrain from it without doing violence to our nature. But he asks us not to mourn as those who have no hope. When the worldling stands by the bier he is comfortless and his mourning borders on despair; but when the Christian stands by the coffin and the grave he has hope and even amid the gathering darkness there is a

rift in the clouds and a ray of light from a better world cheers him. He mourns with hope.

The source of our comfort is the Bible. It was given that through its comforts we might have hope. In cases of affliction men comfort each other; but human comfort is vain. The only balm for the wounded heart is found in the Word. May God help us to apply it to your bleeding hearts!

What Comfort Do the Scriptures Give Us Concerning Our Dead?

They teach:

I. That they sleep in Jesus.

Text, verses 13, 14.

What a beautiful figure by which to represent death! There is something dreadful about this king of terrors and we shrink away from his chilly touch and his icy embrace. The world has invented figures by which to represent this unwelcome guest, but after all there is a tinge of sadness and of incompleteness about the broken wheel, the broken pitcher, the sickle and the sheaf. These do not overcome the terrors of death. How much more pleasing is the figure of sleep. We do not dread it; yea, we rather long for it. When we are wearied by the heat and burden of the day, we look forward longingly to that hour when we can recline on the couch and forget all our cares in sleep.

The death of a believer alone is spoken of under this pleasing figure. Christ has taken away the sting of death and has disarmed it. The bee robbed of its sting cannot hurt, the serpent robbed of its fang cannot bite. While the believer walks in the valley of the shadow of death it cannot harm him. Christ has overcome death for his people and turned it into sleep.

Sleep brings rest and for this reason death is so called. It brings rest from all the cares of life. What a burden sin has brought upon us. Who will recount all the hardships that are included in God's curse upon the first transgression? What a daily battle for bread we must wage! What wrestlings with the ills of life we must endure! What heart-aches, what pains, what terrors we suffer! No language can express them. But death brings rest from them all.

It brings rest from our spiritual warfare. As soldiers of the cross we are engaged in an ardent conflict. The kingdoms of light and of darkness are battling for the mastery. Earth is the battlefield. We are enrolled under the Captain of our salvation, and just because we are on his side we are molested. They who have been serious in this holy cause have experienced the ills of this warfare. But they end when death comes and we pass from strife to victory.

Death brings sweet rest with Christ in heaven. To see him face to face, to carry the victor's palm, to be clothed in garments washed white in the blood of the Lamb, to walk on the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, to behold the eternal city whose light is God himself, to join with angelic choirs – this, this is the rest which those enjoy who sleep with Jesus.

The departed was a follower of Christ in life and we believe that she is with him in death. Therefore we do not mourn as those who have no hope.

The Scriptures tell us concerning our dead:

II. That they will arise.

Text, verses 14-16.

The world laughs at the idea of a resurrection of the dead. “Death ends all,” they say, “or if it does not, we cannot know anything with certainty of the hereafter.” They appeal to human reason and ask how the body that has been resolved into its original elements can again be animated. But they forget that he who once fashioned the body from the dust of the earth and breathed into it the breath of life, is yet almighty and that he can again quicken the dust.

The Apostle does not suspend our faith in the air, but places it upon an immovable rock, viz., upon the resurrection of Christ. Just as certainly as Jesus arose, so surely shall our dead come forth. Jesus Christ arose from the dead and as this text intimates by his own power. Even his enemies admitted that his grave was empty. He himself tells us: “I am the resurrection and the life.” If he is the life essentially and in his divine person there dwells almighty power, then death could not hold him, neither will it be able to put his promise to shame: “I live and ye shall live also.” By virtue of the resurrection of Christ the restoration of our dead becomes a possibility. He became “the first fruits of them that slept.” But one is first

only in reference to others. If Jesus was the “first fruits” then necessarily others must follow.

Jesus who is enthroned at the right hand of God will descend with the voice of an archangel and the shout of trumpets. It will be the shout of victory and of triumph. The last enemy will hear and will release his grasp upon the dead and they will arise. The sleeping army will gather for its final review before the throne of God.

What comfort there is in this revelation of the Word! We love the forms of our dead. We love their clay. In this body we have learned to know them; in it we have conversed with them; by it we have recognized them. In this body we have loved and embraced them and have had sweet communion and fellowship with them and in this body glorified we are once more to possess them. Let those who choose stand by the grave and see it open its maw to receive their dead and let them, if they can, derive comfort from the thought that the earthly tabernacle will now be dissolved and that they shall no more look upon the faces and forms once so dear to them; but to us the thought is utterly heartless and comfortless and we already anticipate that joyful hour in which all that are in their graves shall come forth and we shall ever possess our dead. This is the only thought that can satisfy our affections and stanch our bleeding wounds.

"We believe that the departed will arise from the dead. We mourn, but not as those who have no hope.

The Bible tells us concerning our dead;

III. That they will be reunited with us eternally.

Text, verse 17.

In this world we can look for nothing else but the breaking up of our families. Sin is here, consequently death. It will claim ours as its prey. And if it be not that, our children will mature, they will leave us and especially in this restless land of ours, they will settle in distant parts. The family circle is broken and, fight against it as we will, we are helpless.

But we are comforted that “so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Death and its painful separation will be unknown and the reunion of our families will be eternal.

Should God have planted in our hearts these affections for each other, especially for our own blood and will he mock us by leaving them unsatisfied? Should he who has placed this longing in us for our kin, even after they are removed from time, fail to regard his own work? Nay! “There shall be no more death.” This is his promise. He is truthful. There shall be no more separation, but we shall ever be with them.

Rest, Resurrection and Reunion – these are the comforts of the Scriptures concerning our dead. Discard the cold comforts of reason and “comfort one another with these words.”

May God heal your wounds! Amen.

25. The Abiding Love Of God As The True Source Of Comfort In Our Sorrows By Rev. J. H. Schneider

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” – Rom. 8:38, 39.

Occasion: For a Middle-aged Christian

All that this earth affords is changeable. The hardest granite and the toughest steel waste away under the tooth of time. Cities and nations spring up and disappear, yes, earth itself is changeable. How about mankind? Are men stable? By no means. Their appearance, their condition, their disposition, their station are all subject to constant changes. The fathers and mothers of our day were the playful children of yesterday. The rich people of the present were, in many instances, the poor people of the past. The friends of our youth are, sometimes, the enemies of riper years. Those carried on the shoulders of fame a few years ago today occupy a forgotten grave.

Yes, all on earth is changeable. Not even the deepest and purest love of a wife and mother is lasting. It is true, that as long as her life's blood courses through her heart, love remains unchanged; but the day comes in which the eyes are closed and the heart stands still, and then also a wife's and mother's love has ceased.

In the midst of all this change, is there nothing at all which is firm – nothing at all which we can hold?

Thanks be to God, there is something immovable, something unchangeable. It is the love of our God.

How well it would be if we would at all times, but especially in times of sorrow, think of the changeless love of God.

You, dear family, have been sorely afflicted. A great change has taken place in your home. The eye which looked for your weal, the hands which labored for your good, the lips which prayed for your welfare, the heart in which next to God you had the warmest place – they are all still and cold and dead. You stand sorely in need of comfort. Is such comfort to be found? Is there any ground to which you can anchor any hope?

Yes, there is comfort for you also. Permit me to direct your attention to

The Abiding Love of God as the True Source of Comfort in Our Sorrows

1 Is the love of God really abiding? 2 How can the abiding love of God be a source of comfort to us in our sorrows?

I. Is the love of God really abiding?

It certainly is abiding, as we must admit if we remember what it can withstand and on what it is based.

Paul in our text recounts a list of things which are liable to destroy love, but of all of them the apostle declares: “I am persuaded, that they cannot separate us from the love of God.”

Foremost among the things enumerated stand death and life.

Death indeed severs the most intimate relations and the firmest bonds. Even body and soul leave each other at death's cold touch and the body crumbles into dust and ashes under his influence. But mark well, death cannot separate us from our love of God. There may be a death-struggle in a fine home which is so severe and so prolonged that even the members of the family can hardly witness it. Again, death may come upon one in a strange and far country, where there is no kin or friend to cool the parched lips or smooth the heated pillow. Up in the garret, where poverty lives, death may put in his appearance. Yet in all of these places and under all conditions and surroundings the love of God remains. Everyone can

truthfully say with David: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

Death can hold neither the soul nor the body, though it does separate them for a time. Death is followed by the resurrection and by eternal life. In the very valley of death, and while looking up to God, David, and with him everyone who knows the love of God, can confidently say: “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over” (Ps. 23:5).

Thus death cannot separate us from the love of God.

Life also cannot separate us from the love of God. The life of this one or that one may yet last many years, but God does not grow weary of loving. He is not like fickle men who today are filled with an ardent love for a person, and whose love cannot live long. If the object of their love loses its charms, it ceases to be loved. Many a wife and husband, many a father and mother have lived longer than the love which was at one time bestowed on them. The length or the character of their life separated them from the love of their kin and friends. Life does not, however, separate from the love of God. Think of the patriarchs. They lived long and they were not without faults, but their length of days did not separate them from the love of God. Every one can in truth say in regard to God: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Ps. 23:6).

Next are mentioned angels and principalities. Although an angel became a devil, and although he succeeded in misleading man into disobedience, he did not succeed in separating us from the love of God. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Think of Peter and Paul. The one is sifted by Satan and the other is buffeted by Satan’s angel, but neither of them were in this way separated from the love of God.

In the third place, the apostle mentions things present and things to come. At present we are passing through great tribulations; we are undergoing great trials; we are sustaining great losses. Must these things not cause us to fall? No! for these things are not at all an indication that the love of God has turned away from us. Think of Job and of his losses and afflictions. His losses and afflictions resulted in his real welfare. But what the Lord does in the present that will he do also in the future. As truly as he

gives evidences of his love today, even though with those who mourn, so truly will his love continue towards everyone of us also in the days to come. Even eternity cannot bring forth anything which can separate us from the love of God.

Finally, St. Paul thinks of height and depth. David and Solomon rose to the throne, while Joseph, Peter, John, Paul went down into the prison, but the love of God was not thereby affected. It continued to exist and to show itself.

Surely the love of God can endure much. No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

Remember also upon what the love of God is based.

There is nothing in us which would kindle or sustain God's love to us. Look at that which we are by nature and at that which we can do. By nature we are the children of wrath. "We are conceived and born in sin. Out of this bad condition of our hearts come forth evil thoughts, words and deeds. Even our best efforts, our righteousness, are as filthy rags before God. This, moreover, applies to all. There is none that doeth good and sinneth not." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

God, however, is holy. He hates sin. He cannot love it. Therefore we cannot think or say that God loves us on account of that which we are by nature or can do by our own strength and effort.

St. Paul tells us that the love of God, which nothing can turn away from us, is the love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Christ Jesus is he of whom we say: "I believe, that Jesus Christ, true God-begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."

God's own Son took upon himself the form of man. He was born of a woman. He was made our own Brother. Moreover, he took our place, becoming our substitute. It is he of whom we confess, that he "has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." Jesus Christ has removed all that sin had put between us and the love of God. There was the law and its just but unsatisfied requirements. Jesus put himself under the law and fulfilled all of its demands; he did this to redeem them that were under the law. There was the punishment

deserved by our transgression. This punishment is death; for the wages of sin is death. Jesus paid for this also; for he died for our guilt. He, as our substitute, was forsaken of God, because we had forsaken God. Thus was the wall of separation removed.

“When we now belong to those of whom St. Paul says that no creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, we appear before God no more as we are by nature, but as we are in Christ Jesus. His merits are ours. His righteousness covers our sins. In him we are pleasing and acceptable to God. This is the case when we stand as did St. Paul, when he wrote to the congregation at Rome, and as that congregation at Rome stood, when Paul addressed his epistle to them. Paul and the Roman congregation were full of faith, and were thus real children of God. The same conditions exist today. It is through faith that we are made partakers of the merits and righteousness of Christ. Paul states it thus:”We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28).

God’s love to us has, therefore, a good ground. God loves us in his own Son whose righteousness we have appropriated by faith. Should such a love not be abiding? When all else fails, God’s love to us who have accepted Christ as our Redeemer will not fail. Keep this in mind, dear friends, in this time of sorrow. It will redound to your welfare.

II. How can the abiding love of God be a source of comfort to us in our sorrows?

In general it is admitted, that where we find real love, we may be sure of finding blessings in store for th^e who are the objects of such love. Think of a child and its mother. The Lord himself says: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb” (Isa. 49:15)? If any hurt or harm threatens that child, the mother flies to its aid. Day and night that mother will plan and think and labor for the welfare of her little one. The child, moreover, knows this and will, therefore, in times of trouble, seek help and encouragement from its mother. It knows quite well that a mother whose love is so evident cannot fail to help in need, and to give that which must be of real good.

Think of the prodigal, mentioned in the parable. He was in a far country. He had sought the pleasures of the world. He was a disappointed, forsaken

man. What induced him in his wretchedness to turn his thoughts and then his steps towards the home which he had so foolishly left? He knew of his father's love. This convinced him that he would receive nothing but good things at the hands of his father. His father's love was a guarantee to the prodigal son that even for him there would be a kindly consideration on the part of the father, even though this would give him only a place among the servants.

We may well say, that in general among men, where there is real love we may expect blessings. Should the case be different in regard to our God? We have seen that his love is truly great and enduring. Can we, with this before us, for a moment think that this loving God will let evil befall us? Must we not with the apostle declare: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). Many things may, indeed, for the time being, be dark to us. We may not be able to say: "This is good for this and that good for that." In many things the Lord must say to us as he said to Peter of old: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7). As we increase in our understanding of spiritual things, as our faith grows, we shall learn to see the wisdom and the goodness of our loving Lord in some things which at first were utterly dark to us. But even though in this life we should never fully understand why God has sent this or that cross upon us, we are still sure of this, that he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, will with him give us all things. When once we stand before God's throne of glory, and look back on our experiences here on earth, we shall surely find that not only many things, but absolutely all things did work for our good. Of this we must be sure if we are sure of the abiding love of God towards us in Christ Jesus our Lord. This gives comfort.

In the case before us we have reason to say: God loved the departed one and he also loves you, hence he cannot have done anything that is evil.

How do we know that God loved the departed one? Was she not included among those whom Christ redeemed by his suffering and death? Was she not one of whom St. Paul says: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26, 27)? In infancy already God made his covenant of grace with her in holy baptism. The faith then planted into her heart was nurtured by proper instructions, received from Christian parents and teachers. She was permitted to confess her faith before many witnesses

at confirmation. All the days of her life she had access to the Word of God and to the sacrament of the altar. Through these means of grace she was instructed, admonished, corrected, comforted and directed heavenward. Are these not proofs of God's love for the departed one?

But how about her sickness, her sufferings and her departure? Are there any marks of love in these? God who did her so much good gave her no evil in the end. Was God not with her in her sickness? Did he not give her strength and patience and resignation? Did he not keep her in faith even unto the end? Are these not marks of love and not marks of anger or of neglect?

Go further now and ask yourselves: "Has God done evil to our departed one by taking her away from this life?" What did she lose? She has been removed from a world of sin and sorrow, a world of trials and temptations, a world of imperfections and disappointments. She has instead for Christ's sake gone to that place of which St. John writes: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3, 4). She has joined the company of those of whom it is said: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). Of her, too, Jesus declares: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29).

Her immortal soul has gone into the rest of God's children, and her body, after a rest in the grave, will be raised and in its glorified condition will be reunited with the soul. Of this we can be sure because he who loved her in Christ Jesus our Lord has given us this assurance. Should this not comfort you?

How do we know that God loves you? Was it not God who gave you a truly Christian wife and mother? Is this not a great blessing? You know this better than I can tell you? You will appreciate what she was to you in the days to come, but every time you are led to think of her kindly Christian

work and influence in your home, do not forget that God gave her to you, and gave you with her a mark of his love. God has taken your wife and mother from you. Has he done you no act of love in this? He has done so much assuredly. By taking her away he directs your attention more than ever to the truth that we have here no abiding city. He turns your minds to heavenly things. He tells you in a most forcible manner to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. God wants j^ou to be where she is and he, therefore, took her before taking you through the valley of death into the mansions of heaven. By so doing he would lead you with all earnestness to seek him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Is this not a proof of God's love to you?

You are today directed to God's Word by God's servant. You are told where God's fountains of comfort flow. You are being pointed to the green pastures and the living waters of God's Word. If you go to these fountains today, and find comfort and consolation, will you not go there after today also? Will you not more than ever before taste and see how good the Lord is? I hope you will do this. But if you will make the Word of God henceforth your daily study, it will bring you unspeakable blessings. It will increase and preserve your faith. It will give you hope. It will turn you from the allurements of the world to the one thing needful, to Christ and his righteousness. Is this not good? Is it not a mark of God's love? With this before you, can you not find comfort in the abiding love of God? Can you not, though it be with streaming eyes, say: "Nothing, I am certain, can turn God's love away from me, and now I pray God, that this affliction may not turn my love away from him, but may lead me to cling to him with childlike confidence."

Cling, then, dear friends, to our ever loving God. Pour out your hearts before him. Seek his Word. He loves you and he will heal your hearts for Jesus' sake. Amen.

26. God's Standard Of Greatness By Rev. C. B. Gohdes

“As unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed.” – 2 Cor. 6:9.

Occasion: Funeral Sermon, Preached for a Godly Woman in Humble Circumstances

A wife, a mother dead! Orphaned children, a lonely husband, a home from which its guardian angel has departed! Nor is it the bereaved family only which feels the loss. In the congregation none was more faithful than she. We, pastor and flock, share the bereavement. Aside from the family and the congregation, however, barely any note is taken of the loss of our sister, appalling though it be to her nearest of kin, painful though it be to the congregational family. The daily paper accords her no paragraph; society drafts no resolutions of condolence. Unconcerned, the stream of human life flows on, regardless of human hearts that grieve and break in obscurity.

The utter absence of interest in the life, the death, the burial of our beloved sister is a link of union between her and Jesus. No life so beneficent as Christ's, no death so momentous – yet no worldly biographer chronicled the loving deeds of that divine life, and inconsiderable was the interest displayed by the contemporary world in a death at the sight of which the sun dipped into eclipse.

The world's standard of greatness is different from God's. The world is infatuated by human wisdom, by power, by wealth, in short by that which is extraordinary. But God's queens may serve in kitchens, the scepter of his royalty often rests in the calloused hands of labor, and obscurity is not seldom the halldom of his saints.

“As unknown, and yet well known.” These words, taken from what might be termed Paul’s autobiography, I have chosen to describe the life of our sister, one of God’s obscure saints. As a spray from God’s garden of flowers I place them upon her coffin, that the tender greeting of their fragrance may, in a measure, relieve the grief of our hearts.

We speak of the life to come in distinction from the present life. This distinction is in a measure justified by the contrast between the conditions of life on earth and those of the life in heaven. Here we weep – no wails shall sound among the trees of life! Here we toil, and often back and hands and heart are weary from the severity and the unfruitfulness of our toil – no toil in heaven! Here the flight of the soul is hindered by a ponderous body – there progress has no barriers, and the assertion of thought and will are its methods. Here we sow in tears – there we reap in joy. Here we trust, though our vision is veiled – there the brightness of God’s smile shall irradiate our faces. But, though the difference between earth and heaven be the difference between the tear and the sparkling diamond, there is no essential difference between the life now lived by us and the life we shall live after passing the portals of death. Death is no sacrament to give the soul fitness for God’s presence. The Christian life on earth is the germ of the life which shall flower and fruit in heaven. We shall be spiritually and morally in heaven what we are becoming spiritually and morally on earth.

Extraordinary deeds and striking performances, therefore, are not essential to the Christian life, unless called forth by extraordinary opportunities. The Christian life may be lived in the obscurest sphere by avoiding sin, by seeking after righteousness, by wrestling with wrong as our only real foe. How great was the life of our sister when considered from this standpoint! Her trust was altogether placed in the grace of God and Christ’s blood-bought merits. She was a saint of God who brightened her lowly sphere with a luster caught from the Sun of Righteousness. Her life left no stamp upon “society,” but her prayers moved the hand of omnipotence. She was content with the bread of hard, ill-paid labor, rejoicing in the grace which enabled her to feed upon the bread of life. She never gave anyone occasion for stumbling; but her unobtrusive godliness acted upon her surroundings with the force of a moral tonic. She was almost unknown beyond the divinely appointed sphere of home and church; but, clad in the garment of Jesus’ righteousness, unpolluted by the fashions of the world, she was heralded upon her advent in heaven by God’s angels, and from the

position of the obscure wife of a workingman she has advanced to the sceptered estate of one of God's queens. Unknown to earth, she is well known in heaven.

I express this hope on the strength of the noble service whereby she has demonstrated her trust in Christ. Do not be astonished! I do not say "conspicuous" service. I say "noble" service, for a life of noble service hers has been. She gave expression to the fact that she was one of God's immortals by the patient, prayerful, conscientious performance of the lowly duties of her calling on earth. Let us not think that those who take a direct part in evangelizing the world are the only powerful witnesses for Christ. Witness for Christ is often borne with silent lip by the consecration of life's "lowly weal and dole." Is it not highly significant and inspiring that Christ, in the state of humiliation, disdained a conspicuous, lucrative position? The carpenter's lathe and axe were his tools of labor, were his expression of the life to be lived by God's immortals in its earthly relation. The showy life, the conspicuous deed, may result in fame for us, but it may leave heaven unstirred. Of old, men, with utterly false conceptions of holiness, would spend their lives in seclusion from their fellows and in disdain of ordinary labor. To be near to heaven they would dwell upon high pillars; to be remote from the world they would immure themselves behind convent walls; to exhibit contempt for wealth they would beg. But did they not become victims of spiritual pride by failing to heed the lessons taught by the sainthood of Jesus, who served his parents in one of the lowliest of callings?

"Do today the nearest duty! Our work counts for more than words. Three things are great:
Conscience and will – and courage To fulfill the duties these create."

If zealous, patient, prayerful performance of the lowly duties of every-day life demonstrates greatness in God's sight, we should revere the signs of toil upon the silent brow and hand as the hallmark of truest royalty. How unremitting her work in spite of the feebleness of her body! How sweet, how uncomplaining her work despite the meagerness of earthly reward! Her work was never done, yet her well-thumbed Bible and prayer-book attest that she had time to pray. She has left no jewels to her daughter, no lands and merchandise to her sons, no dowry of earthly treasure to her husband. What she has left is the noble example of a life hidden with Christ in God.

The uplift you, husband, received, when you would come from your daily task, toil-worn, and often dispirited, – from that godly, consecrated heart, now silent, you received it. The Christian faith cherished by you, children, the priceless treasures of worship and Christian joy you possess, largely to your mother you owe them under God. Renown and greatness before the world are often purchased with inattention to soul-culture, to Christian principle and morality, to the requirements of the inner life. Spiritual influence and power however, are often exerted in inverse proportion to earthly greatness and renown. These hands, now folded in death, have left a blessing foreign to many a jeweled hand – a home blessed by Christ. Our Christian sister's life was a never-ending round of sacrifice, patiently, prayerfully offered. And it is precisely such constant, uncomplaining sacrifice of love which produces that greatness which is the joy of God and the marvel of heaven.

“Measure thy life by loss and not by gain; Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth: For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice, And whoso suffers most has most to give.”

“As dying and behold, we live.” So Paul characterizes from another standpoint the life hidden with Christ in God. Those of us who were privileged to witness the last sickness of our sainted sister were edified, not to say amazed, by the courage, the heroism, with which our sister met and mastered the king of terrors. Dying, to her, was an extraordinary test of faith. Humanly speaking, she cannot be replaced. You, husband, felt you needed her, to whose sweet, un-intermittent devotion you owed not only much earthly comfort, but, under God, your main moral support, upon the path of duty. You, children, felt you needed her in the thousand thousand offices of love to which only the loving mother hand is equal. All this she, too, realized; and when she prayed for recovery it was not because life harbored much promise and sweetness aside from your affection, but because she felt that you needed the support of a mother's hand, a mother's love, a mother's presence. But did she shrink in dismay from the revelation that, after all, death would be the issue of her sickness, although it struck terror to your hearts? On the contrary, in resignation, in complete readiness, with joy, she faced death, consigning both her soul and her orphaned home to her Savior.

Why was her death not a defeat, but a rapture into life? Because her life had been a continuous death to flesh and world. Dying, she lived! In this populous city thousands were situated as she. Existence is possible to them only upon the basis of unceasing toil, rigid economy, endless sacrifice of comfort. Such life will produce discontent and rebellion against God's benign government, save upon the basis of close and constant communion with God. Thousands lack the latter, and, in consequence, the rich, spiritual and moral opportunities of a life meager in earthly resources are killed by fretfulness, envy, discontent, and ingratitude for the wealth of grace in Jesus Christ, which is an abundant compensation for every ill. Because the world has not vouchsafed them her treasure trove of temporal abundance many refuse to avail themselves of the eternal plenty God intends as compensation. Not so our sister in Christ. Nerved by grace, enriched by the gifts of the Spirit; joy, peace, prayer, love, self-denial, she died to self and world. The very restrictions of her situation in life which would have seemed elements of death to others, were to her opportunities to rise to largest liberty in Christ. And so it came about that the pathetic exterior of toil and dearth concealed and protected a vast wealth of spiritual life.

Oh! that we might learn the lesson! Life does not mean the abundance of the things one possesses – wealth, pleasure, position, opportunity for self-gratification. It means faith, love, service, hope, submission to God. True life does not come with its tide of blessings in answer to earthly desire. But mortify the flesh, crucify unlawful desire on the cross of repentance, and, dying to the lower self, you find the higher self quickened and fruitful and attended by a host of joys too deep for utterance! Seek life in what the world calls life – the enlargement and gratification of the lower self, and you will meet death as a slave, with a trembling and fear, and regrets fierce and unavailing will surge through the heart! But seek life in what God calls life, in fellowship with him, in self-sacrifice, in free submission to his will; enlarge and foster your inner life by crucifying everything that retards and threatens its development, and you shall be able to meet and master the old foe, because you have died daily to sin, which is the sting of death and its essence. Death shall come to the Christian as a deliverer and the harbinger of a perfect life. He is great in God's sight who has died to what makes death terrible, and therefore, can bid the destroyer welcome. "As dying, and, behold, we live."

“As chastened and not killed.” This clause of my text I apply to you, my mourning friends. The grief which God has sent you is designed as a means to spiritual strength and greatness. On the surface it would appear that death has robbed you of your chief treasure in life: of the loving wife, the faithful, zealous mother with the inspiration of her presence and the caress of her patient, tender hand. But I know you will not go home from her last resting-place embittered and defiant because what joy you had in life has been taken. No! joy is not dead. One of the chief sources is still flowing strong and clear, namely, duty. Your wife in heaven, husband, your Savior, my Christian brother, both look to you to continue single-handed the work upon the souls of your children. These Christian hearts are the treasure your godly wife has left you, to care for them, to keep them untarnished from the world, and, in the face of perpetual temptation, to guard them against the destroyer. You, children, are the only joy remaining to your father on earth, save the spiritual joys which his Christian faith provides. Support by double love and devotion the hand which, so far, has had the main earthly staff and stay in the love of your sainted mother! Let the mother’s faith survive the mother’s presence; let the angel of unselfish love, whom she cherished as the permanent guest of her home, continue his noble ministrations, and you will emerge from the gloom of your bereavement, not killed by despair, but merely chastened, and stronger than ever to do the will of God, whether by the performance of duty or by suffering. And deep in your hearts shall shine the light of that deathless hope that the beloved is not lost but translated to the higher life for which your present chastening is a preparation.

Glorious Gospel! It has a cheering message even concerning life’s weariness and the clutch of its terrors. It does not deny or conceal the travails of life nor the bitterness of death and of parting, but it transfigures them into prophecies and sources of the sweet rest that is to be.

"My feet are weary and my hands are tired,
My soul oppressed;
And I desire what I have oft desired –
Rest, only rest.

"’Tis hard to toil when toil is almost vain
In barren ways;
’Tis hard to sow and never gather grain
In harvest days.

"The burden of my days is hard to bear,
But God knows best;
And I have prayed, but vain has been my prayer,
For rest, sweet rest.

"'Tis hard to plant in spring and never reap
The autumn yield;
'Tis hard to till, when His tilled to weep
O'er fruitless field.

"And so I cry a weak and human cry.
So heart-oppressed;
And so I sigh a weak and human sigh
For rest – for rest.

"My way has wound around the desert years,
And cares infest
My path, and thro' the flowing of hot tears
I pine for rest.

“And I am restless still – 'twill soon be o'er;
Far down the west
Life's sun is setting, and I see the shore
Where I shall rest.”

Amen.

27. Thus Saith The Lord By Rev. W. E. Schramm

...Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." – 2 Kings 20:1.

Occasion: Far a Stranger

SORROWING FRIENDS:

Death, that silent, mysterious and dreadful visitor, has come among us once more. Quite unexpectedly he has entered this home, and has laid his icy hand upon the brow of a son of this household. In the prime and vigor of manhood the summons has come to him, and yielding to that summons his soul has gone into the presence of his Maker and his Judge.

It was not my privilege to know the deceased personally, and I shall, therefore, make no attempt to speak of his character or life. I am informed that as a boy he attended a Lutheran Sunday-school with some regularity, but that since that time, it has been but occasionally that he has attended the services of any church. Yet, I have no desire, I have indeed no right, to pass judgment upon his relation to God. There is but One who is competent to judge souls righteously, and he is the Lord on high. His Word declares, that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." If this young man went before God's judgment throne with a living faith in Christ Jesus, if there was in his heart a clinging trust in the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, it is well with him. If he departed without this trusting faith, the Scriptures give us no word of comfort which I can bring to you in this hour. Leaving your friend then in the hands of the Lord, who is a righteous Judge, permit me to address a few earnest words to you, who are here assembled in this hour of mourning and sorrow.

I ask you to notice carefully that the message I bring to you is not mine. It is the message of Almighty God. This brief text begins, "Thus saith the Lord." It is, therefore, our great God and King who says, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live." This message God sent to Hezekiah, king of Judah, long years ago, and he had it recorded for our admonition and warning today. In these words the Lord gives us first an EARNEST EXHORTATION__ – "SET THINE HOUSE IN ORDER"; AND IN THE SECOND PLACE, HE PRESSES THIS EXHORTATION HOME TO' US WITH AN __UNANSWERABLE ARGUMENT – "For thou shalt die and not live."

"Set thine house in order." "Ah," someone may say, "I have given careful attention to this matter. I have written my will. I have made ample provision for my family. My private papers are all arranged in order. Everything is in readiness for the executor when my end comes. I have set my house in order." My friends, these are matters which may and should receive a certain amount of attention, but there are duties which are far more important than any of these. None of these things will prepare you to meet your God. None of these things will prepare you for the judgment to come. You need, above all things, a preparation which will cleanse you from your sins, for it is sin that has put your house into disorder and confusion. As long as your soul is burdened and stained with unpardoned sin, so long your house has not been set in order.

This cleansing from sin can be accomplished in just one way, and that is the way of repentance and faith. "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." This is the way of salvation which Jesus proclaimed, and in these words he gives us plain directions for setting our house in order. There is no other way. Repentance is necessary, because the man who is not repentant will not see his need of Christ, and, therefore, will never open his heart to receive the Savior. We must truly acknowledge that we have broken God's holy law in thought, word and deed. We must recognize the fact that our sins have offended God, and that on account of them we deserve God's temporal and eternal punishment. We must be truly sorry because of our wickedness, and turn away from sin with loathing. Such convictions in the heart indicate a repentant spirit, and repentance is an essential part of setting our house in order.

But repentance must be joined to faith in Christ. Genuine repentance ever goes hand in hand with the confidence that God for Christ's sake forgives sin. Without faith it is impossible to please God in any matter, but

he who holds to Christ in faith, has peace with God; he has pardon from his sins; he has power to live .the life which glorifies the Lord. Christ in the heart cleanses us from all that is offensive to God, and supplies us with all that we need to find favor in his sight. In other words, Christ in the heart sets the house completely in order. Men ask, "What shall I do to be saved?" My friends, our salvation is not something which we do, but a work which divine grace does for us. It is not wages which we earn, but a gift which God bestows upon us in Christ Jesus. Our blessed Savior lived and died that he might redeem us. He stands at the door of our heart and knocks. When we believe his promise, we open the door to admit him. He enters and banishes all the rubbish of iniquity and adorns us with the furnishings of holiness. Then is our house in order.

But let us pass on to the argument which our Lord uses to make us feel the great importance of his exhortation and the urgent necessity for us to take it earnestly to heart. "Thou shalt die and not live." This argument applied to King Hezekiah in olden time. It applies to every sin-infected human being since the time of Adam. It applies, therefore, to you and to me today. This word of God contains a truth which is not always easy to realize. We find this "thou" hard to apprehend. "Thou shalt die and not live." I look upon some pale, hollow-cheeked invalid and I can easily believe that he must die. I see some tottering old man, or some puny, delicate child, and I can readily understand that they may not live. But the fact that my heart beats must cease – that my eyelids must close in death – that I shall die and not live – this is hard indeed for us to realize. You can apply it to others, but to apply it to yourself, that is the difficulty. Yet when you think soberly and seriously you find it a truth which you cannot deny. It is an argument which you cannot answer. Thou shalt die and not live.

We have here also, in our Lord's argument, a truth which is not pleasant to contemplate. To most men the thought of death is dreadful. We naturally shrink from it. The grave is repulsive to us. If we could, we would banish from our minds every thought of dying and of being buried. Particularly to men who are not Christians, are thoughts of death unwelcome. When worldly men and women are in some manner forced to think of their latter end, they often plunge into gaiety and into dissipation in order that they may forget the horror which such thoughts excite in them. But such a course is extremely foolish. When a wise man is overtaken by a storm, he will seek shelter; only a fool will try to forget the storm's approach. Whether we

relish it or not, my friends, it is a wholesome thing to face the truth, that “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” “Thou shalt die and not live.”

But even when we admit that our Lord’s word is true, and his argument unanswerable, we often try to console ourselves with the thought that our death is a thing of the far distant future. Young men and women are prone to imagine that their present health and strength render them immune from death. But, my friends, this very occasion affords a striking illustration of the truth that there is no age and no condition of health which is proof against death’s summons. Until quite recently, this young man seemed to be in perfect health. A week ago he seemed no nearer death than any of us here present at his funeral. From life to death is indeed a short step, and God may call upon us to take that step at any time. This year, this week, this very day, God’s grim messenger may come to you or to me.

And now, in conclusion, a question – a vitally, important question – if the death angel should come soon, if he were to knock today at your door, would he find your house in order? Would he find you trusting in the crucified Son of God? Would you go before God’s judgment throne trembling in the guilt of unpardoned sins? Or would you go boldly in the calm confidence that your iniquities are blotted out in the blood of Jesus? This is the first time that I have ever addressed most of you, and in the providence of God it may be the last time. I, therefore, ask you in all earnestness to take these questions to heart, and I pray the Holy Spirit may give you no peace, until you have answered them to the satisfaction of your soul and of your God. The Lord has given you the Bible to point out the way. He has established his church to instruct and to assist you on the way. And now he calls upon you, he pleads with you, “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live.” Amen.

28. Our Conversation By Rev. Simon Peter Long, D. D.

“Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.” – James 4:13-15.

Occasion: Sudden accidental death of a husband and father while working

BELOVED MOURNERS AND FRIENDS:

Little did any of you suppose the other morning when this husband and father left home and expected soon to return again that he would come back to die so soon. You well remember the last words as he went out of the house. How little you thought that it would be the last conversation you would ever have with him on this earth during this life; and how you treasure those words which fell from his lips. I am led to speak to you a few moments today in the presence of the dead, while I speak as a dying man to dying men, women and children of

Our Conversation

I want to show you *what we generally say, how little we really do know, and then what we should say.*

May God bless this meditation and comfort us and lead us close to him who holds our lives in his hands!

What do we generally say? James knew human nature well. He is the practical apostle and knew the general drift of the people's conversation, and he did not like it. His dislike of the popular way of saying things is expressed in the phrase, “Go to now!” He meant just what we Americans

mean when we say: “Now let up on that!” It was a custom in his day to say where they were going and how long they would stay and how they were going to do good business in a way that ignored God entirely, and he did not like that.

And do we not do the same things today? Have you and I not said a thousand times: “I am going to such and such a place tomorrow?” We seem to take it for granted that because we saw the sun rise so often we shall see it rise till the world comes to an end. Some day we will see the sun rise the last time in this life, and not one of us knows that we shall see tomorrow’s sun. This man went away never dreaming that it was his last day’s work on earth. Let us not be too sure where we are going tomorrow.

“We will go into such a city, and continue there a year.” “Man proposes, but God disposes.” We plan to go away on such a day and to stay just so long, and we tell it as if God had nothing to do with our time. Many a man has written: “One year after date I promise to pay Mr. So-and-so, one hundred dollars for value received,” but when the year was up his hand had turned to dust and his tongue had long since stopped counting money. We must plan for the future, and God does not object to our plans, providing we submit our plans to him for approval, as I shall show you hereafter, but the common conversation is all wrong just because it does not recognize God. We not only plan to go tomorrow and to return at a given time, but we talk as if there were no question about our success in business. “Buy and sell and get gain” was the object of all business in the days of James, and that is the motto today. Is it not strange that people think of nothing but gain today when it is plain history that over ninety per cent, of all business men fail? The big “I” without God is one of the false gods of the day. What is our daily conversation? I will go tomorrow. I will return in a year. I will make good. I shall come home rich. It is people’s own fault, if they fail – look at *me!*

James understood human nature and the power of sin, and he cries to the churches: Now let up on that! He recognized, furthermore, how little we really know. “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” What do we really know about the future, or about life, or about death?

It is well for every business to have a day of invoice and balancing of the books and see how the business stands. It is well for us to stop and think

how much, or better, how little we actually know. How humble we would all be, if we could see ourselves as the Lord sees us! With all our wisdom we do not know what will happen tomorrow. The next minute is a stranger to us till it is the present. No one in this whole neighborhood would even have dreamed two minutes before it happened that this man would be dead and buried this week. "What is your life? It is even a vapor." But what is a vapor? You say it is nothing, and, therefore, life is nothing. But wait! Let us think a little! We just passed a train with this funeral, and its tremendous weight was drawn by the ponderous black iron horse, and he ran down the road as if he were playing; and what was it that gave that horse such wonderful strength? Listen! It was vapor! Do you grasp that? Vapor is power of God in action. What do we know about life? Very little!

And what is death? The end of life? Oh, no! Life "vanisheth away." Did you ever see nothing vanish away? The apostle Paul has called death in one of his epistles an "exodus" – a going out – a sailing out over the sea. He himself, whether in the body, or out of the body, he did not know, saw things in the third heaven – things not to be uttered on earth. What do we know about death? It is enough to know that the soul goes out and lives and never dies – that it is immortal!

And all this leads us to a great conclusion – what we should say – "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, and that." Here, then, in a nutshell, is the key to correct conversation. We should speak of the Lord, of his will and of our service to him. Notice the weight of the one word "ought." I once heard Joseph Cook draw a picture that I shall never forget. He held before the eyes of the audience a great balance and placed one world after the other on the one end of it. Star after star he brought down and united the bulk until they reached to heaven, and then he took the little word, "ought," and laid it on the other end of the scales, and the mountain went higher, and the ought came down. Never before did I grasp the tremendous weight of the word ought. May its weight lie on us from this day forth, as we consider our conversation. Ye ought to say, means that it must be said, if you want to do your duty. "Was there ever a greater subject for conversation than the Lord himself? Then why do we not speak of him? Why, why, do we Christians not love to speak of our dear Lord? If he is our Lord, then he is our Master; and, if he is our Master, then his will should be consulted in all things. For him we should live. Him we should serve. What is the difference where we are, or what we do," this or

that," if we are where God wants us, and if we are doing what he gave us to do? Believe me, dear friends, I would rather be where God wants me to be and do what he wants me to do, and say what he wants me to say in the darkest and loneliest spot on earth than to occupy the throne of the greatest earthly king against his will. I say it with a degree of shame that as a rule the professed Christian is the biggest coward on earth when it comes to speaking for his Lord. I am glad to say that the one whom Providence has called away so suddenly was not afraid nor ashamed to speak for his Lord and of him. He was a teacher in God's house of God's Word, and delighted in his work and conversation. This should be a great comfort to the family and all friends. In all my ministry I have never been at a funeral – and I have preached over five hundred and thirty sermons in this county alone – where anyone was glad that the dead was not a Christian. On the other hand, even the careless rejoice to know that the dead was a child of God. Then let me ask you all here and now to give your bodies and souls to Jesus, and serve and obey him till death, that at last he may give you the crown of eternal life. Amen.

29. A Vision Of Heaven By Rev. G. J. Troutman.

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” – Rev. 7:9-17.

Occasion: The Death of a Good Church Member

DEAR MOURNERS:

At such a time as this, the beautiful and impressive hymn which we have sung is so comforting:

“I’m but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home.
Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand;
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home.”

How solacing to know that earth is not man's only abiding-place; that "life is not a bubble, cast upon the ocean of time, to float a few moments upon the surface, and then sink into nothingness and darkness forever." We have a home in heaven. Paul says:

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Our text throws considerable light upon our future home, and graphically portrays the happiness of those who enter the New Jerusalem.

God has, in mercy, lifted the curtain that separates earth and heaven, and permitted St. John to behold the magnificent scene that he describes in the words of our text. God help us properly to consider and vividly to view this scene for our instruction and comfort.

St. John's Vision of Heaven, as Portrayed in Our Text

I. What John saw:

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb." From these words of the revelator it is apparent that in this glimpse of heaven, which John was permitted to behold, he saw a great concourse of people, so large that it was impossible for man to count them. Hence we may conclude, that there are thousands upon thousands in heaven, enjoying the kingdom of glory. Nor does this contradict the statements of Christ, who said: "Many are called, but few are chosen," and that the majority of mankind are on the broad way that leads to everlasting damnation. We must not lose sight of the fact, that since the days of our first parents there have always been some godly people on the earth, who, when they departed this life, joined the host of heaven. Thus generation after generation has contributed to this number, until it has grown to a multitude, which no man can count. This innumerable host of saints, which inhabits the realms of glory, came from all nations and kindred and people and tongues, so that in heaven there are people of all nationalities, races, colors, and conditions. For, wherever the Gospel is

proclaimed, there are always some persons who receive the glad tidings of our Savior's love, and thus enjoy the benefits. These God-favoring men, women and children of all people and tongues, who die in faith, enter the kingdom of glory and stand before the throne, and before the "Lamb, which hath taken away the sins of the world."

St. John, in this vision of heaven, furthermore informs us, that the glorified saints are clothed in white robes, and have palms in their hands. White is an emblem of purity and righteousness; and these persons, whom John saw standing before the throne of God, are pure and righteous. They were not so by nature, but grossly impure and unrighteous. These persons were made pure by God's grace, through Jesus Christ our Savior. And in this spotless dress they stand before this great tribunal, with palms in their hands. Palms are signs of peace, joy and victory; and these glorified saints rejoice over the peace which has been established between God and man, and the victory that has been won over sin, death and the devil. None of these enemies can harm them now; they stand before the throne of him who has won the victory for them, and will be permitted to enjoy the fruits of this victory for ever and ever.

The revelator, moreover, tells us, that these saints, as they stand before the throne, express the intensity of their joy and gratitude by praising God with a loud voice, saying: "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb." They attribute the glory of their salvation which they are now enjoying in a full measure not unto themselves but unto God, who is the Author of salvation, and unto the Lamb as the Mediator. The angels also "stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God." They acknowledged the glorious attributes of God by "saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." The angels that never sinned thus declare the divine perfection of God. In heaven a perfect harmony exists between angels and saints. Together they acknowledge, in songs of adoration and praise, the glorious being and work of the almighty God. A certain writer has said: "We thus see what is the work of heaven, and we ought to begin it now, to get our hearts tuned for it, to be much in it, and to long for that world where our praises as well as our happiness will be perfected." We hope the beloved one, who has departed this life, is in this company of heaven. This glory, described by the holy writer, awaits you

and me. We, too, if faithful unto death, will stand among that innumerable multitude, dressed in robes of spotless purity, waving palms of peace and victory. We, too, may join the angels and saints before the great white throne, and unite in singing songs of praise to the Lamb of God that hath taken away the sins of the world.

II. What one of the elders said:

One of the elders, that is one of the representatives of the triumphant church, asked St. John a question: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they?" This inquiry was made by the elder, not for his own information but in all probability for John's and our instruction. For the lowest saint in heaven knows more than the wisest man in the world. John does not say that he cannot answer the question. He no doubt could have done so, but he knew that the elder was able to give a better and correct reply. So he answers: "Sir, thou knowest." And the elder said unto the revelator: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Thus we notice that the persons who are enjoying the glory of heaven are not individuals who had an excellent time here on earth, whose earthly existence was one long holiday, but persons who have gone through many trials and tribulations. The poet expresses it thus:

"Seems it in my anguish lone,
As though God forsook his own,
Yet I hold this knowledge fast,
God will surely help at last.

"Earth may all her gifts deny,
Safe my treasure is on high;
And if heaven at last be mine
All things else I can resign."

The elder also informs us how the robes of the glorified saints become so beautiful and white. The robes were made white by the blood of the Lamb, and not by the individual efforts of the saints. "It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that cleanseth from all sin."

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

"This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years;
No age can change its glorious hue,
The robe of Christ is ever new."

The elder informs the seer that these justified, sanctified and glorified persons are, on that account, "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." They are happy in their station and employment, for they serve God continually. And God dwelleth among them and shall be their constant shelter, defense, and joy. There "they see him face to face and sing the song redeemed by grace."

Moreover, the saints in heaven are free from all care. Every want is amply supplied. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Heaven is a place where there are no aches or pains, no trials or tribulations, no sickness or death, no funerals and no mourners. "For the Lamb shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." They are in possession of everything that is pleasant, and are delivered from all sorrow and causes of sorrow. God himself wipes away the tears and they shall return no more forever. Dear mourners: It is such a home as this, we hope, our departed one has entered. Surely we would not wish him back in this cold and sinful world. Let us rather prepare to go where we believe he is. Let us so believe, live and die, that when we depart this life we may join the multitude who stand about the throne, and with the angels and saints glorify God for ever and ever. Amen.

30. Who Will Enter The Kingdom Of Heaven? By Rev. G. J. Troutman.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: hut he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” – Matt. 7:21.

Occasion: Death of a Christian Man

DEAR MOURNERS:

We have assembled this afternoon to perform the last sad rites over the remains of the departed brother. Naturally, on such an occasion as this, as at no other time, serious thoughts pass through our minds. We are forcibly reminded of the indisputable fact that man is mortal. Sooner or later, the grim reaper, Death, will knock at our door, and we must obey the summons. Thus at such a time as this, we think of that eternity toward which we are tending. This afternoon we will lay the lifeless body of the beloved one in the grave, to wait the glorious resurrection morn; but the soul, we hope, is with God in heaven. But it is a grave mistake to suppose that death is always the vestibule to heaven. Let us, for our instruction, admonition and comfort, consider the subject:

Who Will Enter the Kingdom of Heaven?

I. Not every one.

“Not every one,” as the devil would have us believe. If Satan cannot succeed in making an unbeliever of a person, he will attempt, and often succeeds, in alluring him into a condition of false security, regarding the

soul's salvation. It is exceedingly gratifying to this arch-enemy of God and man, if he can make a person believe that life need not be taken so seriously; that it matters little what a person believes, or does not believe; what he does, or fails to do; he will, notwithstanding, enter the kingdom of heaven. Satan, in this manner, succeeds in rocking many a conscience asleep, while he drags the soul to hell. That many have, and are, being thus deceived, is apparent to the Christian observer. "Not every one," as the Universalists teach, will enter the kingdom of heaven. One would suppose that this so-called church, with its doctrine of universal salvation, would have many adherents, and be an exceedingly popular church. This tenet ought to be very acceptable to fallen man. But such is not the case. People are wise enough to conclude that if everybody will finally be saved, then there is little if any use for the church. Universalists tell us all are chosen. Christ declares: "Many are called but few are chosen." Universalists would have us believe that the gate is so wide, and the way so broad, that leads to heaven, that all will enter. Our Saviour says: "Enter ye in at the strait gate – because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Universalists teach that none will be condemned, all will be saved. Christ declares: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned," We Christians accept the statements of our Savior Jesus Christ, and hold fast to them, whether they be acceptable to flesh and blood or not.

"Not every one" will be saved even if this be the prevailing opinion of many. A careful observer cannot fail to notice that there are many people who are not Universalists, yet, when they hear that a person has departed this life, take it for granted that the individual has gone to heaven. In fact, these persons are astonished, and very often angered, should anyone express a doubt regarding the salvation of the departed one. "Who cannot recall instances of persons departing this life, without having been baptized, or making confession of Christ; who have never been known to read the Bible, or attend divine service, except on funeral occasions when practically compelled to attend. Yet, notwithstanding this deplorable condition, when such persons die, there are always some who pronounce them blessed, and speak of them as being in heaven. They request that "Asleep in Jesus! Blessed Sleep," be sung at the funeral, the inconsistency of which everybody must feel. We Christians should disapprove of such travesty, and

impress on these misguided people that only those are blessed “that die in the Lord.”

“Not every one” that has a religion will enter the kingdom of heaven. There are ever so many religions taught on this sinful earth. Who can begin to enumerate all of them? And some people have permitted Satan to delude them into believing that all that is necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven is a religion; and it is immaterial what kind of a religion one confesses. They say: One religion is just about as good as another. All you need do to be saved is to live in conformity with the confession you profess, the Jew to Judaism; the Mohammedan to Mohammedanism; the Christian to Christianity; the Moralist to Moralism, etc. True believers will not permit themselves to be entrapped in such snares. They know that there is only one saving religion, and that is the religion of Jesus Christ. “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me,” saith Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” No, dear mourners, the Scriptures plainly teach that “not every one” will be saved; let us hold fast to the Scriptures.

II. Not every one that calls upon the Lord:

Our text plainly states: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Or, in other words, not every individual that outwardly confesses Christ will be saved. That Christ desires us to make a confession, and to make it publicly, is apparent from his own words: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:31-33). This statement of our Lord is certainly explicit. He wants us to acknowledge him before men. We do this when we unite with the Christian Church, attend services regularly, participate in the Lord’s Supper, and in word and deed manifest a truly Christian spirit.

Our text clearly proves that a formal confession will not save. A mere lip service is not sufficient to entitle a person to a place in the kingdom of heaven. “Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The mere fact that a person habitually goes to church and the

Lord's Supper, talks about God, and calls upon the Lord, does not prove with absolute certainty that such a person is a Christian. He may do all this from habit, or because he sees that it pays from a financial viewpoint, or that it gives him a standing in the community which he could not otherwise obtain. These and various other reasons, too numerous to mention, may be instrumental in causing an individual to say, Lord, Lord, while his heart is far from God. That there are insincere persons in the church needs no proof. That there are hypocrites among professed Christians, must not surprise anyone. Christ has told us that there are such. A hypocrite may succeed in deceiving the world, but he cannot deceive Christ. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Not all that call upon the name of the Lord will be saved, because they do not remain faithful until death. Is it not to be deplored that there are so many who have at one time or another made a good confession before God and many witnesses, but later have fallen by the wayside? Oh, how sad that a person who was once a child of God should turn back to the world! Yet, their number is legion. The fact that a person has once been baptized, confirmed and been a faithful member of a church, will not insure salvation. He must be faithful to the end. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Who does not realize the need of our Savior's warning: "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38)? No, not all those who have called upon the Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, for some are insincere, and others do not remain faithful unto death. Is not this an earnest warning for us to guard ourselves lest our praying, singing, reading, and church-going be mere formalism? May we be numbered among those who worship God in spirit and in truth.

III. He that doeth the will of the Father:

The words of our text make it plain who will be saved. "He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Is not this explicit? The person that does the will of God the Father can be absolutely certain of entering the kingdom of heaven. Where do we find the will of God? We answer: In the Bible. In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, God our heavenly Father has revealed his will unto us. "For the prophecy came not in old time

by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." All that is necessary for man to know in order to attain eternal life has been revealed to us in this blessed book which we call the Bible. No wonder it is highly prized by God's children.

It is the will of the Father, that we make the proper use of the Scriptures. If we search them diligently we will find that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our only Savior, and that there is absolutely no hope of salvation except in his name and through his mercies. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It will become apparent that those who depend upon their own righteousness to bring them into the kingdom of heaven will utterly fail; for the only righteousness that avails before the throne of God is the perfect righteousness of Christ which is appropriated through faith and assures us of the blessedness of heaven. It is the will of the Father that we make the proper use of the means of grace, the "Word and sacraments, which our Savior has instituted to prepare the soul for the eternal kingdom. It is the will of the Father that man unite with the church which the Lord has established for the purpose of promulgating the wonderful Gospel of salvation among men. It is the will of the Father that we take Christ as our example and let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. It is the will of the Father that we believe and live in such a manner that when the hour of death comes we may say with Paul:"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." That person will enter into the kingdom of heaven that doeth the will of the Father, and this will is found in the Scriptures.

Dear mourners: Our comfort on this sad occasion is not based on man's opinion, or sentimentality, or good works, but upon the infallible word of God. Our departed brother did the will of God, although in great weakness. He was baptized in infancy, and thus became a child of God. In confirmation he publicly ratified the covenant vow, and confessed Christ before many witnesses. He not only attended divine services, but took an active interest in that institution which the Lord established. The departed one was not sinless; by no means. This he acknowledged by attending

confessional services, and on his knees confessing his sins before God and man, and partaking of that sacrament, the Lord's Supper, which was ordained to bring pardon to the guilty soul and give life and salvation. These are some of the reasons why we believe that our brother is with God in heaven. God give us grace to do the will of the Father, so that when we depart this life we may enter the kingdom of heaven.

“Now lay we calmly in the grave,
This form, whereof no doubt we have
That it shall rise again that day,
In glorious triumph o'er decay.”

Amen.

31. The Path Of Life By Rev. W. R. Walter

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” – Ps. 16:11.

Occasion: For Middle-Aged Church Member

DEAR MOURNING FRIENDS:

Well has the poet said:

Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

It is the wise design of God that the soul of man shall be perpetuated after physical death. The soul is spirit and created indestructible. Consciousness of the human soul shall continue forevermore. That consciousness shall be either in the heirship of heaven or in the realm of deserved doom eternal. It is of the future life that dying mortals inquire. Job asks: “If a man die, shall he live again?” Scripture replies in the affirmative: “Some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

The future happiness, or future woe of the soul is determined by the way – the path – that the soul follows as it passes through life and the valley of the shadow of death. There are many roads in this life that lead to eternity’s brink, but there is only one road that leads to eternal happiness and joy; all the other ways lead to destruction. Let us heed the Master’s admonition: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because strait is

the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” It is of this narrow way that our text speaks.

The Path of Life

May God grant us believing hearts and understanding minds while we consider for our comfort and edification: 1 The Path. 2 Its Destination.

The blessed Master has not left us without comfort. The words he spake unto the disciples long years ago are living words for us today. Their hearts were sad when he told them of his departure from this world, but he comforted them, saying: “Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto the Lord, We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” These words of Jesus are an excellent sermon on our text. They tell us clearly of the path, that is both the truth and the life, the only way unto the mansions in the Father’s house.

There is salvation in none other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved but by the precious name of Jesus. Christ is the only way for the dying sinner, as the open portal unto grace, pardon and life eternal. We are either saved alone and totally in Christ by faith, or we are not saved at all. Christians everywhere are saved only in this way. There must be no deviation from the path. It must be Jesus, only Jesus, in our faith, in our confession, in our life.

We do not find that path by our natural powers. All the wisdom and knowledge of the world are not sufficient to guide us to the path of life. The words here say: “THOU,” referring to God, “wilt show me the path of life.” “I cannot by my own reason or strength believe on Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel and enlightened me with his gifts,” is what we Christians must confess. Unless God shows us the way, and guides and preserves us in the way until our journey is ended, we shall never reach the home of the blessed. But the promise to believers is: “The meek will he guide in judgment; and the meek

will he teach in his way,” and “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” Jesus comforts us in trials and sorrows, and temptations with the assurance: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” and “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” He is with us to guide and keep us in the narrow path by the leading of the Spirit. Hence we sing:

“Jesus, be our guide,
As through life we glide;
Faithfully in our behavior
May we follow thee, dear Saviour,
Lead us by the hand
Through to Fatherland.”

God shows us the path of life clearly. He does not leave us to our naturally blinded instincts and reason, nor to our faulty intellects and emotions, but points out the way in his infallible Word which is Spirit and life. It is that Word that the Holy Spirit employs to work faith in our hearts and to guide us into all truth and keep us steadfast in hope and faith to make our salvation sure.

The Psalmist here says: “Thou wilt show ME the path of life.” O what comfort! Jesus knows every individual member of his flock. Jesus knows you. Jesus knows me. Jesus is our way, our truth, our life, and with Paul we can therefore cheerfully profess: “For me to live is Christ.” Such was the profession of our departed sister. From her confession and daily walk we conclude that her profession was prompted by living faith in Christ, and in him she had found the path of life.

And now as we consider the destination of the path, our text responds: “In thy presence.” Into the presence of our Redeemer. The Christian is an alien and a stranger here, a wanderer, a pilgrim on his journey, homeward bound to his Father’s house, the home in heaven. “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come,” exclaims Paul. Here in this life there is but little real joy, and that joy is mixed with alloy of sorrow and disappointments, as St. Austin says: “A drop of joy in an ocean of sorrow.” Yesterday merriment filled the heart with laughter; today come sorrow and tearful lamentations. Yesterday had its hopes and glad anticipations; today those hopes are crushed to the earth. Yesterday ambition held sway in the soul; today finds the ruin of human plans. Yesterday parents’ hearts were

teeming with joy; today there is weeping and sobs for a little white coffin has been carried into the home. Yesterday a family circle was complete; today it is broken; for the wife's and mother's place is vacant. Will there never be cessation to these trying ordeals, these sorrows, these tears, these partings, these death-bed scenes? Oh, yes, in the presence of God in heaven! There sorrows cannot enter, there sin can never come, there death will never be known, for the Christian will be at home. Farewells and goodbyes are of earth; in heaven partings are unknown. John writes: "There shall be no night there. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." No darkness, no sorrows, no tears there! How can there be when the Word here tells us: "In thy presence is fullness of joy." fullness of joy is there; not that it has been there, or shall be there, but is eternally present there. Joy is ready and awaits the pilgrim's home-coming. It has been prepared by Christ; wrought by his works as our mediator, purchased by his blood as our Redeemer.

New pleasures await us at the home-coming, as the Word here says: "At thy right hand there are pleasures evermore." We do not understand the blessings promised us, and even were God to tell us in plain words all the happiness and the glories of the saints above we could not comprehend them, "As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The joys of heaven never fade, never wither, never die, nor ever are they lessened or interrupted. The joys of the saints in glory are never ebbing, but, like the incoming tide of the ocean, flow to a fullness of measure and contentment: for the blessed are forever with the Lord where "there is fullness of joy." It is no wonder that the tried and suffering Christian is so often homesick and longs for the heavenly rest. Yet great as the Christian's anticipations may be here, he cannot form the slightest idea of eternal bliss, but he tunes his heart to that beautiful hymn by De Morlai:

"Jerusalem the golden!
With milk and honey blessed,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice opprest.
I know not, O, I know not
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory.
What bliss beyond compare!"

Dear bereaved Friends: In the presence of God there is fullness of joy; at his right hand there are pleasures evermore. There is comfort for you in these words. We confidently believe that the wife, the mother, the sister, the friend for whom we mourn today has entered into that joy of the Lord which has no end. A Christian's farewell to those dear ones who die in the Lord has the true meaning of Goodbye – "God be with you" – and include those impressive words of the German at parting: "*Auf Wiedersehen*," which means, "We hope to meet again." Would we meet again, in the presence of God where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures evermore, those dear saints who have gone before? Then must we follow in the narrow path, treading in the footsteps of the Master. We must resign ourselves to God. His Word must be our chart and guide so that with Paul we may declare: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Let us make our salvation sure by daily consecrating ourselves anew unto God. Then when the trials and cares and afflictions of life beset us the comfort will be with us. When the chilling waters of the river of death encompass us, we will be ready to face the foe in the last battle and having clung to Christ by faith, the victory will be ours and the crown of life which Jesus has laid up for us, we shall wear throughout eternity in that

Land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal dwell,
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain. "

Amen.

32. Faithfulness Is The Crowning Glory Of The Lord's Servants By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” – Matt. 25:21.

Occasion: The Death of a Pastor

BRETHREN OF THE MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY MEMBERS OF THIS FAMILY:

J— F— S— was born in the common walks of life. His parents followed the first and most honorable of all earthly callings. They were farmers. His early life was spent in farm work and he developed a healthy body and a firm character. But this was not to be his life's work. The beneficial effects of his early training remained with him throughout life. He loved the common people, was not afraid of drudgery and could talk to men in the common walks of life in language and figures which they could understand.

God gave him his talents. He loved books. This was a fingerboard on the road of life. It was somewhat late in his youth, at about the age of twenty-one, that he took up the preparation for the Christian ministry. But it was not harmful, because he was settled in his disposition, fixed in his purpose and unlike so many candidates for this office, he kept his eye steadily on the goal.

He completed his work here in eight years. He was ordained to the office and served acceptably in three congregations. During the last year he was twice afflicted in health – once seriously and this last time fatally. The last

chapter of his life has been written by God himself. The Lord took him. And as the divine hand closed the book of his life never to be opened in time, I hear a voice saying: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

There are many qualifications that both God and man expect in a minister of Jesus Christ. Experience shows that men require more than God. The duties of the office extend over such a wide range, that there seems to be no limit to the gifts and accomplishments which a pastor and preacher may use profitably in his holy office. No man has all the gifts which could be used and not a few incumbents lack some that are really desirable. This may explain why men are such unjust critics and make such severe demands upon their pastors.

God is more charitable and this is a real comfort. True, even he demands some gifts. He says that “a bishop must be apt to teach,” that he must be an example to the flock and that he must rule well his own house. Amid all the requirements which both man and God may demand in a Gospel minister, what is the crown? St. Paul says: “Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” He refers that to all stewards whether they be set over material or spiritual possessions.

Faithfulness is the Crowning Glory of the Lord’s Servants

I. The Lord praises it:

This text is taken from the parable of the king who, before going into a far country, called his servants about him and entrusted unto them his goods. To the one he entrusted more, to the other less. He said: “Occupy (work) till I come.” At last he came and called them to an account. He finds one who had five talents in his keeping and he brings other five talents which he had earned, and the king praised him. The king might have praised him for his diligence, his wisdom, his thrift, his cunning, his zeal, his forethought. But nothing of all that. He says: “Thou hast been faithful.” This is the crowning virtue and glory of a servant to deny his own will, and to do that of another, to have an eye single to one purpose and that not of his own choosing.

If the Lord praises faithfulness in his servants, why should not I? I will.

Our brother was faithful to his King.

He understood his relation to his Lord to be that of a servant to a king. He was content to occupy the position of a subordinate and was happy in it. He was not crouching before an earthly master and was not fawning for favor. He recognized that there was One who was his Maker, who formed him in secret, gave him body and soul, eyes and ears and all his members and whose purpose was that the creature might glorify him. The ruling principle of his life was submission to his Master. His question was this: "What is the will of my King?" And when he recognized it, he bowed in submission. It becomes a servant to know his place and knowing it he is in a position to be faithful.

No man reaches this standpoint except by the aid of God's Spirit. Human nature is sodden in selfishness. In fact, selfishness is the very essence of sin. The human mind is self-centered and there is a real battle to be fought out with the Spirit of God before a man comes to this state of submission. But when the Spirit has won the victory and there is in the human heart a new center, a new motive, a new life, what a happy life it is!

Our brother was faithful to his office.

There was committed to him the highest office in the gift of the church. He was a Gospel minister. I speak advisedly when it is called the highest office in the gift of the church. There is none higher – none even so high. The world does not place that estimate on the office and we need not be disturbed. Their eyes are holden. Their faces are turned earthward. They have looked so long and intently upon the earth that they have forgotten that which is above. As much as the soul surpasseth the body, by so much does the ministry surpass other callings. These are concerned about temporal, perishable things; but the holy office of the ministry is concerned about the spiritual, the eternal.

Our brother understood the very spirit and essence of the Christian ministry; He understood it to be the office of reconciliation. No man can be faithful until he has absorbed that conception. Not until an incumbent of the office has a clear conception of the nature and attributes of God and of man can he be efficient, or faithful in the work. Our God is holy. Sin is an offense to him and in his wrath he is moved to temporal and eternal punishment. But he has had mercy on the helpless sinner and has sent

Christ to reconcile the world unto himself and now the purpose of the Gospel ministry is to plead with men to be reconciled with God.

What a distorted conception of this office some preachers must have! Judging by the themes which are announced in the daily papers, by the projects which are launched and directed by them, by the work which they foist on congregations and by the large amount of time at their disposal for amusements and relaxation, one is forced to conclude that the temporal is more vital than the eternal, that sin has lost its damnable character and that God is no longer stretching out his merciful hands to a dying world.

Contrast with those preachers, this one. He was willing to discard human wisdom for the revelation of God. Sweeter than the doctrine of salvation by ethical culture and good works was this biblical teaching: "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." He rightly divined the Word – the law for the flesh and the Gospel for the spirit. He did not belong to that class of preachers of whom an aged father in Israel once said to me: "Our pastor is such a gentle man. He can tell a man that he is a sinner and do it in such a pleasant way that the man pays no attention to it." You did not go home feeling that hell was a pleasure resort when you heard his testimony against sin. And you felt the comfort of the Gospel for repentant sinners when he lifted up the Crucified One. In the conduct of your congregational work there was always that fundamental question: "What is the Lord's will?" As one of his parishioners I voice the sentiment of all when I say that he was faithful to his office.

Our brother was faithful to his church.

He was a member of the Church of the Reformation and was such from conviction. He was not like some, in a church, but out of harmony with it and at every turn offending against its principles; uncomfortable himself and making others so. He understood the history, doctrines, life, practices and spirit of this church and he stood by them. He was not sighing for greater liberty, knowing that the greatest liberty consistent with God's revelation is already ours. He was an intelligent, consistent Lutheran. God raise up many more such! We need them in our ranks. Our church is frequently misunderstood and misjudged and we need men in our pulpits who will stand their ground and defend our biblical principles. We do not need men who defend our principles and practices just because they are

Lutheran, but whose conviction is that they are biblical I Then our distinctive doctrines will be upheld and our church will fulfill its mission in this land.

That the departed was a conservative Lutheran was again shown upon his deathbed. He called for the Holy Sacrament. It seemed necessary to administer it at once while his mind was yet clear and he still had the ability to examine himself. The elements were prepared from the first material at hand, common bread alone being available at the instant. But when he saw that table bread was set out he requested that hosts be procured. "For," said he, "on my deathbed I do not wish to make the confession of indifference or of laxity." He was mindful of all that bitter struggle through which the church passed in her contention for the sacrament and in his dying hour he was not willing to appear in depreciation of her contention and victory. That is the true spirit to be manifested by a Lutheran pastor. That spirit did not merely manifest itself in the eleventh hour of his life, but was regnant throughout his official career.

Our brother was faithful to his Synod.

He was born and reared in this Synod. He was educated in her institutions and he loved her work. Our Synod has passed through many bitter battles. Her history like that of the church at large has been one of conflict to maintain in its purity the faith once delivered to the saints. She has testified against unionism, Calvinism, lodgery, new-measurism and a host of isms. Many have fallen by the way. Our brother never was a champion or a leader in our conflicts, but he stood. A church does not need a large number of leaders and standard-bearers. The nature of things does not require it. But it does need a large number of supporters. He was one upon whom we could count in every good work and in every righteous move.

II. The Lord rewards it:

The king rewarded his faithful servant by an advancement in service. He says: "Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee a ruler over many things." At first he was a servant, but now he was to become a

ruler. At first there were entrusted to him but a few things, but now he was to have many things. His reward came by advancement in service.

The faithful are advanced in this life. To them we give our confidence. Their talents grow by use. In their lives the saying is fulfilled: "To him that hath shall be given." The condition upon which this is done is that faithful use be made of gifts and opportunities. Gifts and talents grow by use. Even in a worldly sense God says to such people: "Come up higher."

This reward came to our brother. God called him from the plow to the college; from college to the seminary; from the seminary to the pulpit; from a country pulpit to a city pulpit; from a city pulpit to this university pulpit. All through life there was a gradual progression, a growing field of usefulness. God was making him a ruler over many things. What a sphere of usefulness was offered him here. To help to mold the character and to form the ideals of our prospective pastors, to pose unconsciously as their model, this it seems to me is a field of unusual influence. Though dead he still speaks in the lives and work of other men.

God gave man dominion and its exercise brings satisfaction to the human heart. The possession of money and goods gives joy to the soul largely because it puts the possessor into a position to exercise dominion. Why does the scientist seek to wrest from nature her secrets? Because he seeks dominion over her! What have the wars of the world been about? To a great extent for dominion. No man exercises dominion in a higher degree than the preacher and the prophet. His is a moral power. The greatest satisfaction that any man derives from his work is the consciousness of having rendered the world an indispensable service. This reward of faithfulness our brother had.

But there comes to a Christian a higher service and reward. They will be higher in kind and in degree. As the future life is higher than the present, its services and rewards will be in proportion. This life has limitations. Here we are held down by the weaknesses and fetters of the flesh. Here sin holds sway. The slimy trail of the old serpent is visible and there is nothing so fair but he has befouled it. Our faculties have been dwarfed; our reason clouded; our will perverted; our affections warped; but when we have cast off this tenement of clay and have been freed from the curse of sin and the image of God is once more restored in its fullness, then the Lord will have service for us that is commensurate with our larger powers.

That life is not one of idleness. God is ever active; he never slumbers nor sleeps. He could not tolerate creatures around him that do not revel and delight in activity. See what he is doing in this world and then by analogy conclude what he must be doing there. If in this lower form of existence there is so much to do in his service, how the heart beats and the breast heaves in anticipation of what is coming!

We do not fully know wherein this higher service will consist, but here and there a glint of light falls through the curtain that separates time from eternity. God in his Word has drawn the curtain. A man standing by a wall and looking through a chink may have a view of a whole field that lies beyond. That must have been St. Paul's case when he cries out in exultation: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The glory which is peculiar to Jesus as the exalted Son of God, which causes the hosts of heaven to bow down before him and worship, sending up their anthems echoing and reechoing through the vaults of heaven, that glory the King promises to share with the faithful. In this life we have shared with him battles and hardships and persecutions; but we will go from battle to victory, from insult to honor, from death unto life.

How often the language of Scripture is made to groan beneath the weight of meaning when the sacred writers try to convey to us a glimpse of that heavenly glory! But they succeed only in part. We know that the reward that awaits us will be out of all proportion to our services. If a king in his magnanimity should give a servant a palace for a day's work it would be a reward of grace and not of merit. "We shall drink of the rivers of joy." "At thy right hand are pleasures forever more." Not a drop of joy; that would do: not a cup of joy; that would suffice: not a vessel of joy; that would be a plenty; but rivers of joy at God's right hand forever. AVho can comprehend the reward of the faithful!

Brethren of the ministry, students of our school and members of our congregation and family: what is the lesson of the hour? "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Amen.

33. The Illumination Of Death

By Rev. Prof. David H. Bauslin, D. D.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are fallen asleep...” – 1 Thess. 4:13.

Occasion: For a Prominent Church Member

Addison tells a story of a dweller in Bagdad, who, having a vision, saw a bridge projected from a cloud on the hillside to a mist on a corresponding acclivity. Beneath the bridge there flowed a deep, dark and turbulent stream. The bridge itself, you may remember – for many of you have read the story in the schoolbooks – rested on an hundred arches; the first seventy were firm and intact; the last thirty were crumbling and unsafe. An innumerable multitude was continually emerging from the cloud and struggled and jostled each other on the bridge. In the bridge were numberless traps, and through them the wayfarers kept falling and disappearing in the stream beneath. A few only kept on until they reached the last thirty of the arches, and with trembling step faltered along among the crumbling stone, and, only prolonged by vigorous efforts, they inevitably dropped into the stream beneath. That vision is an epitome of human life. It is a somewhat weird portrayal of the end of man's fitful and uncertain earthly existence. “Alas,” said the beholder in the narrative, “here is man given away to mortality and swallowed up in death.” This vision is a rehearsal of the absolutely omnipresent fact – “dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” No man who is pastor of a congregation as large as this, composed of so many households, can have failed to notice, and painfully, how frequent a visitant upon the earth death is; how much of uncertainty and painful possibility all our days and nights are freighted with; with what

frequency the tenderest expectations falter, the dearest plans are broken, and the fondest hopes droop into dreary disappointment. And yet, my friends, this is but to have taken up into one's own experience and observation the most painful natural fact of human history from the beginning. Wise men of the world have taken different standpoints, reasoned from this and then from that assumed or admitted fact, followed different and frequently divergent lines of reasoning, and constructed theory after theory, each of which in its turn has given place to some successor, until now the entire pathway of the world's history is strewn with the wreckage of abandoned theories, unsatisfactory speculations and disproven assumptions. And yet today, as at the beginning, the great unknown is before us, and to the human wisdom it is as much the unknown as ever before. Here the wisdom of the world stands today as it has stood for more than six thousand years, knowing nothing of the future, either near or remote, especially after the death warrant has been issued and executed. Before the great perplexing question all worldly wisdom stands with bowed head and sealed lips. It has been so from the beginning. Go back to the earliest annals of our race and in the fifth chapter of the old book of Genesis you read the genealogy of a long line of patriarchs, each terminating with these words, "And he died."

These words are broad and deep with meaning. They mean that the wonderful functions upon which our animal life depends, and all the other functions connected with man's physical organization, have reached their final limit. They mean that all the signs and manifestations on earth and through the body are at an end. They mean that a man's power to think has come to an end. They mean that the body that the man once used and graced is no longer useful, and that no nerve, or sense, or muscle can give the feeblest hint, as to where the real man is or what has become of him. They mean that all of a man's connection with and participation in the affairs of this world are completely ended, as much as if he had never existed at all. They mean that the world is done with a man, and that he is done with it as a present and active factor and power. These words mean, for the mightiest monarch that ever ruled, that he comes down to the level of the commonest subject, so far as action and influence on earth is concerned, the moment he stops breathing. Life itself is a marvel which has taxed the scientific wisdom and curiosity of all the ages, and when it stops the marvel loses none of its strangeness. Society has no service which dead men can render, and no machinery which they can run. Dead men enact no

law; they make no speeches; they write no books; they fight no battles; they set on foot no magnificent enterprises to employ or bless mankind. All that is left of them for this world is the memory of what they once were and the projected effect of what they did when living. Put all these natural facts together and you get something of an idea of what death, the great reality, that awaits every one of us, means.

These we say are sad and ominous facts. And yet I know not after all whether they are so sad, unless we be content to come under the baleful dominion of an exaggerated and utterly unbiblical view of the place and importance of death in our lives. With many people, in belief and practice, death is assigned an importance which it does not have either in the Bible or the nature of things. Many men mark on their charts a *terra incognita* beyond the grave and wish to pay no attention to that region. Their common ideas and fears of death are more pagan than Christian. It is a vague affair in their minds with much in it that is repulsive, and accordingly they would keep their thoughts from it as far as possible. Death to many men is the blank wall around life beyond which they look or plan for nothing; an abrupt chasm at the end of ill paths; nature's final contradiction of man's hopes, the realization of his fears. An uncertainty is always unpleasant to dwell upon, and if you put a not inconsiderable element of fearful possibilities into the uncertainty, then you make it still more odious. It is this uncertain future with its dim forebodings which makes the mass of men dread death. The uncertainty is the result of the condition of ignorance in which men keep themselves in spite of God's light offered them, and the forebodings on the result of sin recognized by the conscience, and suggesting by the uniform constitution of the soul the consequent punishment. The great majority of men have settled down to look upon death as a monster, and for much of their time on the earth have excluded the painful subject from their thoughts by absorbing themselves in the affairs of this present life. No age or nation can produce an exception to this natural hostility between man and death.

But all this, my friends, is contrary to Scripture. You are much mistaken in putting such a character as you do upon death physically considered, for it is not made the important thing, in our Bible, nor does it hold the first place in the economy of redemption. The Bible assigns a subordinate place to the king of terrors, and it nowhere elevates death to the rank of the supreme and final transaction between man and his Maker. The crisis in any

soul's history is not, in the Bible, the death of the body. In the light of the New Testament doctrine of the resurrection and eternal life, physical death does not cease to be looked upon as an event that awaiteth every soul of man; but it does cease to be a thing of terror, the final thing, and as an utter and impassable chasm across the continuity of life. The dread and supreme fact of death is thus susceptible of illumination, and accordingly we have the Lord's own apostle saying in our text – "I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are fallen asleep." I have dwelt thus far upon the exaggerated and unbiblical view of the place and function of natural death, in order to prepare the way for several of those supreme considerations which will serve us in the illumination of such a certain fact as our final dissolution. There is something better for us than a prolonged endurance of a restless and unhappy existence through fear of a slain enemy.

First. Let me say then, in the first place, that DEATH IS ILLUMINATED WHEN WE REMEMBER THE UNAPPEASABLE DESIRE OF MEN — OF ALL MEN — FOR IMMORTALITY; THAT THERE IS IN MEN — IN ALL MEN — A CERTAIN INTUITIVE PRESUMPTION OF THE INDESTRUCTIBLE PERSONALITY OF MAN.

Four questions have been asked everywhere and in all ages: (1) Is there a God? (2) How ought man to live? (3) How can the consciousness of guilt be appeased? (4) Does death end all? These questions, and the answers they have received, summarize the religious history of mankind. Can it be that man, who is thrilled with deathless aspirations, shall fall as the leaves fall?

Immanuel Kant said that it is the business of philosophy to answer three questions: (1) What may I know? (2) What ought I to do? (3) For what may I hope? Attempts to answer these questions summarize all the world's philosophy from Plato to Herbert Spencer. "For what may I hope," is one of Kant's questions; but centuries before Kant, and far back in the dawn of history, Job, as he pondered on the same unending problems, cried out: "If a man die, shall he live again?" That is the one question which will never go down. I ask it; you ask it; every man asks it with unappeasable eagerness. If man is to die at last like a dog why should he live like an angel? If death ends all, then it would be difficult to prove that the barbarous philosophy of life that says, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die," is not the true philosophy of life. But we have a consciousness of something within us that has about it the very property of deathlessness. And just that consciousness, my friends, in our hour of high access to God, we sometimes do have and

there is in us a deep, full sense that we CANNOT die, because there is in us, and of us, something to which death has no relevance. It is only by having within us something that is immortal, and having it in such fullness that it lies as a great wealthy fact in our consciousness, that we are delivered from the bondage of fear, and are set in the pleasant prospect of the things to come.

There are physical facts and there are mental facts. The physical facts prove that a nature of things exists. The mental facts prove that there are mental endowments. To deny either of these statements would be to ignore the universal conviction of mankind and to strike reason in the face. But are there no spiritual facts as well? The world-wide consciousness of mankind, the testimony of human history is the affirmation to the question. Men talk of tender conscience, of hatred for all evil and vileness, of the loving of all things beautiful and good. What are such factors in human life and aspiration? But if there be spiritual facts, there must be a spiritual nature. And this spiritual nature has needs peculiar to itself cravings higher even than those of the intellect, aspirations reaching out far beyond the kingdom of nature. Man's harmony with the world is never complete. His heart constantly throbs with unsatisfied desires. Amid conscious infirmity, under sentence of death, there is ever a feeling after if happily he may find his home, a knowledge more satisfying, a welcome more cordial and a resting-place more permanent and restful than any this earth has afforded. The question is this, Has no provision been made for such facts? Is there no answer to Kant's question, "For what may I hope?" Is the racer in life to reach no goal? Is the voyager to the future to be stranded and to go down in a sea whose caverns are dark with doubt and uncertainty? Is the better and higher nature of man to be vanquished in the hour of death? The assertion of even such a possibility, my friends, can be of no possible use to you and me. Such an assertion but mocks our deepest convictions, laughs at our sense of moral quiet and shames the deepest longings of our souls. The soul's immateriality, and the soul's longings, and the soul's capabilities would seem to indicate possibilities of development for which there is manifestly no room in this earthly life. They do so indicate, and if there be no affirmative answer, no definite and satisfactory answer to Kant's question, and Job's question, then man's works are greater than man's self – then are the pyramids grander than their builders; then were it better to be an oak in yonder forest than to be Wm. E. Gladstone.

But a few years ago, and near the same time, there passed away from the earth two of the leading names in the scientific annals of our times – Prof. Clifford and Prof. Maxwell. They were not only widely learned men but both genial, kindly and loving souls. Professor Clifford sang no song of triumph because as he personally said, he had no song to sing. He believed that man had come here as the fatal working out of sightless and ungoverned forces, and that he was the result of a thousand aimless energies. Prof. Maxwell on the other hand, believed man to be a son of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, in whom was lodged the sovereignty of the King over all. Prof. Clifford believed that no personal immortality attaches to man – that the longings and aspirations of which I have spoken, are but lies in our being and the phantoms of our lives. Prof. Maxwell believed that manhood was filled with divinely loaded energies, that it shall go on forever, that a limitless eternity hangs over all men, and that it is filled with a voice which says – “He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son.” Professor Clifford’s creed had this for comfort and strength – “Beloved now are we the results of force and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when the changes come, we shall be like these forces, for of them we come and into them at last we go; man is the gift of force and the end of force is death.” Professor Maxwell’s creed is an assertion of the lordship of life over death. It is a song of triumph and a shout of victory. It is this – “Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is.” I know not what to say to the man who does not recognize and feel the difference in these creeds, as answers to the deep questionings of the human soul. This, my brethren, is our consolation, this our confidence, our inspiration and our hope – that we walk this earth as the kings of nature, and as the prophets of another world; that we are chosen from our birth and called of God to be witnesses to the higher order of spirit, and to live as heirs of the kingdom of God.

Second. But to advance to stronger assurances and unquestionable certainties, let me say, that DEATH IS ILLUMINATED BY READING INTO IT THE FACT OF THE EVANGELICAL HISTORY.

There is in much of the world’s literature, and in current speech, so much in recognition of a better life, and a more restful and holy life, that men forget sometimes that the fertile ground of all such expectation, and the

fruitful fountain of all such consolation, is the Gospel. We know of no one else but the Lord from heaven that has brought life and immortality to light; so that any just discourse upon such a theme must needs begin and end with Christ. Sin it was that caused the natural possibility of mortality to pass into the certainty of death for man. But nevertheless, man is to work out his time here and to pass through death as being not necessarily subject to death, but born under the higher law of the spirit and with the fact of eternal life always before him. If we are to learn anything from the manifestation of Christ after his crucifixion, it is this, if we have need to learn it, that over the man, the spirit which thinks and feels and loves and which is in turn loved and trusted and honored, death has no control.

To the question: "If a man die shall he live again?" there is nothing in nature which renders a distinct answer. All that is taught, for example, by the seed corn cast into the ground, and from which the blade appears next spring, is the continuity of life. The change that takes place in the seed no eye, no microscope, no chemical analysis can trace. It is an enigma, and from an enigma no clear and satisfactory truth can be drawn. Nor have philosophers succeeded by the process called logic, any better in satisfactorily proving immortality. Plato's splendid efforts are not entirely convincing, and the phoenix bird which rose from the ashes of the ancient funeral pyres was but a delusion. The Christian doctrine of immortality is not a surmise; it is not an inference from certain facts and appearances in nature that happen to look in that direction; it is not a wish pushed to the point of becoming an opinion. The doctrine of immortality was first a fact in the life of our divine Lord and we are entered into participation in that fact because of our participation in the life of our Lord. Whatever the longings and hopes and guesses as to the future life, the resurrection of our Lord for the first time sets all questions as to the future and the life after death at rest. If he be alive from the dead, then have we a demonstration that death has not absolute power, and that if it could not hold him who was slain on the tree, then who may hold such as Christ bids to arise from the dead? The resurrection of Christ demonstrates that there is a kind of life that death and the grave cannot do anything with, cannot handle it, nor do its pleasure upon it, nor in any way obstruct or embarrass it.

That guarded tomb in Joseph's garden on the night of our Lord's crucifixion was the grave of his people's hopes; the open sepulchre from which the stone was rolled away on the morning of the third day was the

birthplace of their immortality. Not since then has the tomb been so dark and forbidding. Christ did depart. He did return, and his very presence did proclaim that there is a father's heart in the universe and that that heart beats in sympathy with the sighing and sorrowing. Such an assuring pledge of the certainty of that immortal life as the resurrection of our Lord we sadly need. The sad plaint of John Stuart Mill shows us how that life is rayless, starless midnight without one voice of hope and cheer crying in the darkness, when there is no such assurance. The plaint of that gifted man is one of the saddest chapters in modern literature. Under the teaching of his father his young mind had been thoroughly emptied of God. In 1830, at the age of twenty-four, he began a friendship, which he calls "the honor and chief blessing of his existence, as well as the source of a great part of all he attempted to do or hoped to effect thereafter for human improvement." He was introduced to the lady who after twenty years of friendship became his wife. With more than the usual enthusiasm of love, John Stuart Mill believed that he had found in her a combination of the finest qualities he had known in the greatest men. To her this philosopher gave himself with a devotion as fervent as was ever rendered the Virgin Mary by the most devout Romanist. "Who can read without emotion the dedication of his essay on Liberty –"To the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer and in part the author of all that is best in my writings, the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward – I dedicate this volume... . Were I but capable of interpreting to the world one-half the great thoughts and noble feelings which are buried in her grave, I should be the medium of a greater benefit to it than is ever likely to arise from anything that I can write unprompted and unassisted by her all but unrivaled wisdom." In 1851, Stuart Mill was married to her in whose mind he could "detect no mixture of error." For seven and a half years only did they live together, and then she was taken to the God in whom she also did not believe. The memory of that woman became the strong man's religion. She had been laid to rest in the south of France, in sunny Avignon, and year by year this remorseless logician, this acute philosopher, went thither and wept over her grave. There he walked amid the cypress trees, and looking vainly to the east and the west, the north and the south, he sent forth an exceeding great and bitter cry which seems like an echo of Mary's voice from the

empty tomb of her Lord in Joseph's garden – "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

You may ask, "What does all this mean?" It means this – that here was a man, a son of the living God living upon the recollection of a brief gladness that could never come back, for I would have you to remember that no flower of hope bloomed on that grave in the south of France to which Mill made his sorrowful journeyings. I revert to the words of our text, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are fallen asleep," and couple them with the words of the same apostle of the Lord – "If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable." "Because I live, ye shall live also." That is the statement of a great fact that draws another great fact in its train. My immortality is the immortal Christ in me. That is the Christian doctrine of immortality, so that death means no more to me, if Christ lives in me, than it meant to Christ himself. That is the great point in Christ's address to Martha, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." We have not only the fact of our Lord's rising from the dead, but also the doctrinal import of that fact with respect to believers. Christ has risen in a certain character and relation as "the first fruits of them that slept." A vast harvest is in the future, of which he is the first fruits and pledge of the full ingathering. Previous resurrections occurred, but in no sense were they "first fruits." They involved no idea of a divine covenant, and had no representation or mediatorial character. The Scriptures declare that "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," and we may credit that revelation which bids us believe that God's own thought is to bring life to everlasting triumph in some final deliverance from death, and that the living God will not pause nor tarry until he raises from this earth a race of the children of God, capable of living forever in unison with himself and his creation.

Let me know beyond a doubt that Jesus folded the napkin in that sepulchre in Joseph's garden, burst the bars of death and led captivity captive, and then I know that the atonement is perfected, that sin may be clutched, that Satan may be conquered, that God may be reconciled, and that eternal life may be made accessible to every man's faith and hope, that the body, the temple of the Holy Ghost, is sacred, and that by and by, our Lord will raise it up, and shall fashion it anew that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

I turn aside here from the pursuit of this inviting theme to a conclusion or two befitting the greatness and gladness of our subject. My sermon has been one of assurance regarding that eternal life which is declared to be a gift of God. Now then if these things be so, it follows that our true life consists in our coming at once, in our own souls, into the right and fullest possible correspondence with that which is the real and eternal element of life. We are made to live in harmony with all good, beautiful, and true things, or in communion with God.

(1.) Accordingly my first conclusion from our subject IS ONE OF ADMONITION REGARDING THE ORDERING OF OUR LIVES IN VIEW OF THESE SUPREME FACTS. The man who has not a clear belief in a future life based upon such assurance as I have named, can have no strong sense of duty. The great truths involved in our subject are so wrought into our faith and sensibilities that they wield the man who ardently believes them. They are mysteriously gifted with a power of their own. The teaching of the Bible is that what, as to condition and destiny, we are to be hereafter, depends upon what, as to character, we are here. The two lives are thus united not simply as being successive, but in the order of moral sequence as well. This, according to the Bible, is the constitution of things which God has adopted, and which we cannot vacate or change. We are subject to it by the irreversible necessity of a divine appointment, and whether we heed it or not, act wisely in view of it or not, the appointment remains the same. It is true that, under this appointment, "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." It is true that "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" and that "he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The Bible is full of this idea, and in the light of it is constantly sounding its warnings in the hearing of men. The man who assumes the contrary, or practically conducts life as if the reverse were true, takes upon himself an awful hazard. He denies, when he ought to admit, and trifles when he ought to be solemn. It is a practical heresy to deny that what a man thinks upon such great themes as the future life and his personal immortality, has nothing to do with the formation of his character and the ordering of his conduct. Any degree of presumption that we are here acting for eternity ought to be practically as conclusive as the most absolute demonstration.

In one of her moral fables Jane Taylor gives an account of the arrival and sojourn on this earth of a former inhabitant of the planet Venus. He was one of a race like ours, apparently in all respects human, except that he had

never heard of death. No hint of it came to him until after he had resided several weeks in this world, and had in the meantime been introduced to all the gaieties of society and instructed in the best means of making money. His emotions at the discovery that all men must die, and the amazement that overcame him at the worldliness of creatures with such a destiny, and their indifference to the future, are vividly portrayed in the story. He was appalled at the earthly insensibility and lack of preparation for death. The admonition of our subject, my friends, is to watchfulness and fidelity in the ordering of our lives. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." Thus shall we weigh anchor and put out hopefully for eternity. Tennyson has given it well in "Crossing the Bar":

"Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea.

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark:
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.

"For though from out our bourne of time and place.
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

My second conclusion from our subject is the ASSURANCE OF CHRISTIAN HOPE REGARDING OUR CHERISHED DEAD WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP.

Not long ago, on a beautiful day, when the sun was soft, the skies translucent and the air laden with fragrance, I stood with a little company of friends, in our cemetery. A wife and mother was being laid to rest. It was a sight often seen, and yet one to which we can never become reconciled. There was the narrow grave, the long box, the mound with flowers that

would soon wither and the “dust to dust, and ashes to ashes.” How common that sight has become, for all these things have been going on for thousands of years. In view of such facts certain teachers in our day have mustered courage to say only this: “We don’t know; there must we leave it.” But that satisfies no one. It is no panacea for sad hearts and weeping eyes. Immanuel Kant said it was the business of philosophy to answer the question, “For what may I hope?” It is the Gospel and not philosophy that answers that question that never goes down. What says Jesus Christ about the mystery of death? Never do his great words thrill with so divine a music. This universe is not simply space dotted with worlds held together by invisible attractions. Listen – “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” many rooms. Father; house; many rooms; dying, going from one room into another. Let not your heart be troubled; death is nothing to dread. This is a sample of the answers Jesus Christ brings to such questions.

And it is only, my friends, when such experiences are made our own that we come to know the fineness and sweetness of these answers. There is a time in many lives when the whole being is absorbed and apparently satisfied in the love of others at their side. But this time is brief. The intensity of such love is the measure of the pain it must entail on the survivor. All the reverence and sanctity of love for parents; all the growing into oneness, and the cleaving of soul to soul which hallow married life; all the joy of being trusted by fair children, is like the brief sunshine which burns down into the chilly evening and then into the cold night.

There is no more pathetic sight in this world than a new-made grave. It is the mournful termination of human toil, the end of man’s hot ambitions and strenuous exertions. If the assurances of our faith which we have considered, be no assurance, then our march of the sleeping-places where dark yew trees cast their shadows and lettered stones betray the impotence of grief is always a “dead march” along an uncheered *via dolorosa*; then the resting-places of our cherished dead are become gloomy and forbidding prisons; then those words of hope chiseled on tombstones in every churchyard of Christendom have no meaning, and the flowers which symbolize our hope, planted on the graves of our departed, are without significance. But faith in Christ is faith in him who said, “Thy brother shall rise again.” “I am the resurrection and the life,” It is a faith which casts the soft light of hope on ancient graves, and on the newest turf which covers such as have gone hence.

There is a pretty little story of a Hindu mother who went hither and thither with her babe in her arms, crying to neighbors to help her:

“Something to heal my darling’s heart,” she cried.

“A grain of mustard seed,” the sage replied,

“Found where none old or young has ever died,

Will cure the pain you carry in your side.”

The eager mother wandered east and west, but found not the magic seed. Everywhere death had been before her. Let it be even so, beloved; but we who believe in the risen Lord are not hopeless. Our precious dead are safe. This we know, they have gone to be with Christ, through whom we have the gift of eternal life, and that involves everything we could wish for them. They can nevermore be vexed or agonized with suspense or blighted by sickness or death. True it is, that we miss them, and at times are inexpressibly lonesome without them; and yet our grief is never a hopeless grief because our Lord has risen and lives forevermore, and has the keys of death and hell, and because we read into their departure the glad assurances of our Lord’s Gospel. And this, my friends, is great gain. “I am come,” said our Lord, “that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” is his perpetual assurance. “If a man keep my sayings he shall never see death,” is his promise. “He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life.” Therefore, beloved, “I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are fallen asleep.” We have seen the risen Christ and heard his words, wherefore let us go on and live.

“I shall arise! What time, what circuit first, I ask not; In sometime – his good time – I shall arise;

* * * * in his good time.”

34. The Mystery Of Death Is Solved By Rev. J. W. Schillinger

“The wages of sin is death; hut the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” – Rom. 6:23.

Occasion: For the Father of a Family, and a Faithful Member of the Church

DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, AND ESPECIALLY SORROWING FAMILY OF THE DEPARTED BROTHER:

One of the most wonderful mysteries in this world is the mystery of life. We see evidences of it on all sides. In every sprouting seed and growing plant, in every animal, in every human being, we see its manifestation. In every one of God’s creatures which lives and moves there is an active principle which we call life, which, however, no man is able to comprehend or explain. The folly of the man who refuses to believe what he cannot understand is evident here. He carries in his own body an active principle called life which he dare not deny, and yet which he cannot understand. When we view this mystery of life which surrounds us in this world and which we carry in our very being, it should impress upon us the solemn truth that the Creator is vastly greater and wiser than the creature.

Almost equally wonderful and incomprehensible is the mystery of death. What is death? Whence did it come into this world? How did death with its destroying power manage to get into a creation which God made so perfect and beautiful? How can we escape death? What is the state of man after death? These are some of the troublesome questions which have baffled the minds of men for many centuries. Death is a mystery. For the man whose mind has not been enlightened by God’s Word it remains a grim and awful mystery. In the text which we have before us today God has given us a perfect solution for this mystery. As we now stand in the presence of death,

and our souls are troubled by the mystery in which it is wrapped, it should fill us with comfort and joy to hear that:

The Mystery of Death is Solved

1. The Origin of Death is revealed:

The origin of death has always been one of its mysteries. How is the presence of such a horrid monster as death in this world consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God? We know that “God is love.” Out of pure love he created this world and everything that is in it. He did it all also in supreme wisdom. After he had finished his creation he said that it was all very good. How then did death get into it to ruin it all? Why did God ever permit death to come and turn all of man’s happiness into wretchedness, and change this world which was a paradise into a vale of tears?

In their efforts to solve this mystery men have fallen into grave errors. Some have tried to tell us that death is simply a natural end to man’s life in this world. It is not a sad thing, they say, but a perfectly natural thing. It was God’s will from the beginning that man’s life should end in this manner. Just as at harvest time the golden grain, having become ripe, is gathered in, so man’s life, having run its course, comes to a natural end. A reply to such a theory is hardly necessary. The human heart instinctively rejects it. You, dear friends, experience on such an occasion as this that death is a painful thing.

You saw the sufferings of our dear brother before he fell asleep. You know that the rending of his soul from the body was painful. You know the sorrow of your own hearts over the separation which you have experienced. It must seem like mockery to you for anyone to tell you that death is simply a natural event and not to be grieved over. Your own heart tells you that such an event as this is contrary to the original plans of a good and wise God. You instinctively feel that if God’s original plans for the happiness of our race had been carried out death would never have come into this world.

Others, in their zeal to reconcile the existing state of affairs with the goodness of God, have denied death entirely. They tell us that sin and death actually do not exist, that they are simply creatures of man’s perverted imagination. You, the sorrowing family of this departed brother, know by

your own experience that such a theory is absurd. The man who can believe such theorizing must have lost his reason.

How then shall we solve this troublesome question with regard to the origin of death? Our text gives us the solution. It says: "The wages of sin is death." This explains it all. It was not God's plan from the beginning that death should come into this world. It was his intention that man should live forever and be eternally happy in the paradise of this earth. Death was a thing entirely foreign to God's original work of creation. But man sinned. Of his own free will he permitted himself to be deceived by Satan. He placed his will in contradiction to the will of God, and the result was that this horrid contradiction to all of God's beautiful creation, death, came into this world. On the very day that man committed that sin he plunged himself into spiritual death. He separated himself from God. The natural consequence of this was bodily death, the separation of the soul from the body. And unless the course of events were staid by the grace of God, the end of it all would be eternal death, the eternal separation of the soul from God. By man's sin he brought death also upon all creation. All nature was cursed for man's sake. God's creatures began to fall victims of disease and accident; they began to destroy and devour one another. Ever since that sad day when man rebelled against God, death has reigned supreme in this world. On the day of our birth already we begin to die. The infirmities which are the harbingers of death appear. They grow in strength and daily gain more control over us until we sink' into the grave. The entire human race is a dying race. The entire earth is one vast cemetery. One after another, we carry one another to the grave. All of God's wonderful, beautiful creation is a dying creation. It has all been brought about by man's sin.

The presence of death before us today should therefore be a call to repentance. Here we are forcibly reminded of our sinfulness. Death stands before our eyes; and we know that death is the wages of sin. Surely this must move us to examine ourselves and see the sinfulness of our hearts and lives. Here we see also what a dreadful thing sin must be in God's sight. So dreadful it is that it plunges the whole creation into death. Surely this must move us to repent with all our hearts and turn from sin.

For your comfort, dear friends, you have the assurance that this dear brother before he departed had learned this lesson from death. He knew that death stood before him. He believed the words of Holy Scripture, that death

is the wages of sin. In death he saw a reminder of his own sinfulness. Not that he was a sinner above others; for he led a truly Christian life; and we all may take his life as a model. But he never trusted in the Christian life which he led. He knew his own sinfulness too well for that. His approaching death reminded him of his sinfulness. It moved him to renew his repentance. On his death-bed he made humble confession, as he had done so often before. He confessed his faith in Christ. He received the absolution, and was comforted with the holy supper of our Savior's body and blood. Death which stood before him moved him to repentance; and of that repentance he is now enjoying the fruits.

2. The Way of Deliverance from Death is opened:

How can I escape death? The human mind has ever concerned itself with this troublesome question. Men stay away from death as long as they can. When they see death coming near them, they flee from it as far as their strength carries them. They do everything in their power to prolong life. All of the inventions which the learning and science of men can produce have been utilized to overcome the ravages of death. Religions have been invented by man which claim to offer a way of escape from death. In times of old there were fabled fountains of perpetual youth, the creatures of man's imagination; and many a man spent his fortune and wore out his life searching for such a fountain in the wilderness. But all in vain. No mere man has ever yet solved the mystery, how to escape death.

But is there then no escape from death? Yes, the mystery is solved. God himself has solved it for us. He has pointed us to the tree of life, that we may eat of its fruits and live forever. He has pointed us to the fountain of life, that we may bathe in its waters and escape death. Let us hear the solution for the mystery of death as it is given us in our text. "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

To receive eternal life means to escape death entirely. This, our text says, is a gift of God. God is the only one who has power over death. Death tyrannizes over all others; but God is the Lord over death. When God speaks the word, death must obey. It is in the hand of God alone to deliver us from death entirely and grant us eternal life.

Let us now hear from our text how God delivers us from death. It is all contained in these words: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord." "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Jesus by his perfect life in this world entirely fulfilled the law of God for us. Thereby he robbed sin of its power. He shed his precious blood in order to atone for the sins of the world and thereby robbed death of its sting. He arose from the grave and thereby triumphed over death. He made himself the Master and Lord over death. He destroyed death for us. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It remains for us to accept in true faith this victory over death which Christ won for us. If we do so we are delivered from death. The Savior himself says: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." A bodily death indeed still awaits even those who believe in Christ. But it is hardly any more worthy of the name death. It has become merely a means of delivering us from the tribulations of this earthly life. It has become simply a gateway by which we pass from this wretched life here below into the glories of the eternal life above. This bodily death is no longer our enemy. It has become a dear friend unto us; for it is the means through which we enter into heaven. Death may sometimes seem to be a dark and dismal gateway. When we examine it we find that the vines which entwine its pillars are covered with many cruel thorns. But when we open the gate and enter, we find that it leads into a most beautiful garden, the garden of God, paradise.

Our dear brother who has now been taken from us had solved the mystery of death long before his departure. He was not afraid of death. He knew that God had given him the victory over death through Jesus Christ his Lord. He had triumphed over death. When the hour came for him to depart he peacefully fell asleep in the full assurance that he was going home to be with his heavenly Father. A Christian father once lay dying. His children, all grown to manhood and womanhood, stood around him weeping. He said to them: "My dear children, when you were little ones I often carried you up to bed and kissed you goodnight as I laid you to rest. Were you afraid then?" The children answered: "No, father, we were not

afraid. We knew that we were going to sleep just for the night, and that we would awaken again in the morning to enjoy your love and tender care.”

“Just so,” the father replied, “my Heavenly Father is now laying me to sleep. I am not afraid. There is no cause for fear or sadness. I will peacefully sleep during the night; on the glorious resurrection morning I will awaken again to enjoy the loving kindness of my Heavenly Father forever.”

Such was the death of our dear brother. He was not afraid of death; for he had solved the mystery of death. He knew that a complete deliverance from death was his through Christ Jesus. Even in his death he was triumphant over death.

Dear friends, let his faith be your comfort. Imitate him also in his faith. Trust in God and in Jesus Christ your Savior as he did. Like him show your faith also in your manner of life.

Death may still have many mysteries for you, mysteries which we cannot solve now. You may ask: Why was it done just so? Why did God take our beloved father away from us just at this time when we still stood so much in need of him? We know that he is much happier now; but he certainly would have been willing to live with us yet for many years. Why did not God permit him to stay with us? Why did God require him to endure such severe sufferings before his departure? These things we cannot answer. These are mysteries. But only believe. Put all of your trust in God and trust all things in his hands. The day will finally come when you shall be reunited with this dear brother and father in the presence of God in glory. On that great day you shall see all of these things clearly. Then all of the mysteries of death will be solved. Amen.

35. The Word Of God As The Only Source Of True Comfort In Affliction By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.” – Psalm 119:92.

Occasion: For a Christian Husband, Father and Brother

DEAR CHRISTIANS AND MOURNING FRIENDS:

We often meet in the house of God. In fact we can truly say with the psalmist: “How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Ps. 84:1, 2). But today our meeting here is not a joyful one. We have been called together by the voice of death. We have met for a funeral service. Our object in coming here is not simply to do honor to the memory of the departed and to express our sympathy with his bereaved family but to offer them true comfort as this flows from the never-failing fountain of God’s Word. What would we do in the face of death without the Word of God? Our text says: “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.” And this well expresses the experience of every mourning Christian. We know, my friends, that this is a sad hour for you. To bid a last farewell to a loving husband, a kind father and an affectionate brother and son is no easy task. No wonder that your eyes overflow with tears and your hearts bleed. But you are not without comfort in this hour of affliction. God’s Word is full of comfort to mourning Christians. Yes, it is the only source of all true comfort. Let me direct your attention today to

The Word of God as the Only Source of True Comfort in Affliction

In considering this subject let me endeavor to show you I. How true this is, and II. To what it should move us.

I. How True This Is

It is not unusual, when death has visited a home, for friends, neighbors and relatives to gather in and offer sympathy and comfort. Some will say: "Suffering is inevitable in this imperfect world. It is something we must expect. It comes in the ordinary course of nature. We must expect to part sooner or later. We cannot live always." Others will remind you of the fact that suffering is universal. No one escapes it entirely, although some seem to suffer more than others. Yours is the common experience of all men. You are no exception to the general rule. Yea, others must even carry heavier loads than you. If you knew what others suffer you would consider your own load light. Then again, you will be reminded of the fact that time heals all wounds. You will not always feel as sad as you do now. In time your sorrow will cease, at least in part, and you will again be able to enjoy yourselves. The wounds will heal, although they may leave a scar.

But I hear you say: There is little comfort in all this. You feel like saying as Job did to his friends: " Miserable comforters are ye all" (Job 16:2). There is little or no comfort in all such considerations. They are truths that cannot be denied, but they leave the heart cold. It would be sad indeed if we had nothing better to offer our mourning friends today. This is no balm for bleeding hearts.

But thanks be to God we have something better to offer when death enters a Christian home. God in his Word offers true comfort; comfort which really comforts, balm that heals. In the first place it assures us that those who die in the faith of Jesus are not lost but saved. The world may say: You have lost a husband, brother, father, son. But God's Word says: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). We mourn over our dead but if we could realize that those who die in the true faith are at home with the Lord and inexpressibly happy

we would shed no tears but those of joy. The Savior said to the malefactor on the cross beside him: " This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paradise is heaven, a place of perfect and eternal happiness. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Our loss is their gain. They have reached the end of life's pilgrimage and have entered into the rest of God's children. Their warfare is over and they now enjoy the victory for which they strove. Their labors are at an end and they enjoy sweet rest in heaven.

We lay the mortal bodies of our beloved ones in the grave where they must return to dust and ashes; for "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Since the fall, this is the inexorable law of nature. When our friends die we must hasten to bury their remains for in but a few days they would be objects of abhorrence and a menace to all who came in contact with them. But God's Word offers us the blessed comfort that the dead shall arise, and accordingly we confess in the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body." The apostle says: "The dead in Christ shall arise" (I Thess. 4:16). The Savior himself says: "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life" (John 5:28, 29). This is not the last time you expect to look upon the face of your beloved. You hope to see him again at the right hand of the Lord on that last great day when death and the grave shall give up their prey. And with what bodies will they arise? Not with such poor, sickly, wasted bodies as they had in this world, but with glorified bodies. St. Paul says: "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil 3:21).

Then besides this, God's Word assures us that whatever befalls us in this world must, by the overruling providence of God, be for our good. For " all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). When Joseph's brethren sold him into slavery in Egypt it must have seemed about the worst thing that could have befallen him, and yet years after he could cheerfully say: "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good"

(Gen. 50:20). We are, even in our saddest experiences, under God's all-wise and merciful providence. He never allows us to be tempted above what we are able to bear. He can bring good out of evil. What seem our most painful experiences will in the end turn out to be our greatest blessings. God may lay the rod of affliction upon us, but he never does so from hatred but rather from love. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). So God's Word is full of rich comfort in affliction, yea, it is the only source of all true comfort.

Having seen how true this is, let us now also in the second place consider:

II. To what it should move us:

First of all we should ourselves make faithful use of the Word of God when we are afflicted. What would you say of a person who is hungry and has plenty of food, good, nourishing food, but refuses to eat? What would you say of a person who is sick and has the proper remedy to cure his diseases but fails to apply it? Would not this be the height of folly? Then what else are true Christians doing when in affliction they fail to apply and take to heart the sweet comfort which God's Word offers them? My friends, it is but natural for us to weep and mourn when death separates us, even though but temporarily, from our loved ones. We are weak flesh and blood and cannot but feel sad when death tears asunder the tenderest bonds of blood and friendship. But let us not weep and mourn as though we had no hope. Let the infidel howl and lament. Let the atheist wring his hands in despair. Let those who live in the world without God despair in the face of death; for they are without hope and the future is full of dark forebodings. They tremble at what may possibly come after death. But such conduct does not become Christians who know and appreciate the sweet comfort which God's Word offers in the face of death. Present these precious truths to your minds. Call to remembrance what you have been taught, what you have read of the Gospel promises, and the word of the Savior shall be fulfilled in your own experience: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

O how anxious we should be to store our minds with the comforting assurances of the Gospel so that in the day of trouble we may draw upon

this never-failing source of true comfort. How careful we should be to read and hear the Word and above all to keep it, for: " Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28). How zealous we should be to have our children memorize such comforting passages of Scripture so that when their day of affliction comes, it may not find them comfortless. The more thoroughly we live ourselves into the Word of God and make its truths our own, the better will we be able to withstand the fiery darts of Satan in the hour of trial. Do not allow the clouds of adversity to hide from you the smiling face of your heavenly Father; for "behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face."

Then there is another thing to which the fact that God's Word is the only source of true comfort in affliction should move us and that is to offer this comfort to our friends when they are in trouble. It does the troubled heart good to be assured of the sympathy of dear friends. It seems to lighten the load when others join in carrying it. Christians should not be cold and indifferent to each other's afflictions. We are all members one of another and "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). Any injury inflicted on any member of the body is felt by every other member. Let a little grain of dust fall into the eye and the whole body is disturbed in sympathy with the afflicted member.

But let us do more than merely express our sympathy. Let us offer substantial comfort. Why should the pastor be the only one who is able to offer the comfort of the Word of God? Why should not one fellow Christian offer to another the cup of comfort from the living fountain of the Gospel? Do not be timid about confessing your faith on such an occasion. Let the conviction of your heart find expression in words which will act as a healing balm to bleeding hearts. Our church members are too often slow to speak when it comes to comforting those who mourn over the death of their loved ones. They are like Job's friends of whom it is said that " They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:13). If we have experienced the true comfort of the Word of God in our own hearts under affliction, let us not be slow to offer it to others.

This is the object of our meeting here today. The congregation by the mouth of its pastor offers to our mourning friends the true comfort of God's Word. Let me assure you, dear friends, that I speak in the name of all your brethren and sisters when I say to you with the Savior: "Weep not" (Luke 7;

13). And words of comfort will be spoken from this pulpit Sunday after Sunday. See to it that you come to hear them. They will do you good. The preaching of the Gospel will help you bear your troubles more patiently. It will save you from hopeless despair. It is the day-star from on high lighting our way through this vale of tears until we reach the true home of God's children in heaven.

“Blessed are the meek and contrite,
Who in Jesus fall asleep,
Blessed where the saints forever
Their untiring vigils keep.
They are from their labors resting,
God has wiped away their tears.
They are dwelling in the kingdom.
Free from all their sins and fears.”

Amen.

36. What Must I Do To Be Saved? By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“And (he) brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.”– Acts 16:30-31.

Occasion: Used at the funeral of a worldly-minded man who repented shortly before his death

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, BUT ESPECIALLY MOURNING FAMILY:

The choice of this text was determined by a recent visit to the departed. During the last weeks of his life I had frequently called on him in a pastoral way. At all of these visits I was more than welcome. Last week while standing by his bedside and talking with him about death and the life to come and comforting him with the salvation in Jesus, he said: “What must I do?” He was referred to this passage and the circumstances that called it forth and he received the biblical answer to his question. He was a seeker after the truth in these last weeks of his life. He acknowledged very frankly that he had made a mistake by standing aloof from the church and he regretted that he could no longer take part in its work. His estimate of himself he expressed in these words: “I think that I have been a good citizen, but I have been a poor Christian.” When he was asked whether at his funeral it might be stated that he had regretted this mistake he said: “Tell my friends, and tell them to be different.”

Thank God that even in the eleventh hour the departed accepted the salvation in Christ. Today we publish it here for the glory of God. “Jesus sinners will receive.” According to his own words he found this salvation “like rain upon parched ground.” And we add: “There is joy in the presence of God over one sinner that repenteth.” “What an answer this conversion is

to the many prayers sent up in this home for his soul. What an effect this ought to have on his associates and neighbors who are still halting between two opinions.

The greatest question of life confronted this brother on his death-bed.

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

I. What gives rise to this question?

No man seriously asks this question until he realizes that he is in sin, that in that condition he is not acceptable to a righteous God and that he cannot help himself.

This question indicates alarm. It is raised only in a soul that has a deep conviction of sin. You can only save what is in danger, or lost. You save a burning building, a drowning man or a lost child. The house that is not exposed to fire, the man that walks on solid ground, the child that sleeps in its mother's arms are not in need of help.

Men do not raise this question as long as they depend on civil righteousness. How many are blinded by it! Because men are good citizens, trusted friends, loving husbands and fathers, they think that God must be satisfied with them. Because they have a good name in a community and have promoted worthy causes and have endeared themselves to their families, they think that they must be acceptable to God.

But what a distorted conception they have of God! He cannot be holy; he must wink at sin; he must be endowed with human attributes and weaknesses; he cannot be righteous and just. The Pharisee who went up into the temple to pray was so well pleased with himself because he measured his worth by a wrong standard. He said: "I thank thee, God, that I am not like other men," and then he chose even the lowest class, "adulterers, fornicators, or even this publican." He had the wrong standard, therefore he appeared so well. Had he taken God for his standard, not as sinful men, following the light of their own minds, picture him, but as the Bible reveals him, he would have hidden his face in shame.

Our brother found this civil righteousness satisfactory in life because he banished from his mind the true conception of God. He worshiped a God of his own making. He set up his own standards and ideals and as he made

them low enough he measured up to them fairly well. He leaned on that staff many years while enjoying good health and when no serious thought of death and judgment and the life to come ever confronted him. But when the test came the staff was weak; it bent; it broke and left him without support.

When he came to examine his life under the searchlight of the law of God he saw himself in a new light. God was no longer an imperfect man, but a being whose holiness and righteousness and justice were a consuming fire. He demands absolute holiness in his creatures because that is one of his attributes. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." When our brother saw himself in this new light he felt his nakedness and sinfulness and cried out: "What shall I do to be saved?"

Beware of trusting your own righteousness for salvation. Many of you are comforting yourselves with it; but know that it cannot stand before the bar of an aroused conscience that has been under the influence of God's law! Today accept what will give ease of conscience and support in death.

A belief in a future life also gives rise to the question: What shall I do to be saved? There is in the breast of man an inkling that he will live after death. It seems that no savage tribe is so benighted that it has totally lost this feeling. The North American Indian speaks of his "happy hunting ground" and when an African chief dies they kill off many of his slaves to accompany him to the life to come. This belief is inborn. In spite of man's fallen condition this hope is not entirely blasted and man hopes to live forever. There is something in our very makeup that shudders at the thought of annihilation. There is a longing in the human breast for life. It is the supreme desire of the human soul and Job correctly says: "Whatsoever a man hath will he give for his life." Life! Life! This is God's gift to man. How we shudder at the thought of surrendering it. We cling to it more and we long for it hereafter.

Our brother had this faith. No doubt, for many years he tried to suppress his hope, but as death drew near it could no longer be suppressed. God was merciful to him. He took a real interest in the future, he asked many questions about it and he accepted the light that fell from beyond. He no longer warred against his better self, but breaking away from the restraint of sin, he longed for that better life. He found the answer to his question and we trust that his soul is now at rest with God.

II. What Answers are given to this Question?

The world tells you that there is no satisfactory answer to the question. It says: We cannot know whether there is a God, a heaven, a hell, or a future existence of happiness or misery. They say that we cannot have the evidence of our senses and, therefore, we cannot know. They tell you that no man has ever come back from the dead, that that land is a "bourne whence no traveler returns," that the future is a sealed book and that no man has ever been able to break the seal.

But in worldly matters men do not act so. They do not insist on the evidence of their own senses. If a man were to say: "I have never seen the land of China, hence I do not know that it exists," would we not question his sanity? There are men enough who have seen China; who have landed on its coasts, who have seen its cities and eaten its fruits. These trustworthy witnesses have come back and told us their experiences and we accept their testimony and act on it. Who among us has seen George Washington? No one; and yet who doubts that he was the first President of the United States? It would be a mark of insanity to doubt all that reliable eye and ear witnesses have told us about him and we are just as sure that he was the first President as if we had been in Washington and had seen him with our own eyes.

Yes we can know about the future life and the way that leads to it. God has not left us in the dark. There was one who came back from the dead and who revealed the future life to us. Christ arose from the dead. He could not be holden of death. He went into it but was mightier than death. He came back for the very purpose that he might give us the assurance of the life to come. After his resurrection his disciples touched him; they ate with him; they put their hands into his pierced side; they conversed with him and held sweet communion with him. Both Jesus himself and his disciples have given the world the testimony that there is a future life. He was seen at one time by more than five hundred brethren. Who could reasonably doubt such a cloud of witnesses! There may be such a thing as an honest doubter, but he does not question sufficient testimony. Here then from the mouth of Christ and his faithful followers you have the testimony that you need and if you still doubt you do so because you choose to, not because the testimony is not sufficient.

But the world sometimes admits that the question can be answered and it has an answer that is satisfactory to itself. It says: "Do the best that you can; follow the light that you have; obey the voice of conscience; fulfill self-imposed laws; do good as you understand it." Summing up all the answers that the world gives we have this: Human righteousness is sufficient for salvation. But the Book says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." The scribes and Pharisees were not bad men as the world goes. They were not gross drunkards and thieves and adulterers. Their fellow-men gave them the testimony, that they led model lives, that they outwardly conformed to the letter of the law. And yet Jesus says it takes a better righteousness than theirs to enter the kingdom.

There is no more prevalent sin both in the church and outside of it than self-righteousness. A man wants to be his own savior. That is the only way to salvation that the natural man has found and it is the only way that is satisfactory to him. It tickles his pride. It calls for no humility. It exalts human nature and puffs it up.

But there is an answer given to this question by the Bible that is so simple that a child can understand it, so comforting that the soul that has grasped it seeks no further. It is the answer sent by God and for that reason it is final and complete. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He is the Son of God. He was our substitute under the law. He suffered the penalty of sin upon the cross. He cried upon the cross: "It is finished!" God's wrath is appeased. His justice is satisfied, his holiness is vindicated. The debt is paid and his resurrection and ascension are the evidence of it. There is nothing asked of you for salvation. You are a poor beggar, you have nothing to offer. But the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses from all sin.

Because this is God's answer it fills the bill. It is satisfactory. It meets the needs of the human soul. In all the world ours is the only religion that knows of a Savior, that offers the human heart just what it needs.

If a man were trying to run a wheelbarrow down a railroad track anybody could see that the barrow and the track were not made for each other. It is equally plain that a wagon and a railroad track were not designed for each other. But stand and see the iron horse come down the track. Its flanged wheels are designed for the track, with safety it runs at high speed.

Here is a sinner and here is a Savior. They are designed for each other. They fit together. Nothing in all the world could meet the needs of the human soul, but a Savior who was the Son of God! And when he came and bore the load of sin, then the sinner had One who could lead him into the presence of God. And that is why when a sinner has grasped the idea of sin and its results, and forgiveness and its consequences, nothing else is needed for support in the hour of death.

While this is an occasion of sorrow, there is much over which to rejoice. In the eleventh hour our brother found the Savior, he confessed him and found peace in the forgiveness of sins and he had the hope of heaven. May others who have been indifferent heed the warning and come to Christ while he still calls them. And may those of us who have found peace in his wounds so live that death may admit us into the glorious presence of God. Amen!

37. The Heavenly Emigrant By Rev. Frederick B. Clausen

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.” – 2 Cor. 5:1-9.

Occasion: A middle-aged man whose consistent, Christian life greatly endeared him to his family and congregation and also won for him the respect of his business associates.

We are face to face with a great mystery. Question crowds question, but only bewilders, confuses and deepens the silent gloom. The pain-throbbing heart is hungering for comfort. Human weakness and frailty so convincingly brought home, look for a rod and staff to lean upon. The American poet in his classic effusion counsels thus:

“When thoughts of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart, –
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature’s teachings, while from all around –
Earth, and her waters, and the depths of air, –
Comes a still voice – Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course
Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again.”

I call this giving a stone for bread and scorpions for fish. But this is the philosophy of man, the creed of materialism, the only comfort (?) of unbelief. With relief we turn from man and nature to our Bible, and lo, “earth’s shadows flee and heaven’s bright morning breaks.” For here in our text we have the reiteration of the blessed truth spread over all the pages of the Bible:

1. There are no dead!

Language is so confusing and often contradictory of the faith we confess. We, the person, the ego, must be dissociated from the body or form given for making self known and expressing self in this world of material things. This body or shell is swallowed up by the grave, but the immortal tenant, death, cannot harm; it can only serve him. We are met, not to mourn a death, but to sorrow for the temporary loss we have sustained by the removal from this world to heaven of a dear and esteemed person. He has emigrated from the vale of shadows, sorrows and disappointments to the highlands of unclouded happiness and endless vision. Dead? Never! God, his Father, to whom he was given in holy baptism and whom he endeavored to serve in this world, has sent his beautiful messenger to invite him to the mansion which the Savior prepared for him and all who love his appearance. Therefore he was in a strait betwixt two: he loved us and could not ask to have the bonds of flesh cut which bound him to us. But he loved Jesus and would see him face to face and sing the praises of the Lamb with that great company on high which no man can number.

And we also find ourselves in a strait betwixt two: We loved him. He was such a Christian gentleman. His place will be hard to fill. But is our love so selfish that it would bring him back to his suffering, to this world of sin, to all that cramps and keeps us from happiness? Come, let us think less of our loss and more of his gain. Take to heart the blessed comfort:

“There is no death! The stars go down
To rise upon some other shore,
And bright in Heaven’s jeweled crown
They shine forevermore.”

2. Has moved

Behold, he whom we mourn as dead, has moved, according to the inspired statement of the Apostle Paul, “from the earthly house of this tabernacle to an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” This house crumbles and decays, the fire we call death consumes it, but not him, the person, the soul we loved.

Paul speaks of the body as a tabernacle or tent. It is language conveying the sense of temporariness, weakness, lack of durability. Lest we forget, the great Apostle reminds us of the suffering and humiliation that this tabernacle of the body occasions. “For in this Ave groan.” “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.” Men suffer unspeakable agony and pain and most of these experiences arise from the body. The tabernacle is constantly decaying and exposing the spirit to the untoward world and the groans of the martyred spirit arise to heaven. From such tyranny and humiliation it must be redemption to be released. Like the ancient Jews returning from the Babylonian exile, the heavenly emigrant, released from the thralldom of the earthly tabernacle may sing: “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

We would not despise this body. It is God’s wonderful gift and precious trust. It is the means of association with the dear ones at home and our friends. This fact, perhaps, more than any other, makes us cling desperately to it. We know not how a bodiless spirit can commune with spirits in the body. But “while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” This earthly tabernacle cannot enter heaven, as “flesh and blood cannot

inherit the kingdom of God.” How difficult it is even to commune with God, with the awful drag of this body, to draw near to him in worship at the infrequent periods which we set aside for that purpose. Even devout Christians must confess: " Our souls, how heavily they go to reach eternal joys." "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Like Martha, so many of us are careful and cumbered with many things so that we also often forget the one thing needed. Lives there a child of God, unspoiled and loving, who will not say with Paul: "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

"To die is gain" in every way. Does death carry us out of the earthly house of this tabernacle? Only to lead us, if we served God in this earthly tent, to an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For this body of corruption we are given one of incorruption. God exchanges rags of mortality for the robe of immortality. The image of the earthy which we have worn is broken that we might have completely restored the image of God in which he made man at the beginning. Could we see our dear ones who have made this change we could scarcely recognize them – so transfigured would they be. That is all we know and can faintly express concerning the body of the resurrection. Even Paul, who has much to say of this earthly tabernacle, makes only the statement of the fact concerning the home on high. The reason is at hand: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

"What shall be? What shall be? All the joys laid up for me?
Lord, I know not; eyes are holden
'Til Jerusalem the golden
In its glory I shall see."

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

3. Doubt.

Sinister doubt now raises its head and says: All this is beautiful and much to be desired, but, is it true? How do I know that you are not drawing upon a vivid imagination or describing a dream, beautiful, consoling, but only a dream to be dissipated upon awaking? Paul anticipates such doubting

questions. This is his answer: "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." I forbear to dwell upon the first argument, the evident design of God in creating man, not to be lost with the earthly tabernacle and be resolved to earth again, but for eternity, for "He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for in him they all live." May it suffice us that he has given us the "earnest of his Spirit." "Earnest" is a word which once was used for the purpose for which we today employ the expression "deposit." In the language of business it means the payment of a small sum to guarantee the payment in full when the time comes to complete the deal. This deposit is the assurance that a person is in earnest, means to do what he says or promises. The Holy Spirit is God's deposit in our souls to prove that he will fulfill all that he has promised concerning our eternal redemption. That Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus Christ, preserves us in the true faith and sanctifies us through that faith, sealing us unto the day of full redemption. Through the same Spirit we are able to commune with God, although he is a Spirit and we are in the flesh. This communion on earth through prayer and worship is but a faint foretaste of the blessed and perfect communion in heaven when the limitations of this earthly house will have been removed.

Wherefore comfort one another with these thoughts. Instead of plying our perplexed minds with questions beyond that which God has graciously revealed to us, or giving way to brooding sorrow like those who have no hope, let us go back to our homes and occupations with the parting advice of God's servant as the watchword of our lives: "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." How soon sorrow will lose its poignancy and the silent home and empty chair cease to make the wound to smart if our thoughts and affections were more centered on God and the ambition of being found acceptable to him. Is he not the bond that binds the saints in heaven to us on earth? Do not we, his children, live unto him and die unto him? Blessed sorrow that opens our eyes to this trysting place for the dear one gone on ahead and us lingering behind, even God. If we have opened our hearts to God's word, then our departed friend has done us one more and lasting service, for through his grave, as a window, we have looked into eternity and strengthened ourselves for the few miles we must wander in the wilderness ere we, too, may embark for the fatherland on high. And when

“From out our bourne of time and place
The flood may bear me far,
I know I’ll see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.”

38. The Lively Hope By Rev. Prof. George Rygh

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” – 1 Peter 1:3-5.

Occasion: For a MiddleAged Christian

MOURNING FRIENDS:

We have assembled in the house of mourning. Again we stand face to face with the great enemy – Death. He stalks triumphantly through the world and through all the ages. His pathway is strewn with grief and sorrow. Hopelessness and despair are his companions; anguish of heart is his triumph. He walks at our side along the road of life. He sits with us at table; he is the unbidden guest at every merrymaking, the dread, mysterious fact hovering near at every moment. He lays his chill hand upon the heart and it beats no more. The great and powerful have no grandeur in his presence. They are but dust and ashes.

The Danish author, Carl Ploug, wrote a poem entitled “Abel’s Death.” Our first parents are mystified. They cannot comprehend this new thing that has come into their experience. They speak to the prostrate frame; but he answers not. The mother chides him, but the dead boy makes no response. His eyes are glassy. His hands are cold and lifeless. His heart is still. Death had come into the world, and they learned what humanity ever since has learned – that death is the comrade of sin.

Does death end it all? Does death mark the termination of life? Are human beings no more than the cattle of the fields, or the birds of the air that fall to earth and return to the dust from which they came? Or does life project itself beyond this interruption which men call death? Is the soul of

man immortal? Or are the deep-seated hopes and aspirations of men for immortality but an illusion and a deception? All the nations of the earth and the wisest men of all the times have believed and taught the immortality of the soul. In the light of God's testimony in the human heart, they have believed and taught that men's deeds follow them beyond the grave and that every man shall be recompensed according to the deeds done in the body. The good shall walk in Elysian fields of joy and perfect happiness: the evil shall suffer the torments of punishment for their wicked lives. The law of retribution, which so often fails in this present life, reaches men beyond the portals of death and fixes their fate throughout eternity; for justice is the law of the universe, and justice must be done.

But the hope which men have for life beyond death is built on shifting sand. Men's evil consciences warn them against the Judgment Day, and sin cannot be atoned for by good works and scourgings and tears. Sin has humanity in its grip. Sin cannot be argued away nor can the guilt of sin be removed by man. For this reason the hope of humanity is weak and trembling, full of fear and misgiving. Death to the unbeliever or the heathen is literally a plunge in the dark, a journeying into an unknown world filled with direst possibilities. In the presence of death humanity is hopeless, cheerless and despairing.

No wonder the apostle blesses God whom he speaks of as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our God is not an unknown God, not an impersonal Energy, an intangible Force. He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is also our Father, who "according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Through the glorious Gospel he has revealed his "abundant mercy" whereby he bestows on us the forgiveness of sin, life and salvation, for through this "abundant mercy" he has begotten us again. We are born again, regenerated, made the children of God through Baptism and the power of God's life-giving Word.

As the children of God we have an inheritance; for children are rightful heirs. There is a patrimony which comes to us, not by virtue of good deeds or merit of our own, but as the gift of grace. "If children, then heirs."

This inheritance is "incorruptible." It never decays. Our bodies are tenements of clay which soon decay and sink into the earth to mix with the dust from which they came. But that which men call "death" does in no wise vitiate or destroy our eternal inheritance. "Henceforth," says the

apostle, “there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). This “crown” of immortal life represents the honor and unspeakable joy which God bestows in all their fullness upon those who, in this life, built their hope upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

This inheritance is “undefiled.” It is essentially pure. There is nothing to mar it, nothing to tarnish it. It has no taint of evil nor tinge of corruption. It is essentially pure, essentially ethical, essentially the expression of the perfection which is God’s.

“Our inheritance fadeth not away.” It is unwithering. It blossoms forever. It is not only a century plant; it is an eternity plant, never failing to satisfy, never failing to fill the soul with the rapture ineffable and perfect.

Thus gloriously the apostle describes the inheritance which is “reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last day.” Jesus loved to speak of heaven and its glory both for himself and for his disciples. “In my Father’s house,” he says, “are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.” It is the Home Beautiful, the Land of Heart’s Desire. As it is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Corinthians 2:9).

Such is our inheritance. Such is the object, the content of our strong “lively hope.” Neither life nor death, neither principalities nor powers, neither arguments nor ridicule, neither prosperity nor adversity, can separate us from the hope which we have who are begotten again of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his “abundant mercy.” We are God’s children and the rightful heirs of all his wealth and eternal treasure.

But what if our hope were an illusion and a snare; such as is the hope of the unbelieving world? What if we, too, are building our hope on shifting sand? What if the Castle Beautiful which we build is insecure and tumbles about our ears in the day of temptation and in the hour of death? What if the staff upon which we lean prove a broken reed, and we, like the heathen, sink to earth never to rise again?

Our hope is built upon a firm foundation. It is not built as is the unbeliever’s hope upon good works of human merit. Our hope of heaven is not built on human righteousness and human endeavor. The ground upon which our hope rests is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That

is the rock foundation upon which our hope is built. His resurrection seals and confirms forever the truth of Christ's doctrine. It attests God's acceptance and approval of the sacrifice for sin which Christ, the God-Man, made by his perfect life and innocent sufferings and death upon the cross. It is the crowning glory placed by God his Father upon his service as the mediator between God and man. Christ Jesus has paid the price. We are purchased with his holy, precious blood, his innocent sufferings and death. Our guilt is atoned. Our sins are washed away by his blood. Our souls are redeemed through the ransom which Christ has paid upon the cross. Our hope is built upon God's "abundant mercy" as revealed in the sending of his Son to earth to die for the sin of the world and to rise again as the Conqueror of Death, the Accepted Sacrifice, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Therefore every believer says with fullest confidence from the heart:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

Our hope is built securely upon what God our Heavenly Father has done for us through the mediatorial work of Christ Jesus, our Lord and only Saviour. We Christians build our hope on God's mercy, not on our own merits. We build on God's "abundant mercy," not on our own defective work-righteousness. We do not hesitate to make our choice between what God has done for us and what we poor sinners may be able to do. His "abundant mercy" is the Gibraltar upon which by his Holy Spirit we build the castle of faith and hope. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but our hope cannot be disturbed. Men may traduce us. Men may persecute. Men may rob us of life itself; but far and away beyond the reach of all evil powers on earth and under the earth is our hope which is built upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. That cannot be disturbed. That cannot be destroyed. That cannot be taken from us by any power on earth. It is ours. In this hope we rest secure. Though all things fail, it never fails. Though the eyes grow dim, mind confused and the heart chilled in disappointment and

sorrow, this hope glorifies life and fills our soul with courage and joy unspeakable.

Meanwhile we greatly rejoice in this hope, “though now for a season, if need be, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” For as the gold is purified of its dross by the fire so our faith is cleansed by the trials of life. They serve to discipline us, to train and develop us, to prepare us for the larger life, untrammelled in its development into the larger fruition and higher culmination of our Christian hope.

Comfort yourselves, therefore, sorrowing relatives and friends of the departed, in this hope. It is based upon the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Bless God the Father for our Lord Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father, who by his Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament has begotten us again unto this immovable hope by his “abundant mercy.” Those who have gone before beckon us homeward. In the providence of God, our grief, though a trial, helps to confirm our faith and purify it of doubts and misgivings. It gives us a vision of the glory that is not seen on land or sea, but is reserved for the children of God.

May he remove all doubts and all unbelief from your hearts. May he make us strong in faith that our hope may be a lively hope. In that other and better world where sin and death shall be no more we shall know as we are known and rejoice together with our beloved ones who died in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall have experiences new and wonderful beyond the power of our limited minds to conceive. To him, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be praise, glory and honor for his “abundant mercy” now and forever more. Amen.

39. The Christian's Knowledge Inadequate To Solve Every Problem By Rev. G. J. Troutman

“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” – John 13:7.

Occasion: In the home of a suicide, who was a member of the church, and is thought to have become demented from worry over ill health

DEAR MOURNERS:

What a shock this community received when the sad news of the untimely death of became known. We were dumbfounded; it seemed unbelievable; and we have not recovered from the effects of the deplorable act that has culminated in the death of this highly respected man. If we, his friends and neighbors, were sorely affected by the sad intelligence of his untimely death, what must have been the effect on the immediate family of the deceased. I know that I am expressing the sentiment of the community, when I extend to this bereaved family our heartfelt sympathy. While this pity and kindly feeling will not heal the wound, it may, to some extent, allay the pain so suddenly inflicted. Why did this man commit this rash act? Was he accountable for the cruel deed? Did he cease to be a Christian when he took his own life? Could not God have prevented this tragedy? If so, why did he not do so? These, and similar questions, have been asked, but who is able to answer them in a satisfactory manner? Certainly not the man of the world, nor do we Christians claim to be able to do so.

There is much Christians do not know: It is apparent from the words of our text, that Peter, one of the most prominent disciples, did not always know, nor could he understand, the words and acts of the Lord Jesus. Peter

did not fully grasp the import and catch the significance of the last Passover Feast. The sacred scenes and experiences were too much for his finite mind to grasp; and now, as Jesus was about to wash Peter's feet, he remonstrated; he did not think it was the thing to do. Peter evidently considered this act of the Lord as unbecoming and therefore said: "Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now: but thou shalt know hereafter."

The apostles did not possess the adequate knowledge to solve every problem that confronted them. These faithful followers of the Master were often perplexed. The Lord's words and ways seemed strange to them at times. Their short-sighted understanding made it practically impossible for them to understand why the Lord did this, or why he did not do otherwise; why he did not prevent this or that when it was in his power to do so. They, however, learned through faith and experience that the Lord does all things well, he knows what is best for each of us.

That there are many problems that children of God cannot solve, is verified by God-fearing people of every age. This fact should not surprise us. The Lord has plainly told us. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). That God watches over the affairs of the world, and that nothing transpires without his permission, is very plain from Matthew 10:29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." Not that God wills every act of man, by no means. Innumerable are the deeds of men that are contrary to the will of the Lord. God does not want us to commit sin, he warns us against iniquity, and tells us of the terrible results that follow a life of sin. It is the Lord's will that all should accept the redemption offered through Christ Jesus; but many will not. Why so many reject this proffered salvation is a difficult problem to answer. Why individuals will commit crimes in spite of their better knowledge, is hard to explain. Innate iniquity is the key to the solution, but does not solve the mystery.

We are Christians, but our knowledge is not adequate to answer the question: Why did this man take his own life? He had so much to live for.

The deceased had a happy home, which is, without a doubt, one of the greatest blessings on earth. He seemed to appreciate his home, one could usually find him there. He was not like many husbands and fathers that seek association and pleasure elsewhere than at home; who want to get away from under their own roof and the society of those that ought to be the nearest and dearest to them. He loved his wife and children and appreciated being with them: why such a man should separate himself, by this manner, from his dear ones, is hard to explain.

The departed enjoyed the respect of the community. Having been born, reared and always lived on the farm where he committed the rash act that culminated in his death, his friends and neighbors had ample opportunity to know him. Most certainly he had faults like every other individual, but that he was widely known and highly respected is apparent today, and increases the mystery of his untimely death.

This dead man was prosperous. He was honest, industrious and frugal and God blessed his labor, so that he not only enjoyed the necessities of life, but accumulated considerable of this world's goods. Many would say, that he was now in a position and condition not only to live without anxious cares, but to enjoy life; yet he ends his earthly existence in such a ruthless way.

Above all, the deceased was a member of a Christian church. It is deplorable that any person should take his own life, but it seems doubly so, when a confessor of Christ brings about his own death. Late in life, only two years ago, the now departed, whose lifeless body we have before us, publicly professed his faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized. He was faithful in attendance at divine services and regularly participated in the Lord's Supper. Last Sunday evening he attended the service and spoke appreciatively of the same. We have no reason to doubt his sincerity, but it is beyond our comprehension to understand how anyone that has heard the terrible words of the Law, and sweet message of the Gospel, can commit such a deed, diametrically opposed to the Christian religion. A mystery confronts us: a mystery that we shall not be able to unravel this side of eternity. We know so little with absolute certainty, but God knows it all, and we have the assurance that we shall know hereafter.

Some facts we do know: We know that the deceased was not in good health. For some time his physical condition has been far below normal. He sought relief by consulting various physicians and applying the remedies

suggested. He hoped by the change of climate to recuperate, but it was of no avail. His condition worried him and it became apparent to those about him that he was breaking down mentally. His mental and physical condition preyed on his mind and in all probability caused him to commit this rash act.

Part Four

40. Life Here And Hereafter By Rev. Wm. Brenner

“...What I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” – Philippians 1:22-24.

Occasion: For a Christian

PRAYER: Lord God, who hearest prayer, and fulfilllest the desire of them that fear thee: let thy mercy be upon us as our trust is in thee. "We seek thy favor, we implore thy help and blessing.

Especially do we entreat thee to bless and comfort those that mourn, all who are oppressed and heavy-laden, every anxious and troubled soul. What seems evil to these bereaved and sorrowing ones, overrule thou, we pray thee, for good. In their affliction may they turn to thee for succor; in faith and prayer approach thy throne of grace that “they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” In the midst of our many trials and temptations may we never lose our faith and trust in thee, but ever hold fast the blessed assurance which thy Word gives to all believers.

Gracious Savior, be thou with us. Let thy mercy richly flow; give thy Spirit, blessed Jesus, light and life on us bestow.

Unworthy as we are, we come to thee, most merciful Father, for the forgiveness of our sins, and whatsoever we have need of in our pilgrimage through this world of sorrow and strife, of doubt and trouble. Have mercy upon us for Christ’s sake. Cheer us in our weariness. Support us in our weakness. Guide us in all our ways.

Be with us now, and evermore, and grant us thy peace, Lord.

“Dear Saviour of all below,
Comfort us in every woe;
Hear, O hear us, Blessed Jesus.” Amen.

DEAR FRIENDS AND BRETHREN IN CHRIST, ESPECIALLY MOURNING ATTENDANTS:

In the words of our text St. Paul speaks of “Life here and Hereafter,” and that which lies between the two and is the cause of our separation from the one and connection with the other.

“When a man’s earthly course is finished, his physical existence terminated and this world has vanished forever from his vision, we say that he is dead. Death may overtake us any time. Life, exceedingly valuable and precious to him who uses it aright, is, nevertheless, short and uncertain. The Scriptures themselves speak of it as but “a vapor that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away.” “We know not what a single day may bring forth.” “In the midst of life, we are in death.” “We all do fade as a leaf and are carried away as with a flood.” “Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” “Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth.” Does not death often come “as a thief in the night,” when we least expect him? Even of those who live the longest, the words of Job are true, “When a few more years are come, then shall I go the way whence I shall not return” (Job 16:22), and of the Psalmist: “We spend our years as a tale that is told” (Ps. 90:9). And since according to God’s Word and our own experience, these things are indisputably true, will we not be wise if we make the words of the Psalmist our devout and constant meditation: “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (Ps. 39:4)?

King Phillip of Macedon had a servant whose duty it was to wake the king each morning by saying, “Phillip, remember thou art mortal.” Surely we need no such reminders, for the evidences of our mortality are everywhere. More people are beneath the ground than above it. The cemeteries are fast receiving the teeming populations of our cities, towns, villages, and country places. Well may it be said:

“Death floats upon every passing breeze,
And lurks in every flower;
Each season has its own disease.
Its perils every hour.”

Whether with Paul we have a “desire to depart” or not, whether we can contemplate the close of our earthly history with the calmness and holy joy which marked the termination of the temporal career of the great Apostle, or are filled with trepidation and alarm as we think of our approaching end; depart we must. It is the inevitable. “The wages of sin is death.”

“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”

“What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?” “It is appointed unto all men once to die and after death the judgment.”

There is no land without its graves, no city without its funeral processions, no home, however favored, where crepe will not sooner or later be seen on the door, and cries heard for the “touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still.”

“There is no flock, however watched and tended, But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoever defended,
But has one vacant chair.”

Death is a mighty conqueror; all must bow before him; all are under his dominion. He holds universal sway. He makes no distinction between the rich and the poor, the great and the small, the young and the old, the learned and the unlettered. The millionaire banker as well as the meanest beggar must answer his summons.

Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments. Whatever the privileges of the rich, however great the influence of wealth may be in this world, money cannot buy exemption from death. “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Pet. 1:24). “We spend our years as a tale that is told... for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Ps. 90:9, 10). When we begin to live, we also begin to die. Our life is a march to the tomb, and how varied and unsearchably mysterious our

experiences between the cradle and the grave – what toils and cares, pains and pleasures, hopes and disappointments, successes and failures, sorrows and joys are crowded into life’s little span!

"Bits of gladness and of sorrow
Strangely crossed and interlaid,
Bits of cloudbelt and of rainbow.
In deep alternate braid.
Bits of storm when winds are warring
Bits of calm when blasts are stayed,
Bits of silence and of uproar.
Bits of sunlight and of shade.

"Now the garland, now the coffin,
Now the wedding, now the tomb,
Now the festal shouts of thousands,
Now the churchyard’s lonely gloom,
Now the song above the living,
Now the chant above the dead,
The full smile of infant beauty,
Age’s wan and furrowed head.

"Bits of brightening and of darkening,
Bits of weariness and of rest,
All the hoping and despairing
Of the full or hollowed breast;
Bits of slumbering and of wakening,
Heavy tossing to and fro,
Shreds of living and of dying,
Beings daily ebb and flow.

“With these is life begun and closed,
Its strange mosaic thus composed;
Such are our annals upon earth.
Our tale from very hour of birth.”

Our text also speaks of our “Immortality.” St. Paul says he had a desire to “depart,” i.e., of going from one place to another, from this world to the next. He was not thinking of traveling from one point to another on this earth, but of returning, or going back to mother earth – “earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes.” But his life would still go on. His existence would be continued. The words of the Apostle are: Having a desire to depart and “To Be.” The language used is simple. The conviction expressed most

positive. Paul did not merely “hope” for immortality, but he was “persuaded” and “knew, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1).

He was assured that death is not the end; but only an incident in our history, a translation, but not an obliteration or extinction of our being. Whatever others might think, there was no room for doubt or questionings in the mind of St. Paul as to the blessed destiny which awaited him. Others may speak of death as “a leap in the dark,” for the author of the 15th chapter of First Corinthians it was a flight into the light. Others may conceive of it as “going into the great perhaps,” but for the writer of the “Epistle to Timothy” nothing was more certain than that “Christ hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (1 Tim. 1:10), and that if the wages of sin is death, the gift of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:23).

“Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel: wherein I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he will also deny us” (2 Tim. 2:7-12). “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:16-18). “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:20-22).

“Jesus, thou Prince of Life,
Thy chosen cannot die;
They conquer in the strife,
To reign with thee on high.”

"Jesus lives: No longer now
Can thy terrors, Death, appall me;
Jesus lives: By this I know
From the grave he will recall me.
Brighter scenes will then commence;
This shall be my confidence.

"Jesus lives: To him the Throne
High o'er earth and heaven is given:
I shall go where he is gone,
Live and reign with him in heaven.
God is pledged; weak doubtings, hence;
This shall be my confidence.

"Jesus lives: I know full well
Naught me from his love shall sever;
Life, nor death, nor powers of hell,
Part me now from Christ for ever;
Freely God doth grace dispense,
This shall be my confidence."

Further, our text speaks of our chief felicity hereafter. Paul's desire was to depart and be "WITH CHRIST."

Could we desire anything higher or better? "Father, I will," was the prayer of Jesus, "that they whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Companionship with the risen, ascended, and glorified Redeemer – this is the greatest good, the sublimest happiness, which the believing soul can cherish or hope to receive. Where Christ is there is everything that is best. "In his presence is fullness of joy, at his right hand are pleasures forevermore." True, Christ is with his people here and now in Word and Sacrament. He comes to us; but it is largely a veiled and mysterious, a real but unseen presence which he vouchsafes in and through his appointed Ordinances. Hereafter we shall walk not by faith, but by sight and behold the King in his beauty, and rejoice continually before him. Then "we shall see him as he is" and be conformed to his likeness." How glorious is that kingdom wherein all the saints do rejoice with Christ. They are clothed with white raiment, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Beautiful is the Celestial City, blessed its inhabitants, beyond all human conception, according to the inspired record, for "God is in it and the Lamb," and "they shall see his face," and "they shall serve him day and night," both great and small. "And they are without

fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:5). “And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Rev. 15:3). “Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, *and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant*, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24). “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18). “In his Father’s house are many mansions. If it were not so, he would have told us so. He has gone to prepare a place for us, and he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is there we may be also.”

“When death these mortal eyes shall seal,
And still this throbbing heart,
The rending veil shall Thee reveal,
All glorious as Thou art.”

Finally our text speaks of the IMMEDIATENESS of our heavenly felicity, after death.

The Apostle briefly describes the momentous crisis which every one of us must sooner or later encounter, and the consequences of our departure, or the state and condition in which believers will exist after death; but he gives no intimation in his description of Immortality of a so-called “intermediate state” – a doctrine which has deceived many souls. Paul’s expectation is to depart and then at once to be with Christ. His language will admit of no other interpretation. The Bible speaks plainly about two places beyond the grave, but it says nothing about a third place, nothing about a midway station or a purgatory. Paul speaks of those Christians, or believers in Christ who are “absent from the body, as present with the Lord.” “Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” were the words of Jesus to the dying thief, and such is the glorious privilege awaiting every saint that passes down into the valley of the shadow of death.

Without Scriptural authority also is the theory promulgated in certain Protestant quarters about temporary resting-place, an imperfect abode somewhere, for the righteous, where they wait for their Lord, an ante-room

or vestibule of heaven. The Word of God is silent on this point; and all discussion regarding matters not plainly revealed in Holy Scripture only tends to create and promote confusion and disorder, strife and schism, and should, therefore, be avoided. Learned men are often given to vain speculations. False and foolish are many of the ideas and opinions entertained by so-called “modern,” “advanced,” and “scientific theologians,” “who concerning the Truth have erred, and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:18). “There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, teaching things which they ought not,” says Paul to Titus, “but speak thou the things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 1:10; 2:1). “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” Dying in the Lord, we possess at once and for ever an “inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us” (I Pet. 1:4). “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” “This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” “He that heareth my words,” says Christ, “and believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Believers in Christ are saved, unbelievers are lost. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). “Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25:13).

"Who, O Lord, when life is o'er,
Shall to heaven's blest mansions soar?
Who, an ever welcome guest,
In thy holy place shall rest?"

"He who trusts in Christ alone,
Not in aught himself has done;
He, great God, shall be thy care,
And thy choicest blessings share."

“An exceeding and eternal weight of glory” – we cannot comprehend what these words mean, but we comfort ourselves with them. “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” – as Luther says: “It passeth man’s capacity. To understand and explain – the excellency of this is impossible to human reason.”

“There the saints shall keep eternal Holy Day, ever joyful, secure, and free from all suffering, ever satisfied in God.” “My Lord has said that he will raise me up again at the last day. A mighty trumpet-peal will awaken and renew us all. Praise God who has taught us not to dread, but to sigh and long for that day, and with St. Paul earnestly to desire to depart and be with Christ. His is no empty and idle kingdom. There is joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Word of God abideth for ever.” Christ says: “WHERE I AM, THERE ALSO SHALL MY SERVANT BE.” I will comfort myself with this word: “I live, and ye shall live also.” If Cicero could nobly console himself and take courage against death, how much more should we Christians, who have a Lord, who is the Destroyer of death, who has vanquished him, “Christ, the Son of God, who is the Resurrection and the Life.”

“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” “Wherefore sorrow not as others which have no hope.”

Let us remember that we are mortal; that it is appointed unto us also to die. Prepare to meet thy God. “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.” Isaac Watts, the great hymn-writer, said: “Thank God, I can lie down at night with no concern whether I awake in this world or the next.” Can you, dear friend? Can you say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”? Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Confident that “Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification,” have we made him our Refuge and Hope. Happy they who can say with the Apostle: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying” (Titus 3:4, 7, 8).

Live for eternity. Set your affections on things above.

Haller was a great German naturalist, who made physiology a science. He was professor at Goettingen, but his reputation and activity were world-wide. The universities of Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Paris, Florence, Bologna, Padua, accounted it an honor to reckon him among their members; and not merely German princes, but the Emperor Joseph the Second eagerly sought his friendship. After his death a private diary was found, which shows how on every day in this busiest of lives, so constantly devoted to the investigation of scientific questions, time was

taken for communion with the Unseen, and for meditation on the Future. "Enable me to think," these are his words, "in this still hour, on eternity, and prize at their true worth the poor joys of this fleeting life." "May I not only know, but feel, that if I have no peace with thee, my God, I have nothing, and that the most enjoyable of such lives is but a sad dream, which eternity will end."

Dear Friends: May the Lord comfort you in your bereavement. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will turn thy mourning into joy" (Is. 54:11). "Though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer" (Is. 54:10, 17).

"Thou, who alone canst heal the broken-hearted,
O Jesus, Saviour, hear.
For those whose joy of life seems all departed,
Whose path lies bleak and drear.

"He, whom she loved so well thy hand hath taken;
Make her submissive, Lord,
Her soul to faith and trust in thee awaken,
Do thou relief afford.

"O God, be with her in her lonely dwelling,
Reveal how near thou art;
Sweeten her solitude, and, grief dispelling,
Revive her drooping heart.

"At length make clearly known thy gracious leading,
In all the ways we've trod;
We know, dear Saviour, thou art interceding,
For ev'ry child of God.

"Plead then for us, thou dost not love to chasten,
But thou art wise as kind;
O let each sorrow bid us onward hasten,
With patient, earnest mind.

"Lord, our lives we give to thy tender keeping,
Let not our footsteps roam;
And stay the torrent of our bitter weeping,
With foretastes of our Home.

"There where no change, nor death can make us sever,
May we our dear ones meet;
To own thee, Jesus, as our King for ever,
And worship at thy feet."

Prayer: Thy thoughts, God, are unsearchable and thy ways past finding out. Grant us, we beseech thee, in all our trials and adversities, patient endurance, and humble submission to thy Holy Will. Overrule every affliction to thy Glory, and our good. Bestow thy saving grace upon every needy soul. Comfort every sorrowing, suffering spirit that calls upon thy name. Make us penitent for all our sins, pardon every transgression, and lead us into the Way of everlasting life. Let thy mercy, Lord, be upon us, as our trust is in thee.

Grant us thy peace. Lord, through our daily life,
Our balm in sorrow, and our stay in strife;
And when thy voice shall bid our conflict cease.
Call us, O Lord, to thine eternal peace. Amen.

41. I Know That My Redeemer Liveth By Rev. Walter E. Tressel, A. M.

“...I know that my Redeemer liveth . . .” – Job 19:25.

Occasion: For a man of exceptional gifts, highly educated, beset by doubts, suffering at times from serious losses, but regaining the simple faith of his childhood and dying in the Christian hope

A FEW STROKES OF THE PEN suffice the author of this unrivaled book to picture vividly the happy life of Job and his children. Job is represented as a blameless, upright man. He has become a man of wealth, of dignity, of influence. His children visit each other and spend many days in family fellowship and feasting. Fearing that his sons may have sinned and bidden God farewell, this great man offers burnt offerings according to the number of them all.

Suddenly wealth and substance are consumed, servants are slain, the children are destroyed, Job himself is sorely smitten.

“Blessed be the name of the Lord,” we hear him say. “Renounce God, and die,” advises his wife. But he charges her with speaking as one of the foolish and impious women.

Job’s three friends come to bemoan with him and to comfort him, but their words lead the severely tried man to exclaim: “Miserable comforters are ye all.” Broken in body, spirit and fortune. Job presents a pathetic figure. Fear and doubt assail him. Unbelief and despair threaten to engulf him. There is “the light of conflagrations,” one hears, “the sound of falling cities,” “birds of darkness are on the wing, specters uproar, the dead walk, the living dream.”

Job is being tested. Is there no help for him? Is God hiding himself from his servant? Is his mercy entirely removed forever? How nobly the man of patience endures the test! Earnestly does he argue with his friends. Most earnestly does he expostulate with God. At length he bursts through the barriers, and reaching a high-point in spiritual experience, gives utterance to his joyous, comfort-bringing conviction in one of the most exalted declarations that ever fell from human lips.

I Know That My Redeemer Liveth

This bold sentence expresses A HOLY CONVICTION AND CERTAINTY. These are not the words of unbelief.

After strong trial of affliction, some are tempted to denial of God. “There is no God,” they say. What an unholy conviction, if in their hearts they really cherish such a thought! Others admit that there is a God, but charge him with cruelty and injustice. Again, what an unholy conviction! What a comfortless assertion! Then there is the company of the doubting, the uncertain. They hardly know what to think. But they incline to unbelief rather than to the sweet assurance of faith.

Job speaks with holy conviction: “I know.” What refreshing words! He has fought against and vanquished the demon of infidelity. He has laid the specter of doubt. He has come out of the dark night of uncertainty into the bright and beautiful day of certain knowledge. Despite his sad plight, he rests happy in the words: “I know.”

The certainty which characterizes Job’s words is all the stronger because of the trials endured. Man does not develop, in days of comparative ease, as he does in days of tribulation.

“The days that try men’s souls” are the days that make men strong – if they know how to use their opportunities. As the muscles of the body are toughened by severe exercise, so does the discipline of the soul passing through the fiery trial make for spiritual strength.

Job’s knowledge relates to a glorious fact: “My Redeemer liveth.” The word Redeemer calls to mind the ancient institution of the Goel – the next of kin, the avenger. A man oppressed with poverty, a home invaded by the ruthless murderer might look to the next of kin for help. Job declares his confidence in an avenger who will rise to defend him. He will be taken care of. His wrongs will be righted. His own lips fail him: the lips of another will

eloquently and effectually plead his cause. Job's hands hang helpless: another's hands are stretched to help. A mighty Goel, avenger, is quickly coming to the rescue!

Job was probably not conscious of the deep and wonderful meaning of the sentence he uttered, and perhaps did not realize that he was putting into the lips of men of all times one of the mighty words of the ages. He was not fully conscious of the Redeemer's person and work. Yet, despite his limitations, he knew one thing clearly – his next of kin, his avenger, lived and would save. To this truth he clung with a faith which could not be shaken. He knew that there was a Goel, or Redeemer, and he rested in the knowledge that this Redeemer was a friend and Saviour.

If Job, in those far-off, misty centuries, cherished, by the grace of God, such a faith, what excuse is there for us to whom such fullness of knowledge has been given? Christ, our Vindicator and Avenger, has come. Satan, sin, and death have done their utmost to ruin us. We are by nature spiritually poverty-stricken. The passing years have materially added to our debt and the perplexities which of necessity ensue. But our desperate case has been taken in hand by a great challenger. Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer, the God-man, who has fulfilled all righteousness, who has made perfect blood-atonement, who has risen from the dead and now, in heaven, pleads our cause is the great Goel.

He has dispersed our foes. He has spoken into our darkness. He has brought us to faith. We live because he lives. Our cause is won.

Often did the confident and triumphant words of Job come to the lips of our deceased brother. Familiar, through wide reading and prolonged study, with the many modern attempts to discredit the Gospel, to rob Christ of his majesty, to destroy Christ's work – even, at times, bewildered, and surrendering to questionings and doubts – our brother nevertheless found no peace or happiness in these liberal tendencies and movements. Though driven, for a while, to a quasi-assent to philosophies, falsely so-called, these never became dear to his heart, and he fought desperately against them even as a drowning man fights for his life. He discovered that many of the theories, which had captivated his mind, were speculations, unsupported by proof. His associates were brilliant men, bold thinkers, but only too often led away by pseudo-science. In their companionship, their intellectual conversation, their scholarly attainments, their culture and refinement, he found some measure of satisfaction. Notwithstanding the charm and glamor

thus thrown around him, he often felt homesick. He longed for something different, something better, something to satisfy head and heart. Scholarship, culture, fame, were poor substitutes for the living God. Happily even in the darkest day he had not wholly cast aside the Book his mother had taught him to prize. Tender memories of an old-fashioned home, of old-fashioned parents and piety, could not lightly be forgotten. There were moments when he turned to the Sacred Book. The Spirit of God once again had an opportunity to work in his heart. The operations of divine grace were not in vain. Our talented friend came upon a day when besetting fears and doubts vanished, when humble faith in the Savior once again had a place in his heart. It was a precious day when our brother could say: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

"I know that my Redeemer lives: What comfort this sweet sentence gives!"

Job might not know how his deliverance would be effected, but he was certain that he had a mighty friend and deliverer whose salvation would appear in due time. In this conviction he had rest and peace. He had no need to worry. He was comforted. Poverty, loss of loved ones, physical loathsomeness, could not shake his faith in the unseen Redeemer. He felt that his cause was in good hands.

The friend whose mortal remains we lay in the grave today was continually comforted by the sweet sentence I have chosen for my text. This was to him no mere religious commonplace – a thing to be said formally and mechanically. He had proved it to be a living word. It expressed his inmost faith. He had lived through bitter experiences, but had finally come to peace in God. He repeated this passage over and over again. He constantly revolved it in his mind. He delighted in looking at it from every angle, always seeking to discover in it new bounties, even as the facets of the diamond exposed at different angles reveal unexpected beauties. With this word on his lips our brother died.

My mourning friends: What rich comfort the text brings you. You, his wife, understood, as did no other human being, his soul struggles. You sympathized with him. With earnest prayers, with your unfaltering faith, with your never-ceasing hope, with your devout use of the Scriptures, you were a real helper. How precious to your soul ought this text to be! It has for you such blessed and tender associations. Day by day, you will ponder it

and draw strength out of it. In the dark hour through which you are now passing think of your Goel, your Redeemer, who lives as your Savior, reigns as your King, and as your Advocate pleads your cause in heaven. Let this word be a bond of fellowship between you and your Redeemer, and through faith in the living Redeemer may you be united in spiritual fellowship with your loved one.

Young people are hero-worshippers. They admire the powerful, the learned, the successful. You sons and daughters had a hero right in your own family. Your father had rich and varied knowledge; he earnestly and persistently sought the truth. He was a good father to you. He watched over you and cared for you. He sought to protect you from every evil. He endeavored to promote your advancement in every direction – physical, mental, moral, and spiritual. And he was your companion. He loved to be with you, and never were you happier than when in the company of your parents. Never will you hear this text without being reminded of your father's thoughtfulness and tenderness, and especially of his triumphant faith. Oh, I beseech you, let the same faith dwell in you which dwelt in your father's heart. Then, too, will a fond mother ever have reason to rejoice in her children.

May I say just a word to you who, professionally and socially, were associated with the deceased? You respected and admired your friend. He was a congenial companion. To all of you, I have reason to believe, he testified of his joy in Christ. Men engaged as you are, need hardly be reminded of the danger to which you are daily exposed. Ambition, pride, success have slain their tens of thousands. You too need a Savior. Learning, success, and the like will not save you. I sincerely hope that all of you can say: "I know that my Redeemer lives." Or, if any of you must say in the plaintive words of the poet,

"The night is dark. And I am far from home,"

may you not be content to remain where you are, but seek and find the truth as it is in Jesus, the truth which Job found and confessed.

You have heard and been thrilled by the soprano aria, "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth," from the "Messiah" of Handel. The composer seems to have caught something of the great confidence which inspired Job. "I know." The words are repeated. Then with what elevation but withal the

beautiful composure and strength of one certain of his faith rings out the message which, whether in spoken word or in enrapturing song, has both comforted and stirred the hearts of myriads of the brokenhearted. May you and I be enabled, by the Spirit of God, to say and sing:

"I know that my Redeemer lives:
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead,
He lives, my ever-living Head.

"He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same;
the sweet joy this sentence gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!"

Amen.

42. Behold, The Bridegroom Cometh! By Rev. W. Hoppe, D. D.

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” – Matt. 25:10.

Occasion: For a Devout Church Member

UNDER VARIOUS FIGURES our Lord Jesus Christ tries to call attention to the nearness of his coming. The more insistent he is in the message the more careless men seem to become. Yet there is no subject about which men ask questions as much as about the end of the world and about the judgment. They would know the exact hour of this occurrence. They desire to know the character of this judgment. This is neither idle curiosity nor yet a purpose to heed Jesus' call to repentance and a new life in him. In his self-reliance man feels that he is able to cope with the situation on his own terms and with his own capabilities. It has become customary for men today to speak of themselves and of others, especially of those who have died, in the most commendatory manner. A man-made moral standard is all-sufficient. Faith and dependence upon Jesus Christ for salvation have been discarded as useless and unnecessary adjuncts. The power of the Holy Spirit has become void, for the judgment will be according to man's righteousness and his conception of the good. The parable from which our text is taken would show us the falsity of all this. The teaching of Christ and his Apostles is very clear on this subject.

To the man who depends on his own morality, it may be discomfiting to know that a righteous and just Judge shall sit in judgment at the last day. To the Christian this is the source of the greatest assurance and confidence. The most consoling article of faith is the confession which a Christian makes of

Christ – “I believe that thou shalt come to be my Judge.” Nor does he think of this Judge as of an austere and cruel man seeking to bring destruction and condemnation on his creatures, but rather as of the Bridegroom who comes to take home with him the bride of his choice and purchase. Whether it be the end of an individual life or the end of the world, to the Christian it is the cry which is heard at midnight –

“Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh!”

I. There Is No More Glorious Prospect Than This.

To the question, “Shall I be saved?” the answer comes concerning his coming. Our desire is to penetrate into the unknown of eternity and learn to know what God has hidden from our view. But it is not necessary for us to know more than that the Day of the Lord is at hand. Life in all its various activities and experiences has been a succession of limitations and disappointments. We expected so much. There were such brilliant prospects before us. Our parents had such high hopes of what we should accomplish in the world. Whether the young die in their youth or whether the old totter to the grave in their old age, life has been mostly a shut door. All the expectations, prospects, hopes have practically failed of realization. Yet men hope on for the vain things which cannot endure beyond this fleeting and passing life. The fact that they have not attained hitherto does not deter them from hoping and striving after the same things in the future.

Even the possession of these earthly goods and pleasures does not afford lasting satisfaction. The acquiring of some makes men hunger for more. The more they get the more they desire. So the very process of getting these possessions causes pain and anxiety. The foolishness of all this becomes apparent when another prospect is open to us which does not deceive. While men are striving after things they can never really call their own, God has prepared for them and offers to them that which endures. He has created them so as to enable them to look upwards. Yet their eyes are riveted to the ground. Although he has made them in his own image, sin has so distorted it as to make it unrecognizable. More than that it has so changed his whole nature as to make him spurn and despise what God

would give him for good and deliberately chooses that which is for his own hurt.

However discouraging this may be, it does not alter God's proffer. The glorious prospect of sin forgiven, of the life of the new creature in Christ Jesus and of the life in his presence, forever remains. The Bridegroom comes and his own await his coming with longing and ever watch thereunto by prayer and supplications. To a great extent we have lost every sense of the Lord's presence and of his coming again soon. But amid all the turmoils and cares of this present life there remains this assurance that Jesus Christ is coming. The old things shall then have passed away. This it is that makes life worth the living. The bride shall not be left desolate, her Bridegroom cometh to her. In these days of waiting the bride is filled with the most joyous anticipation of the things that shall be hers in that life with her Bridegroom. She has been promised much and she knows that in that day when all things shall be revealed she shall receive beyond her highest expectations, for she shall be with her Lord and shall see him whom she loves.

II. Anxious Fears

Amid these glorious prospects ANXIOUS FEARS crowd in. The cause of these fears is sin and, therefore, they continue to harass the soul so persistently. When Satan finds that he cannot assail our assurance of salvation he begets the fear of this life. How men worry about the competence of this world! We have enough for today, but we fear that which the morrow may hold in store. This fear is not necessarily, although generally, one of what we shall eat and what we shall drink and wherewithal we shall be clothed. We exercise ourselves mostly with this thought and spend our days in figuring on the problem of dollars and cents. The life of the majority of human beings is occupied with concern about today and tomorrow, with the animal side of our nature. To this must be added the fear concerning health, station in life, honor among men with all their attendant train of thoughts and anxieties. The future is so dark and as years go on the feeling of helplessness takes possession of men's hearts and they tremble at the prospect.

After the conscience has been aroused a new fear enters the heart. It is the fear of sin. The remembrance of the past life with its transgressions and iniquities awakens misgivings about the future. With the pardon, the proneness to sin has not been removed. The old Adam remains. A new battle must be waged each day. That of yesterday gives no assurance of victory tomorrow. The new relationship of sons requires a new obedience, yet the old tendency to sin binds with rigid fetters and seems to preclude any possibility of final victory. St. Paul experienced this and is forced to exclaim: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

This fear begets another fear. With anxiety the question comes again arid again: Shall I be saved? "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" Can a sinner so vile ever stand in God's holy presence? There is no weapon which the devil wields with such skill and evident delight as this. When the Christian looks to himself he finds nothing but sin and death, but when he turns his eyes Christward and trusts, new light and new hope come to him. Nothing can please the devil more than that we rely on our own works and righteousness and then fail in the final test. What if sore trials come! What if our life here be marked by failure in whatever we have undertaken! What if in our weakness we have not always obeyed! What if the world condemn us! "Let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." In the face of such promises the poor human heart has no just right to be anxiously afraid. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is on this account that the Apostle can write: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Lack of confidence in Jesus Christ as a personal Savior produces a fear of death. There is nothing in human life so pitiable as this fear. The bride is

not afraid of the hour when her Bridegroom is to appear. Her heart rejoices in contemplation of the happy moment. Her only anxiety is that she may not be ready nor yet meet for him when he comes. Her dread is not occasioned by her leaving her home and going to live with him. Yet that is the fear so many Christians have. They dread to leave this house of clay and fear for those things which may be hereafter in eternity.

“Who would burdens bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?”

To the Christian it is not an “undiscover'd country.” It is the Father's house, the heavenly home. It is the place where Christ Jesus has gone and to it his soul desires to go.

III. Bitter Reproaches

But this cannot take away the BITTER REPROACHES which his disloyalty and indifference to his Lord produce. Only too often these come too late. Life is spent for the world and the things this world stands for and at the last moment as death approaches the desire comes to set at rights the things which have been neglected for so long. Then the pastor, the ambassador for Christ, is called in to pray for the soul's eternal welfare and to give assurance that all is well. Too often he is convinced that the door is already shut. It is the case of the foolish of this world who depend so fully upon themselves and their own work and merit as to have forgotten the oil for their lamps. The closed door shuts out all possibility of entrance. No reliance on human aid, nor indeed any help given us by our fellow-man will avail to unbar that door. A life that is given to self, to the world and to sin will not be found in Christ, and only they who are in Christ have hope of entering with him before the door is shut. No man shall stand in the perfection of another human being. In fact no man can do more than is needed for his own salvation, yea, he can add nothing to that salvation by

all the good works which he may do. No pope, nor council, nor priest can sell supererogated works of Christ or the saints. " Could there be a prophetic irony in the advice of the wise virgins to the foolish, 'Go ye to them that sell'? The irony is terrible when taken in connection with the sequel, that when they returned with the oil so procured it availed them nothing."

These bitter reproaches assail the righteous as well as the wicked. The parable tells us that they all slept. Even the wise virgins could not watch as their Lord had commanded them to do. But their sleep was not that of security. The foolish virgins had waited with preparing to meet the Bridegroom until they heard the cry of his coming. Then they were not ready for his coming. It is the experience of so many today. They are constantly putting off to some more convenient time that which the Lord has commanded them to do NOW. However uncertain the time of his coming may be, the event itself is absolutely sure. Amid all the vicissitudes of this life this one thing alone is positive and unchangeable: "The Bridegroom cometh."

IV. Solemn Lessons

What SOLEMN LESSONS these bitter reproaches teach us! "Teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Whatever of failure the past days of our life may have recorded; today, tomorrow should open a new page wherein is written in large letters: "The Lord he is God. Him will I serve." Unless the reproaches shall continue in their bitterness we must not only acknowledge with sincere sorrow and repentance these our manifold transgressions, but must fervently desire the blessedness of those whose sins are forgiven and whose transgressions are covered and long for those consolations which are promised unto them that mourn. Then will we further confess and pray: "It is our solemn purpose to amend our sinful lives, and to live more godly, righteously and soberly than we have hitherto done." We beseech thee, Lord, to enable us, through the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to carry this resolution into effect." Our sins, our transgressions, every evil inclination of our heart, every willing to do

the wrong should be a powerful incentive in our lives to eschew evil and do good; to seek peace and ensue it.

But this is no time for earthly sorrow. The world may mourn without hope, but the child of God has a lively hope. The anxious fears and bitter reproaches have not been able to take away the glorious prospects. Therefore he looks into the future with JOYOUS HOPE. The promises of God do not lie in the far distant future. They are a very present possession of his children. They know that their sins are forgiven. The earnest of this is given them in the one and only sacrifice which avails for sin, the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. They need not hope, that at some time in eternity, after they have paid a penalty in purgatory, will they receive assurance that their sins are blotted out. Now that Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again, they know that the last penalty of their guilt has been paid. Their sins are forgiven as abundantly and completely as Jesus Christ hath merited by his sufferings and death, and commanded to be preached by the Gospel throughout the world. This is the source of joy and peace to the believing heart. There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

This surety of forgiveness of sins is the earnest of salvation in Christ, for where there is forgiveness of sins there life and salvation are also. As Christ has suffered, the Just for the unjust, he obtained salvation for us. "Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." As St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This salvation in Jesus Christ becomes an ever surer reality by a life hid with Christ in God.

But God has increased our joy and our hope by the promise of eternal life. Here again our thoughts are not directed to something that shall be after this life on earth. As we stand in the presence of the reaper, Death, our confidence is the surer. "And this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." In a certain sense eternal life is to come after we have finished our course here in this world, yet it is just as true that we have it now. It enhances our joy and strengthens our hope to be able to look beyond and to know that God has reserved unspeakable things for his children in heaven above with himself. Again we lay away the earthly form of a pilgrim and stranger in the full hope of the

resurrection to eternal life. Sorrow fills our heart at the separation from a friend. We shall miss the companionship and love, and our hearts are heavy. But we may not permit selfish thoughts to intervene between us and our God. Even in the hour of bereavement and sorrow we cannot but hear the midnight cry: "The Bridegroom cometh!"

In him is our joyous hope. At last the burdens of life are removed. Its sins and transgressions are ended. Blessed is he who has been found of the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. What a loving warning Jesus gives them that are his! Scarcely had the cry been heard at midnight when the Bridegroom came. Then there is no longer time for preparation. As soon as he comes, he will enter into the marriage-hall with them that are his and the door is shut. After this life comes the judgment of all men. For you and every one to whom death comes in the natural way it is the determining time. That is the midnight cry. After that there is no further time for preparation. Those who have not supplied themselves with oil will find the door shut. The Lord Jesus desires that all shall be ready when he comes.

How necessary then for us to watch and pray! The feast of the marriage of the King's Son to his chosen bride is at hand. It is no time for gloom and despair. As we draw nearer to that glorious event our hearts should be filled with joy, our mouth with laughter and our tongues with singing. "The Lord is at hand." It is the harvest time when men rejoice and are glad. Death cannot rob us of this our joy in Christ. His entrance into our family circle may disquiet for a moment, but in Christ is our joy, in Christ is our salvation. "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." No power of hell, no thralldom of death can overthrow our hope, our joyous hope. Christ, our door into the kingdom, will keep us against that day and grant us abundant entrance by an open door into eternal life. "God is pledged; weak doubtings hence! This shall be my confidence." Amen.

43. The Christian's Comfort In View Of Death By Prof. J. Stump, D. D.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” – Psalm 23:4.

Occasion: For a Christian

THE PSALM of which these words form a part is one of the most beautiful and familiar of all the psalms. It is a psalm learned in the days of early childhood, and cherished in after years as a precious possession. It expresses the believer's confidence in God's loving care and protection amid all the varying circumstances of life. In joy and in sorrow, in mirth or in grief, the believer is able to say, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” And today in the midst of the deep shadows of affliction the psalm comes to us with a consoling message.

The imagery of the psalm is drawn from the early scenes of David's life. He had been a shepherd, and he knew by experience the tender feeling which a true shepherd has for his sheep. He calls God his shepherd. And in so doing he voices his confidence in God's care and protection. In the midst of danger and death he is safe. No harm shall befall him. “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” he says, “I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”

Let us, on the basis of our text, consider

The Christian's Confidence in View of Death,

noting,

- I The Solemn Event to Which the Psalmist Looks Forward.
- II The Comforting Language in Which He Describes It.
- III The Confidence with Which He Views Its Coming.

I. The Solemn Event, to Which the Psalmist Looks Forward.

We must all descend into the valley. The psalmist realized this solemn truth. The time will come when he must walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And as the psalmist realized it, so every believer realizes it. He knows that he must die. He looks forward to death. He knows that however much death may delay, there is no escape from it at last. For “as for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.” “It is appointed unto men once to die.” And “there is no discharge in that war.” “No man hath power over the Spirit to retain the spirit.” “They that trust in their wealth and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him that he should still live.” At best “the days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away.”

The Christian knows that Christ has redeemed him from eternal death; but he knows just as surely that there is no escape for him from the temporal death. He must die, in order that his body may rise again a new body, transformed and glorified and fitted to be the eternal abode of the glorified soul.

We must all descend into the valley. We descend by various paths, some by one disease and some by another, some by lingering sickness, and others by sudden accident. We descend at various ages, some in early infancy, some in youth, some in the maturity of manhood or womanhood, and some in old age. The path and the time are determined by the Shepherd. He leadeth us. Our times are in his hands. He has numbered even the hairs of our head. The time when he will lead us into the valley may be much nearer than we think. Who can tell what even a day may bring forth? Two weeks ago none of us imagined that we would assemble here today around the

casket of our departed brother. Today we are well: tomorrow we may be dead. Who knows how near his end may be? How many persons are today planning for long years in the future! But will they live to carry out their plans? God alone knows.

IT IS A SOLEMN PROSPECT. It means a saying farewell to earth and our dear ones. It means a closing of our eyes forever on the scenes of this world. It means a going away never to return. It means the laying down of our life work. We shall not return to complete what we may have left unfinished. We shall not come back to perform what we may have omitted or neglected. We shall never be seen again in our homes and places of employment. The places that knew us shall know us no more. As we contemplate this prospect, what an incentive it forms for us to do what our hands find to do while it is day, before the night cometh when no man can work.

It means a going forth alone. On other journeys our friends and relatives may accompany us. Their companionship may cheer and encourage us. But when we descend into the valley we go alone. Friends may be faithful and true; and our dear ones may love us with a love that is deep and tender. But they cannot go with us beyond the grave.

It means a going forth to our eternal destiny. When death comes the period of probation is over. The time allotted to us for hearing and obeying the Gospel is past. The time for eternal rewards or retribution is at hand. The descent into the valley is the transition to eternal joy or woe. With it our destiny is determined forever. We go to hear Christ say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," or to hear him say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Surely death is a solemn and momentous event. All the changes in this earthly life are insignificant by comparison with the change which we call death.

II. The Comforting Language in Which the Psalmist Describes Death.

He does not say "the valley of death," but the "valley of the shadow of death." For the believer there is no death; there is only the shadow of death. Since Jesus has died and risen again, death is robbed of its sting and the grave of its victory. What we call death is only the entrance upon a new and

glorious life above. Trusting in Jesus the believer is able to say, "I would not live away; no, welcome the tomb! Since Jesus has lain there, I dread not its gloom." Through the death and resurrection of Jesus death has become for the Christian the portal to eternal bliss. It is only a sleep with a blessed awakening. It is a falling asleep amid the toil and turmoil of earth to awake amid the rest and peace of heaven. Death is only a shadow of what it would have been without Christ, and of what it is for those who are living without Christ in the world.

What a comfort this is to the dying Christian! It is not death that comes upon him, but only the shadow of death. It is only a change for the better: a laying aside of mortality to put on immortality. For when the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised incorruptible; the soul shall be reunited with the glorified body; and transformed in body and soul the believer shall enter in and dwell with Christ forever.

And what a comfort this is to the bereaved! They see their dear one passing away. But they know that he is only falling asleep in the Lord, and that this sleep is a blessed one. The waking shall be in eternal joy. For St. Paul tells us, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

III. The Confidence with Which the Psalmist Views the Coming of Death.

He says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." And why? Because "thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." In the darkest and loneliest valley the sheep is safe, because the shepherd is with it, guarding it from danger and protecting it from harm. The Christian is safe in death, because God is with him and keeping him. He goes forth alone, and yet not alone; for the Good Shepherd

is with him to guard him with his rod and staff. The Good Shepherd who is with his sheep always certainly will not forsake him in the hour of his greatest need. He will uphold the believer, and will guide him in safety to his heavenly home. As the end approaches he says to the believer: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." If nature recoils at the thought of the dissolution of soul and body, the believer hears the tender voice of his Shepherd saying, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

Yea, the Christian must descend into the valley. But he fears not; for he knoweth Christ is with him and keeps him in safety. "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me," he says. The Shepherd leads his sheep through the dark valley; but he does so only in order that he may bring the sheep to his heavenly fold, to feed in green pastures, and to rest beside the still waters. For the relation between the Shepherd and his sheep is a deep, tender and abiding relation. Christ says, "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hands."

Let the blessed truths of our text comfort you, my sorrowing friends, in this hour of your bereavement. You know that he whom you mourn was a believer, and a sheep of Christ's flock. You were witnesses of his faith and Christian patience. He has gone into the valley; but it is only the valley of the shadow of death. And he has gone not alone, but accompanied and guarded by his Shepherd. The darkness of the valley was illumined for him by faith. Its terrors were removed by the comforting presence of the Shepherd with his rod and staff. And you have the blessed consolation that after his days of intense suffering he is now at rest – a rest not merely of the body, but the rest of the people of God, the rest of those who have fallen asleep in Christ.

God's ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts. We cannot understand the mystery of his dealings, nor explain why this heavy blow should have fallen upon you. But this we know, that God is love; and that in all his dealings with his children he is guided by love. All things, even bereavement and grief, shall work together for good to them that love

God. And we know that even as the Shepherd's rod and staff comfort the believer as he descends into the valley of the shadow of death, so they also comfort those of his flock who remain behind under the shadow of affliction and bereavement. He will not leave you comfortless, but will strengthen and uphold you. Do you but cling firmly to him as your Savior and trust in him as your loving Shepherd. Then you will be able to say even amid your tears, "He doeth all things well." And though now your eyes are holden and you cannot penetrate the mystery of his dealings with you, some day you shall know and understand that all has been done in love and wisdom. For "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as we also are known." Amen.

44. The Nation's Duty At Its Chieftain's Bier By Rev. W. N. Harley

“...Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's...” – Mark 12:17.

Preached on the Occasion of William McKinley's Death

IT SEEMED TO ME that no word of God that presented itself to memory for this sad occasion was quite so appropriate as these words of our Master: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,” for these words ask that we be loyal to that which is symbolized by the flag and to that which is symbolized by the cross. And now that the flag is draped in mourning for our departed President, it is altogether in keeping with our Saviour's command, as well as with our feelings of patriotism, that we render that tribute to his memory which his official position, his character and his services demand, for the Lord would have us honor in death the servant whom he asks us to obey in life. On the other hand, it is the duty of every citizen in this hour of national grief to bow the knee to God and raise the heart in prayer to him by whom the powers that be are ordained and from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, for he who tells us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, also tells us to render to God the things that are God's. Let us, therefore, consider

The Nation's Duty at Its Chieftain's Bier

According to these words of our Master it is:

- I To honor the ruler's memory; and
- II To render God the homage due his name.

I. To Honor The Ruler's Memory

Today as we are called upon to weave a chaplet of evergreen for the casket of our Chief Magistrate and look over his course of life, we find much that deserves kindly mention and much that serves as an example to the humblest toiler and the greatest statesman. When a man like this stands in Caesar's place we can afford to honor him. He was (1) our President, (2) a Christian ruler, (3) a man strong in his domestic affections, and (4) his course in life is a civic inspiration to the youth of the land.

1 Had he been no more than the President of our Republic, faithful in the discharge of his duty as God gave him to see it, we would this day honor his memory, for "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). Civil government is a human necessity and a divine appointment. Its office is to protect its citizens, to preserve peace and order, to execute justice, and, in short, to promote the common weal. That is the reason God has inaugurated Caesar and placed the sword in his hand (Rom. 13:4), and that is why he says, "Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17). Our departed President held this office, and held it with honor. Genuine was the love he bore for the old flag, that heaven-born emblem, with its red from heaven's morning glow, white from its fleecy chariots, and blue from its azure dome, pleading for love, purity and loyalty. In his conduct and bearing as a statesman there was much of the dignity of the old school, and in his campaigns he was not wont to stoop to the all-too-common level of defamation. As his mortal remains are being borne to the tomb, let these things be remembered to his honor as a statesman.

2 But he was something more than President – he was a Christian ruler. In times like these, and in a place like this, this feature dare not go unnoticed. He confessed the Savior before men, and in his exalted position was not ashamed of the Gospel

of Christ. "With commendable regularity he occupied his pew in the church where he worshiped. In this the manhood of the nation may well find an example. And so far as eye could see he was true to his profession. When the assassin's bullet struck him he said, "May God forgive him," thus forgiving his enemy as the Christ upon the cross taught us to do. When he felt that he was gliding into the great beyond, making the transition from life to life more abundant, he softly murmured, "Nearer, my God, to thee,

nearer to thee,” and said: “Goodby, goodbye, all. It’s God’s way. His will be done, not ours.” An example like this is worth something. Today, when the nation in its sorrow, and love, and gratitude twines a wreath to place upon his tomb, the sweetest blossom in it, and the only amaranthine flower, will be his confession of Christ.

3 His domestic affections were particularly strong, and his life was beautiful in its devotion to mother and wife. His love for children – a commendable heart-quality in any man – was also conspicuous. During his short respite from official cares he would always, on reaching his home, go to the spot where his little children, and, later, his mother, lay buried. The loving care which he bestowed for decades upon an invalid wife is well known, and, so far as I am aware, not even in the heat of political campaigns was his fidelity to plighted troth ever questioned. But particularly memorable is a scene in bleak December. Word was sent to the executive mansion that mother was dying. Back came the message, “Tell mother I’ll be there.” And the President of the Republic sat by the bedside through the long vigil of the night holding the hand of the little, plain, old mother in his until the early gloaming, when her spirit took its flight – an example of filial love for every man and boy in the land. God bless the boy who loves his mother, and God bless the boy of whom his mother may be proud. Thus we must pay another tribute to our lamented President, and say: He was a man whose memory the motherhood of the nation can love and cherish.

4 There is yet another thing. Such lives as his are a civic inspiration to the young men of the nation. He was born in a plain frame house in a small town in Ohio. His body lay in state at the national Capitol. From an humble but honest home he was promoted step by step by his fellow-citizens until he was twice made the recipient of the highest honor at the disposal of this nation – an honor which we hold to be the highest civic distinction on earth. It shows that character counts that diligence is rewarded, and, by strong contrast, shows youth the folly and sin of dissipating time and talent. True is Solomon’s proverb, and ever true it will be: “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute” (Prov. 12:24). And, furthermore, it illustrates once more the possibilities of a life in this land of the free, no matter how lowly the cradle or what the texture of the counterpane that covers the infant may be, and thus increases our love for our country and its free institutions. Honor to the man who passed from an

humble home in our state to the office of chief executive of the nation, and, by the grace of the Lord of lords and King of kings, filled it with honor to himself and credit to the nation.

We have thus in our poor way tried to weave a chaplet for our departed ruler's bier. We now turn our eyes to the Rock and Fortress whence cometh our help. The Savior not only said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," but he added, "and to God the things that are God's." Hence, in keeping with his command, and I trust in consonance with the heartfelt desire of everyone here, let us in this hour of national grief

II. To Render God The Homage Due His Name

Render God the homage due his name. "The Lord looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men" (Ps. 33:13). He says: "I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another" (Isa. 42:8). Therefore in this time of grief and need we should reverently look up to heaven and (1) thank God for a Christian President and a stable government, (2) take to heart the lessons which this instance of mortality teaches, and (3) fervently supplicate God's mercy.

1 Brethren, since the ruler whose death we lament was one whom we can honor as a man as well as for the sake of his office, it is but meet and proper that we thank our God for having given us a Christian President. Sovereigns are by his grace. St. Paul calls them ministers of God (Rom. 13:14); and when God gives a people a wise and benevolent ruler it is a mark of favor and a blessing which should be acknowledged with devout gratitude. With similar convictions and feelings we should thank God for the character and stability of our form of government. In some sister republics a change of government, such as has taken place here in recent days, would be the signal for commotion, confusion, or factional revolt. Not so here. The assassin's bullet caused the sword to drop from a beloved ruler's hand. His lawful successor picked it up. Though the occupant was slain, the office survives, no civic troubles ensued, and the government at Washington still lives. It lives because God reigns and wills that it should live. Let us acknowledge this with grateful hearts. God has been good to this people – very good; every chapter of our history shows it; and in this hour, though stricken with grief, let us look up to him and say: "Bless the

Lord, my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits” (Ps. 103:1-2).

2 Nor should we this day overlook the great and solemn lessons which this sad event teaches.

Death hath “passed upon all men” (Rom. 5:12). Even the greatest men are but mortal, and at the touch of death wither like the flower at the touch of frost. “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27); but no man knows the hour that will strike his knell. Such events as this which shocked the nation’s heart only emphasize the uncertain tenure of life and give tongue of mute eloquence to the words of the prophet who says: “Prepare to meet thy God” (Amos 4:12). The only way is through Christ, for there “is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). And if the ruler whose death we lament entered heaven ’midst the joy of angels, it was not because the President of earth’s greatest republic passed through its portals, but because a poor sinner came washed in the blood of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

But there are other lessons here – lessons of state. Of old the prophet called out: “Hear all ye people; hearken, earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple” (Mich. 1:2). And it seems to me that this voice comes down through the ages and rings into our ears today: “Hear, all ye people!” God says: “Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). But among us irreverence is a besetting sin. Parental authority is taken lightly, the hoary head is hardly honored, and on all hands law is not given the high respect to which it is entitled, and the highest office of the Republic is treated with flippant irreverence by hordes of caricaturists and paragraphers at whose cartoons and jokes the nation smiles. Know they, know we, that they point their sharpened pencils at the heart of the nation? These things must be discountenanced – crush the egg or bear the viper’s sting. We must teach reverence for authority.

Another lesson which this event teaches – this blot which we would fain wash from our history with our tears – is that we must educate the heart as well as the head. God says: “Train up a child in the way he should go” (Prov. 22:6); he also says: “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:2). The man who committed this dastardly and wicked deed said: “I did my duty!” Lesser crimes are justified on like grounds of duty and right. Men must be educated to the highest

ideals, and holy motives must be instilled into their hearts. Only the religion of Jesus Christ can accomplish this. Caesar should never make it difficult for holy Mother Church to bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Nothing but the religion of Christ can overcome the rank materialism and unbelief which are foes to the noblest, the highest, and the best type of patriotism – Christian love of country.

3 Today as we bow our knees to God in this hour of grief, let us also remember our sins as a people and supplicate his mercy. Our gratitude has not kept pace with the greatness and abundance of his blessing, and manifold are the national sins of which we are guilty and for which he could justly thrust us from the covert of his protection. “Sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). Let us, therefore, implore him to forgive us, to strengthen us in our resolve to press forward to a higher plane of Christian citizenship, to keep his protecting hand over our land, and to help us all to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to him. King of kings, the things that are his. Then will the seed sown this day in sorrow bring forth sweet blossoms and wholesome fruit. “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17).

45. The Blessedness Of Those Who Die In The Lord By Rev. W. N. Harley

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” – Rev. 14:13.

Occasion: Preached at the funeral of a woman who died at the washtub in another person’s house where there had been a death

WE ARE COME into this place where God’s honor dwelleth to give and to receive consolation. There is, thank God, a balm for heart wounds such as these. A sprig of green always grows out of a cranny in a Christian’s tomb. And yet, for all that, death always brings grief. So far as this dispensation of Divine Providence is concerned, there seem to be elements in it which are particularly hard to bear. There was the shock of sudden death and the dying alone. And yet, each one dies alone – crosses the river by himself. As for the rest, were it a matter of choice, I do not know but that I would elect a home-going such as this – just slip away quietly, without the long days and weeks which require the long vigils on the part of others. And, then, to be called from the midst of every-day work would also please me, for one cannot be better employed than in doing his duty. There is wholesome truth in what Mr. Davenport said in the Continental Congress on that eventful dark day in 1780 when people thought the end of time had come. “Mr. Speaker,” said he, “it is either the day of judgment, or it is not. If it is not, there is no need of adjourning. If it is, I desire to be found doing my duty. I move that candles be brought, and that we proceed to business.” That was sane and noble. Let us never forget that we are serving God when

we are doing our work in the right way and spirit. Nor do I know a more beautiful dying day than this one was. There cling to it the holiest and most beautiful associations. How fitting for the Christian soul to take its flight from earth to heaven on the day that marks the ascension of our Savior to the same realm of bliss, and to go when the buds and blossoms are bursting open, and the Ascension Day bells are ringing and saying, over and over, "Heavenward! Heavenward!" And yet, when, or where, or how one dies is scarcely worth a thought, if one but die a Christian. That is the case here. The fairest diadem that crowns this mother's brow is her Christian profession and fidelity, and in that lies our chief comfort. It is the only solvent for the grief of death. The reason for it lies largely in the nature of love. On account of its character, love is always ready to sacrifice its own interests, pleasures, and comforts to the welfare of the one loved. Hence the conviction that a loved one has gone to heaven causes us to moderate our grief and find consolation on account of that loved one's bliss. Love would cease to be what it is were it to place its interests and desires above the highest good of the object of its affection. Altruism would turn into base selfishness were such the case. Consequently the bliss of a departed Christian is a consolation to remaining Christians. Therefore, that your grief may find surcease, and your hearts have comfort, let us turn our attention to: —

The Blessedness of Those Who Die in the Lord

The apostle points out two things in which it lies:

I They rest from their labors; and II Their works do follow them.

I. The Dead In The Lord Are Blessed Because They Rest From Their Labors

1 At best, this life has sorrows and troubles enough. This would not be so hard were it not for something else. We ought to be enough of a man, or enough of a woman, to be ready to take the thorn with the rose. If this world has sorrows, it also has compensating joys. As for the world's work, the thing to do is to perform your proper share of it. It is not manly to try to get away from it. But there is something else here. In all human work there is

irksomeness, provocation, imperfection. In all human hearts there is restlessness; a longing for something higher, something nobler, something better. In all human endeavor there is the falling short of the ideal. In every Christian life there is imperfection and sin – the stepping forward, the stumbling, the tripping. Now all these things cause labor, and labor severe in the degree to which one is intelligently sincere. This is the labor of which St. John speaks in the text, for the word in the original means a beating, wearing away labor. From all that sort of thing the dead in the Lord are released. They enter a state of perfection; therefore they are blessed.

2 But note further, the apostle says they rest from their labors. That is part of their blessedness. Now rest does not mean doing nothing at all. Doing nothing is stagnation or death. Rest is change – change of scene, change of position, change of activity, change of employment. People have wrong notions of rest, just as they have wrong ideas about heaven.

“Rest is not quitting this busy career;
Rest is the fitting of self for one’s sphere.”

So the rest in heaven is not idleness, because heaven is not a place of stagnation and death. I take it that the rest meant here is Sabbath rest. The Scriptures elsewhere speak of the rest in heaven as a Sabbath. In fact, Sabbath means rest. So the dead in the Lord are blessed in their rest, not only negatively, on account of certain evils which cannot molest them in heaven, but positively, on account of the good things they enjoy and do. There is the Sabbath of eternal worship. How different the strains above from those in our tabernacles down here! What bliss to see the Savior face to face – the Savior with whom we commune here at the altar under the veil of the sacramental mystery! There also is the Sabbath of sacred acquaintance. It lies not merely in meeting those of our own little circle who have gone before, but in meeting the great family of Mother Church’s illustrious sons and daughters – patriarchs, apostles, evangelists, disciples, martyrs, and all the host of holy angels. Oh, how much there is to see in heaven, and how much to learn of history and wisdom, and learning these things, what ground for an eternity of praise! And that will be rest, for the longing of the soul will cease because it has returned to the bosom of him from whom it came. Just as the migrating bird which longs for the Southland has rest when it reaches its goal, not because it henceforth does

nothing, but because it is in the sunny Southland, so the spirit of man has rest when it reaches heaven.

3 Now, since this is Sabbath rest, the Lord provides for each one Sabbath attire. We are to fit the place into which we are introduced. That place is the abode of God and the holy angels. Hence, we are to suit our environment. That we may enter, Christ's glorious robe of righteousness covers all our imperfections. A change also will take place in us. The change that those undergo who enter heaven is more glorious than the change of the worm into the butterfly. The soul that enters there will be relieved of flaws and be made perfect. You see, this takes place in the person. Down here we adorn outwardly to suit environment. But with God it is not what a man has, but what he is.

Therefore he not only surrounds his saints in heaven with glory, but he makes them glorious in themselves. That is why St. Paul says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory" – mark you – "with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

This, then, dearly beloved, is why the dead in the Lord who rest from their labors are blessed. Does not the truth of it all come upon your bruised hearts as a benediction from heaven? Surely, it must be so.

"Beloved, 'It is well!' though deep and sore the smart;
The hand that wounds knows how to bind and heal the broken heart."

But the apostle gives us another reason for the blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord.

II. "Their works do follow them."

It is worth our while, yea, it is our duty, to ponder this statement also. Let us endeavor to see what it means, and what it teaches.

1 Works are activities. They may be done in words, or in deeds. In fact, thought enters into consideration here, because it is father to word and deed. And more than that, in its subtlety, thought, without being expressed, performs one of the mightiest works – namely, helps to mold one's character. So the word "work" as used here means anything a man does. To follow means to come after. The baby holds to the mother's dress and

follows her. A son may follow in his father's footsteps. So the words, "their works do follow them," are plain enough. But still the question is: Whither do they follow them? My answer is. Whithersoever they have gone. Have they gone from the cradle to the grave? Then their works follow the same course. Have they gone to heaven? Then their works also follow them there. The truth of this is readily seen. What we do upon earth has its influence on others. But influence, once set in motion, cannot be estimated. It may go on till the judgment day, and it will go on long after we are dead, affecting people along the pathway we have trodden in life. That shows how much may be done by one deed of kindness; and it also shows how the works of a Christian follow in his wake after he is dead. Surely it is a blessed thing still to be doing good on earth after you have gone to heaven. Is it any wonder that St. John speaks of blessedness in this connection? But the other side of this is just as plain. As people live, so they die. Some Christians are developed more than others, and consequently enter heaven with a greater capacity. This does not argue imperfection in heaven: it does, if I may use the expression, argue size. You may have two perfect circles, one large and one small. They differ in size, but both are circles, and both are perfect. Or you may have two measures, one large and one small. They differ in size, but you may fill each one perfectly full. So it is here. It is in this way that the works of those who die in the Lord follow them into heaven. And St. John calls this a feature of their blessedness! Can you not also see the blessedness of it? They have grown in holiness, and now they attain it to their utmost capacity. They have grown in knowledge, and now they obtain it to their utmost capacity. They have cherished hope, and now – now it is blessed realization. Ah, yes, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for their works do follow them.

2 But this truth is a stern teacher. Every truth is. Truth cannot bend, it cannot yield, it cannot compromise. It has to do with realities, with things as they are. We can refuse to learn this schoolmaster's lessons, but we cannot escape the consequences.

Since, therefore, one's Christian development here determines one's capacity hereafter, how important that we be true Christians and that we grow in grace! It is utterly senseless to talk about entering heaven without being a Christian. The only way to heaven is through Christ. Nor is that all: the person who is not a Christian would feel out of place there. It would be like a foreign land and not like home to him. He could not be happy for that

very reason. But being a Christian, it is important to grow in grace here: to learn heaven's way of thinking and speaking, commune often with the Savior, and put some of the heavenly life into practice here on earth. To this end frequent and regular worship, Bible reading, and frequent communion will develop you for service here, and that service will develop you for the life hereafter.

And, furthermore, since our works do follow us on earth also, while we are here and after we are gone, how important that we have a care what we do and what we leave undone. Now that this loved one has gone home, what are the things we remember, the things that seem worth while in life? Are they not the deeds and words of love – the hundred and one little kindnesses that grow out of the Christian life? And, brother mine, how much better is it not to live the simple life of faith, and hope, and charity, than it is to chase after fame, or fortune, or selfish pleasure! We see these things in their true light from the side of a coffin. Seeing them, we should act as wisdom dictates. If preparation is to be made, make it now. If a kind word is to be spoken, say it now. If some poor fellow is to be assisted, help him now. Tomorrow may be too late. Act in the living present. Such as these are the lessons which this truth teaches.

And now, dearly beloved, take these things to heart. To you who mourn they are a comfort, and to us all an admonition. Let the sudden death of the mother who was with us here last Lord's day to worship, and whose body now lies here because she loved this sanctuary, together with great truths of our text touch our hearts. If I interpret her life aright, she says to us now:

“Say not, ‘Good night,’ but in that brighter clime
Bid me ‘Good morning.’”

And when that day is here, and we are come to the place where the purple and fine linen of the rich man are no more than the rags of Lazarus, may angels have carried our souls to that better clime and these words be spoken for us: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” Amen.

46. The Death Of A Christian Mother By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” – Eph. 5:20.

Occasion: Death of a Christian Mother

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS:

The last weeks were a time of great anxiety in your home. The life of your beloved mother hung in the balance. For days and weeks you waited between hope and fear. For a time it seemed that her end was near at hand. Then again she revived and you hoped that she might still remain with you a little while longer, although she was now in her eighty-second year and had over-reached the limit of human life as set by the psalmist when he says: “The days of our years are threescore years and ten: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off and we fly away” (Ps. 90:10). But suddenly the end came. She calmly fell asleep in the Lord and we may apply to her the words of the poet:

“Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep,
From which none ever wakes to weep;
A calm and undisturbed repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes.”

And now we have met in the house of God according to Christian custom for a funeral service over her mortal remains.

I have chosen as text a passage which admonishes us to give thanks. This may appear to be a strange selection. The giving of thanks is usually done on occasions of joy, and not of sorrow.

But note what the apostle says in our text when he admonishes us to give thanks. He says, "ALWAYS ___" AND "___FOR ALL THINGS." That means not only in good days but also in evil, not only for what are commonly called the blessings but also for the afflictions of life. In the light of this passage even a funeral service should be an occasion for thanksgiving. Let me speak to you today on: –

The Death of a Christian Mother as an Occasion for Thanksgiving

I will endeavor to show you: I WHAT THERE IS TO BE THANKFUL FOR___ AND II ___HOW YOU SHOULD SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE.

I. What There Is To Be Thankful For

In asking the question. What is there for which you should give thanks today? I answer: You should be thankful for what God did for your mother. He began early in life to bless her. Her very life was his gift. She was born in a Christian home, in the midst of a Christian community. She was in early infancy baptized into the death of the Savior and thus made partaker of all its benefits. She was brought up under Christian parents. She enjoyed the advantages of a thorough course of instruction in the Word of God. Up to the time when the infirmities of old age made it impossible she was able all her life time to listen to the preaching of God's pure Gospel as confessed by our Lutheran church. She had the privilege of meeting with God's people around the sacramental altar and partaking of the Savior's body and blood as most precious pledges of the forgiveness of sins, of the Savior's continued presence with his people on earth and of everlasting life. The good Lord "called her by the Gospel, enlightened her with his gifts, sanctified and kept her in the true faith."

Although in her long life she endured many hardships, which fell to the lot of the pioneers in our community, yet God amply provided her with all that was necessary for the support of this body and life. She lacked for no good thing although the Lord never gave her great wealth. She lived within the limit asked for in the prayer of Solomon: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me" (Prov. 30:8). God made her a

happy wife and mother. She lived to see her children's children. Long life is promised as a special blessing to those who fear the Lord. God says of the righteous: "With long life will I satisfy him" (Ps. 91:16). She lived to a good old age, and was gathered in like a ripe sheaf.

And even when the infirmities of old age came, those days of which most of us say that we have no pleasure in them, she enjoyed the kindness and care of her children who did all they could to make her burdens light. She had no reason to believe that she was a burden to them, but on the contrary they made her feel that it was not so much a duty but rather a pleasure to care for her every want. She could enjoy the visits of her pastor who ministered to her spiritually and comforted her in affliction with the precious promises of God's Word, which is a never failing fountain of comfort in affliction. She enjoyed the company of her Christian friends and neighbors and could thus feel that she was still a member of the communion of saints although unable to meet with God's people in public service as she had been accustomed to do in better days. Thank God for all this. To his grace in Christ Jesus she owed these favors.

But when you are asked to give thanks today, do not overlook what God did for you through your mother. She was God's instrument for the bestowal of innumerable blessings upon her children. There is no one in all the wide world whom we owe more than to our pious parents. And especially our mothers have been singled out by the Almighty as instruments and channels for the bestowal of his richest blessings. At the risk of her own life your mother gave life to you. During the helpless days of infancy her arms carried you day and night. Her very blood was your nourishment. She provided food, clothing and shelter during all the days of dependent childhood. No labor was too hard, no privations too great when it came to making you comfortable. How many sleepless nights she spent at your sick bed! She heard every sigh of pain and every groan of suffering. She forgot herself and her own welfare when your life, health and well-being were at stake. She lived not for herself but for her household. She knew no higher duties than those which she owed to husband and children. She knew no sweeter pleasures than those of the home. Thank God for such a mother. What you are today you owe primarily to your mother. You would be a helpless cripple but for her fostering care; yes, you would perhaps not have lived a month had it not been for her self-sacrificing love.

She was, however, concerned not only in your bodily but also in your spiritual welfare. Yes, as a Christian mother she considered your soul of even greater value than your body. She brought you as an infant, conceived and born in sin, to the sacrament of Baptism that you might be regenerated of water and the Spirit. It was she who first taught you to fold your hands in prayer. She first taught you to lisp the name of the Savior in your morning and evening devotions and in saying grace at meals. She told you the Bible stories in childlike language and led you reverently to repeat the Lord's Prayer. It was through her efforts that you were sent to Sunday-school and to the catechetical class for instruction in the saving doctrines of the Gospel. It was beside her that you sat in God's house when you first enjoyed the privilege of meeting with God's people in worship. Her watchful eye guided you through the spiritual dangers of childhood and even when grown to manhood and womanhood her interest in your spiritual welfare was largely responsible for the fact that you did not stray from the fold of Christ and follow the multitudes on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. And when she had become old and feeble after she had borne the heat and burden of life's day, you were included in her daily prayers and her advice was always ready to guide you in the way of righteousness and truth. She watched and guided your every step with anxious care as only a mother can who is truly interested in the spiritual and eternal welfare of her children. Thank God for such a mother!

II. How You Should Show Your Gratitude

And now let us see how we should show the gratitude which we owe our mothers, or rather God for them. We owe this debt of gratitude to God, for it was by his merciful providence that we were so richly blessed through our pious parents. As they were God's instruments in the bestowal of his blessings so they are the best medium for us to express our gratitude to the Giver of every good and every perfect gift. In 1 Tim. 5:4 the Apostle admonishes children "to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God." In the providence of God the time comes when parents grow old and feeble, when they need care and attention as their children did in infancy and childhood. This is the time to pay back what we have received at their hands. Do not put off the expression of your gratitude

for the fostering care of your parents until after they are dead and gone. Show them your appreciation while they are yet alive. God in his all-wise providence had allowed your mother to become helpless many years before he called her to himself in heaven, and it affords me pleasure to say that you watched over and cared for her declining years with tender solicitude. You made her feel that she was not a burden. It was a pleasure for you to make her load as light as possible. You felt that you owed her, and above all God, whose instrument she was, a debt of gratitude which to pay off you considered not only a duty but a pleasure.

But the time came at last when your pious mother was called home. She fell asleep in the Lord. Her soul has entered into the glory which God has in store for his people above. Her lifeless body is all that remains with us. And even that we must hasten to commit to the earth because of the decay to which it will shortly fall prey. And now we have brought her body once more into the house of God to hold over it a solemn funeral service. We are giving your mother honorable Christian burial as a last tribute of respect to one who has lived and died as a Christian. So we show our gratitude to Christian parents. Your mother delighted in the services of God's house as long as she was physically able to attend. And even when this was not possible by reason of bodily infirmity she was in spirit with us in the assembly of God's people when the church bell rang. There is neither sense nor propriety in bringing the lifeless remains of one who has despised and neglected the services of God's house while he lived into the temple of the Lord when he is dead. But when a devoted Christian dies, who during his life could truly say: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. 84:1), it is fitting and proper that his remains be carried into God's house while his family and friends receive comfort, consolation, admonition, and instruction from God's Word. This public Christian funeral service is not a matter of vain display, but a tribute of honor to the faith and Christian character of those who die in the Lord.

And from God's house we carry the remains of your departed mother to God's acre, there to bury it, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life at the last day, through our Lord Jesus Christ who shall change our vile bodies that they may be like unto his own glorious body according to the mighty working by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. We pay respect to the faith of our Christian fathers and mothers

when over their graves we give expression to this blessed hope in which they lived and died. Yes, the faith in which they lived should be confessed over their graves. We owe it to their sainted memories to bury them in the faith in which they died.

But our gratitude to a pious Christian mother should not end with her burial. It is customary to erect monuments over the graves of our loved ones, to mark the resting places where their decaying bodies await the resurrection of the just at the last day. We would not say one word in disparagement of this custom so far as it keeps in proper bounds and is not a mere display of senseless pomp and vanity. But the best monument which children can erect to the memory of their sainted parents is a devoted and consistent Christian life. Let us follow the instructions and example of our pious fathers and mothers and thus prove to the world that they have not lived in vain. Let it be your purpose to prove in your own life that the life of your mother was not a failure; that the good seed which she sowed fell upon good ground and is bearing rich fruit. The Christian character of a child is the best and most lasting monument that can be erected to the memory of a pious mother. Show the world by a consistent Christian life that you are not only a bodily descendant but a true spiritual child of your sainted mother. Do not disgrace her good name by a life of vanity and vice but honor her name by one of godliness, sobriety, honesty and purity. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven, and laud your pious mother who was his instrument in bringing you up as Christians. God grant it! Amen.

47. Stones Rolled Away By Rev. A. K. Bell

“And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.” – Mark 16:2-4.

OUR GOD who has promised not to leave his trusting children comfortless, gives us a blessed word of hope through his prophet Isaiah, when he says, “That before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

So it was indeed, on that first Easter morning, as the women came with bowed heads and grief-stricken hearts to the tomb of our Lord to complete with womanly exactness and tenderness the work of embalming, which the men in the haste of the approaching Sabbath had not the time to do thoroughly on Good Friday afternoon. Before they had opportunity to solicit the aid of anyone in giving them access to the dead body of their Master by rolling from the door of the tomb the great stone that seemed to make their way impassable, behold, as they lifted their bowed heads, they saw plainly, even through their tears, that the stone was rolled away and an angel of light was sitting upon it.

May we not take this incident as a parable of what our gracious heavenly Father is doing for you, his believing children, today as you walk in the way of sorrows to the tomb of your loved one?

May the Holy Spirit, our ever present Guide and Comforter, lead us from this way of sorrow into the way of truth and show us: –

Stones Rolled Away

Behold how he shows you: I THE STONE OF SIN AND DEATH ROLLED AWAY ___.
II THE STONE OF UNBELIEF ROLLED AWAY. III ___ THE STONE OF HUMAN GRIEF

AND ANXIOUS CARE ROLLED AWAY.

I Our text show the Christian believer the Stone of Sin and Death Rolled Away in the resurrection of his blessed Lord.

St. Paul says of Christ that “he was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification,” and again, “if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

Christ’s resurrection is the stamp of God’s approval on the offering of our Lord made in his own bitter sufferings and death to put away our sin and its curse from us. The emptying of the tomb in Joseph’s garden, which could be seen by the eye of flesh, is the evidence to the eye of faith, of the emptying of sin and death of all their curse and power over the believer who is still alive or over those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus has said to us, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” His own glorious resurrection power over death is evidence that he can fulfill this wonderful promise by exerting this same power in our behalf. Tea, it is sufficient evidence that he has fulfilled this promise he has made us. By his mighty resurrection power he has rolled away from us the stone of sin and death.

And what a heavy stone this is that he has thus rolled away from us! Like a mill-stone it has hung about the neck of every human being from our first parents on down to us, dragging those under its weight down in misery to destruction and death.

Oh, the burden of sin which has weighed upon the conscience of humanity from the time the first sin-burdened souls tried to hide from God in Eden, or the first murderer cried out in despair, “My punishment is greater than I can bear!”

Everywhere one looks he may see mankind burdened, depressed and dragged down, struggling, staggering and falling under the crushing burden of a great weight too heavy for any mortal to bear.

When the soul is wearied and crushed under this load, how welcome is the voice of One who can say, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

He has borne the burden of our sin, and not ours only, but the sin of the whole world, for “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

How heavy was that burden of sin? Go to dark Gethsemane and there amidst the shadows hear our Burden-bearer say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"; hear him agonizing in prayer under that burden until its awful weight so crushed him, that his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; go to Golgotha and there, beneath that central cross, hear the awful words that fell from his lips as he suffered the agonies of eternal death for a lost world, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

How heavy was that burden of sin? Behold in the blood and water gushing from his pierced side the evidence that our Lord's heart was actually broken under the burden of sin he bore, not for himself, but for us.

This burden of sin, which crushed the Man of Sorrows physically and spiritually, does not rest upon those who by faith make Christ their Substitute, for he has rolled away the stone of sin from them by his own death for them, and assures them of it by his resurrection from the dead.

What he has done for sin, he has done for death, for from the beginning sin and death have been inseparable. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The wages of sin is death." Therefore, when Christ, in his resurrection power, rolls away from us the stone of sin, he rolls away from us, also, the stone of death.

Christ's resurrection is only the first-fruits, which shall yet be followed by the resurrection of all those who sleep in Jesus. As he came forth gloriously, so must they; as the grave held no victory over him, neither shall it hold any victory over Christ's own at his coming.

Lift up your heads then, ye who mourn, and look, for this stone, which was very great, is already rolled away for you and for your loved one, for through Christ you can bid defiance to both sin and death and say, "O Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

II Christ's resurrection just as gloriously rolls away for us the Stone of Unbelief.

Even those who loved Christ most did not believe at first, before they saw that great stone rolled away from the door of his tomb. They were coming in the early dawning of the first day of the week with sweet spices that they might anoint him. They had no hope of finding any other than a dead Lord when they came to his tomb. They acted as though Christ had

never said a word about his arising from the dead on the third day. If they had believed his words they would have gone out to find a living instead of a dead Lord.

But the unbelief of his disciples was even more determined than that of the woman. We read that the women “returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” Repeatedly as the good news of the empty tomb was brought some of them persisted in unbelief.

In strange contrast with this unbelief is the attitude of Christ’s enemies, the chief priests, for as soon as the Roman guard bring their report of the resurrection and the rolling away of the stone, they accept it as true, remembering that this is just what he said he would do on the third day, and they bribe the soldiers to lie and say that his disciples came and stole him away while they slept.

But when once Christ’s disciples saw the great sealed stone rolled away their unbelief and doubt was forever rolled away, and their faith in his resurrection, his deity and his saving power forever established.

No fact in the history of the world stands on stronger evidence than does the resurrection of Jesus Christ. One of Christianity’s ablest opponents calls it “the very center of the center” and says there is no use of wasting time in discussing the other miracles of Jesus because everything else stands or falls with the resurrection of Christ.

If Christ is risen from the dead everything else in the Bible is proven to be possible, for this is the miracle of miracles.

The rolling away of all unbelief and doubt is accomplished in this rolling away of the great stone from the door of Joseph’s tomb.

“How tranquil now the rising day!
’Tis Jesus still appears,
A risen Lord, to chase away
Your unbelieving fears:
Oh, weep no more your comforts slain,
The Lord is risen, he lives again.”

III "With the great stones of Sin and Death and Unbelief rolled away for us through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, it follows but naturally that the stone of human grief and anxious care should be rolled away from us.

The women came to the tomb with heavier hearts than those that throb in your breasts today, for you have heard of Easter and they had not as yet. But when the angel answered and said unto the women, "Fear not ye: for I know that, ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay," their grief vanished, and instead, they were filled with joy inexpressible. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." That gladness was born of the knowledge that the One they mourned was not among the dead, where they sought him, but among the living where he said he would be.

Oh, if we, here below, could only look upon God's plans from his side, the upper side, the right side! A mother is working a beautiful design in the cloth upon the frame in her hands; a little child sits questioning at her side, looking up at the rough threads and loose ends, and wonders what mamma is making, for there is no beauty, no design, no plan to be seen in her work from the child's viewpoint.

Beloved, may it not be quite like this with the plan our Father in heaven is working out in your lives today? Today we sit in the place of the child; we look through our tears at the under-side of God's workmanship; we see no beauty of design in it; we wonder why this thread should have been broken here, or another there; or how these ragged ends in their unloveliness could add anything to the beauty of the design our God is working out in the fabric of our lives.

In the midst of our perplexity he says to us. My little children, what I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter. For now ye look at my work from the wrong side, the side of the ragged ends, the ugly, broken threads; hereafter ye shall look upon that same work from the right side, God's side, and the beauty of the design will amaze you, and you will realize that in all of those broken threads and ragged ends your God knew best and he made no mistakes.

Here there are tribulations and sorrows, trials and tears; but there "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

But this great stone of grief will not only be rolled completely away for us hereafter, it is rolled away for us here and now, as completely as it was rolled away for the women in their grief on the first Easter morn.

Is it not so with all the anxious cares that grow out of our griefs to perplex and trouble us? Like the women of our text you may be saying among yourselves today: "Who shall roll us away the stone?" Readjustments will be necessary in the household; new and grave responsibilities will fall upon shoulders unused to them and inexperienced. And from where you sit now in your sorrow these seem too heavy for your strength and there seems to be no one to roll the weight away for you. So thought the faithful women that first Easter morning in Joseph's garden, and then, behold, as they looked up they found that the stone was rolled away already.

Even so it is with all of us and shall be with you as you approach the cares that perplex and the responsibilities that terrify you.

By far the greater number of the things that we worry and are anxious about are things that never happen; things that in God's merciful providence are rolled out of our way or taken care of satisfactorily in some unexpected manner. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," saith your God to you, the same God who sent his angel to roll away the great stone that troubled the women as they approached the empty tomb of our Lord. He says to you as you trouble yourselves about the great stones you think are in your way, "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you," and again, "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me."

If we will only do this, only believe in God and his Son who went through sorrow and death and the grave for us, to rob them of all their power over us, we shall look up as did the women and see that every stone will be rolled away for us, even the great stones of Sin and Death, of Unbelief, and of Human Grief and Anxious Care.

"Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord, Jesus Christ." Amen.

48. Faith Beholds The Glory Of God By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“Jesus said: Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord,”by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” – John 11:39, 40.

Occasion: On the Death of a Christian Man

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD:

The little village of Bethany was situated not far from Jerusalem. Here lived two sisters, Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazarus. This home was frequently graced with the presence of the Savior. Its inmates were his dear friends, and he frequently enjoyed their hospitality. It was a happy home, as only a Christian home, where the Savior is a welcome guest, can be. But sorrow came to this home. Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, was taken seriously ill. When things began to assume a dangerous aspect the sisters sent word to the Savior, saying: “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” (John 11:3). They took it for granted that the mere announcement would be all that was necessary to bring the Savior with his ever ready, omnipotent help to the rescue. But, strange to say, we read: “When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was” (John 11:6). Not until after his friend had died and lain in the grave four days did Jesus arrive at the house of mourning. Martha met him with the sad words: “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” But full of confidence she added: “But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” And her faith was not to be disappointed. For a moment when she stood before the open sepulchre with its awful odors of corruption her faith faltered. Then it was that the Savior spake the words of our text: " Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" There is a

glorious truth contained in these words. A truth that it is well for you, mourning friends, to take to heart. Yes, a truth which may serve to the edification of us all as we look back over the life, sufferings and death of our departed brother. Let me endeavor to show you

How Faith Beholds the Glory of God

I IN THE LIFE__, II IN THE SUFFERINGS, AND III __IN THE DEATH OF OUR DEPARTED BROTHER.

I. In the Life

The world sees nothing specially glorious in such a life as that which has just been brought to a close. There are some lives which appear glorious in the eyes of the world. When a man in the short space of a life time accumulates vast wealth, when, no matter how, whether by fair or foul means, he succeeds in amassing millions, he is looked upon as gloriously successful. Or when a man arises from obscurity to honor and distinction, when he succeeds in wielding great power so that thousands and millions do his bidding, the world looks upon his life as eminently successful.

Our brother was not great in this sense. He was just one of the common people, just an ordinary mortal like thousands and millions of others who never rise to distinction in the eyes of the world. He was satisfied to eat his daily bread with thanksgiving. Having food and raiment he was therewith content. He never had an ambition to do extraordinary things, things that would astonish the world and set it agog. He deemed it sufficient to fill well the position which God had marked out for him, no matter how humble it might be. He was a common workman, just a plain husband and father, an ordinary church member.

And yet we claim his life was a glorious one when looked upon with the eye of faith. From all eternity God had plans for the salvation of our departed brother. And in the fullness of time he carried out these plans, by the sending of his only begotten Son into the world as his Savior. Was it not a glorious thing that when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem our brother that he might receive the adoption of a son? Was it not a glorious thing that God

met him on the very threshold of life and through the washing of water by the Word adopted him into the covenant of his grace? Was it not a glorious thing that having been conceived and born in sin God bestowed upon him the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost? Was it not a glorious thing that God kindled in his heart the spark of faith and through the influence of pious parents, and faithful teachers and pastors fanned this spark into a flame that burned more brightly from year to year? Was it not a glorious thing that he enjoyed the blessed privilege of living in the fellowship of the saints all his days? That from his earliest childhood even to the hour of his departure from this vale of tears he could drink in the living water of the pure Gospel, that he could meet with God's people at the altar of the Lord there to receive the very body and blood of the crucified Lamb of God as most precious pledges of the forgiveness of sins, of sonship in the spiritual family of God and of the hope of everlasting life?

Then see what a glorious thing it was that God made him a happy husband and the father of pious children, that he gave him in his faithful wife a true helpmeet, one who shared the joys and sorrows of life with him as only a Christian wife can? Was it not a glorious thing that God did not withhold from him the blessing of children, and such children as were a real pleasure to their father? For all these years he enjoyed the sunshine of a Christian home, that he and his never lacked bread and even enjoyed a fair share of the comforts and conveniences of life?

Was it not a glorious thing that God called him into his service, that he could live in accordance with the apostolic injunction: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17)? He was a servant of the most high God and that is the greatest honor that can be conferred on mortal man. It places him on a level with the angels who are God's ministering spirits.

Yes, my brethren, there is much in the humble life of our departed brother that is glorious but it requires the eye of faith to see it.

II. In the Sufferings

But strange as it may seem there was something glorious not only in the life but even in the sufferings of our brother. It may sound strange that there should be anything glorious about suffering. The world is no friend of

suffering and goes to almost any length to escape it. A life of pleasure and not of suffering is its glory. "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The world aims to get all the good out of life it can. It pities those who cannot enjoy a large share of the creature comforts of life. Poverty, sickness, pain, disappointment, reverses and the like are considered great misfortunes. It weeps and mourns over its sufferings. Yes, it even curses and raves when things go wrong. So far from seeing anything glorious in suffering it considers a life of suffering as worse than a failure. It would rather not live at all than live a life of suffering. Job cursed the day of his birth under the influence of his losses and pains.

And yet there is something glorious about the sufferings of a child of God. A Christian knows that he is not the football of chance, but that he is at all times and under all circumstances under God's merciful providence. That nothing can befall him except by the permissive will of his dear Father in heaven. The Savior says: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29, 30). God's all-seeing eye is always open over us. He is at the helm of our Lord's ship. We can safely entrust ourselves to him.

We can look to him for grace and strength in every trouble. He never allows loads to be placed upon us without giving the strength necessary to carry them. He never suffers us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, and with every temptation also makes a way of escape. What an example of God's sustaining grace was the life of our departed brother! How cheerfully he bore his load of sickness, pain and suffering! Without murmur or complaint he submitted to the will of his heavenly Father, knowing that God doeth all things well. His life was not all sunshine. He was often under a cloud. Yes, it seems that with him misfortunes never came singly. He was never blessed with over-much of this world's goods. It was often a vexing question how to make ends meet. He had his full share of the ills that flesh is heir to. Sickness and even death repeatedly knocked at his door. To a superficial observer it might seem that his days of adversity by far outnumbered those of prosperity. How glorious that in all these sad experiences he knew that the Lord was with him and he could say with the Psalmist: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I

will fear no evil: for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

What a glorious thing it is to know that God can bring good out of evil! He overrules all our sorrows and makes them redound to his glory and our good. What seem to be our greatest misfortunes will in the end prove to be our greatest blessings. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light and thy judgment as the noonday” (Ps. 37:5, 6).

The Christian often suffers not only the ills that are common to all men, but for his Lord’s sake. He is hated and persecuted just because he is faithful to his Master. Instead of being ashamed of such afflictions the Christian glories in them. It is a glorious thing that we are deemed worthy to suffer with Christ and for his sake. Such suffering we should regard as a special mark of distinction, a badge of honor. If the world hates our Lord and Master what else can we expect than that it will hate us also who walk in his footsteps? The Savior says: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matt. 5:11, 12). It is an honor to bear the cross after the Savior. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10). Yes, faith beholds much glory in suffering and of this our departed brother was an illustrious example.

III. The Death of Our Beloved Brother

But faith beholds the glory of God not only in his life and sufferings but even in his death. In the eyes of the world there is nothing glorious about an ordinary death. In fact death is regarded as the king of terrors. A man will give all he has to save his life. The preservation of life is one of the first laws of nature. What an awful calamity is death! How ruthlessly it tears apart the tenderest ties of life! What a procession of misery and wretchedness follow in its wake! It fills the world with widows and orphans. It starts the tears of mothers and the sighs of fathers. Jesus himself wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus.

And yet there are circumstances under which even the world looks at death as glorious. To die for one's country, fighting in a good cause, to lay down one's life on the altar of patriotism has always been regarded as honorable. There have ever been martyrs of science and invention whose death is prized as something great.

But the death of our departed brother was not of this kind. It was just a plain, ordinary death. Such a death as thousands die every day. What is there glorious about submitting to the inevitable, and going the way of all flesh? Yes, when we think of that which comes after death, of the decay and corruption of the grave, of the judgment which death ushers in, of the eternity whose awful uncertainties begin with death, it is too terrible to think of.

And yet, to the eye of faith, death is something glorious.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). To those who die in the Lord death brings rest, eternal rest, rest from all labor, pain, and sorrow. For "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 14:4). What a blessed prospect for a poor, afflicted, wayworn pilgrim, that he shall soon reach the end of his sad journey!

To a child of God death comes as a welcome messenger calling the wanderer home. Even our poor wasted bodies, after they have rested temporarily in the grave, shall arise to new life and glory in the general resurrection at the last day. "The dead in Christ shall rise first... and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). The life everlasting which we confess in the creed is a life of endless joy and perfect happiness. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Death is to the true believer the beginning of this glory. Is it a wonder that he has a longing for it? St. Paul speaks of himself as "having a desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). For says he: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). From this point of view death loses its terrors. It is changed into a sweet sleep from which there will be a glorious awakening.

Let us thank God for this prospect. Yes, faith sees the glory of God in life, in suffering and in death. This is our comfort today for we are gathered

around the bier of a child of God. May God help us to realize what a glorious thing it is to live, to suffer and to die as a true Christian. Amen.

49. The Blessings Of God In The Life Of The Departed By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” – Gen. 12:1-3.

Occasion: Funeral Sermon for a Man Prominent in the Work of the Church

DEARLY BELOVED IN THE LORD JESUS:

In funeral sermons men usually expect praise. They often expect men to be praised where in reality there is very little to be praised. In fact the eulogy of the dead seems to some the chief object of funeral sermons. But why should we flatter the dead? If there is anything praiseworthy, it is the gift of God. Whatever praise we give should be given to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The death of our beloved brother affords much opportunity for praise. Yes, we feel today like singing: “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.” His life was an illustrious example of the blessings of Almighty God. Let us look upon it from this point of view, while I speak to you concerning

The Blessings of God as Illustrated in the Life of Our Departed Brother

Let us see: I How God blessed him, and II How God blessed others through him.

God says in our text to Abraham first: “I will bless thee,” and then: “Thou shalt be a blessing,” These two sentences embody the two thoughts which should occupy our attention today.

I. How God Blessed Him

Our text speaks of the call of Abraham. “Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” It was seemingly a hard thing that the Lord asked of the patriarch. He was to break all the ties of blood and friendship. He was to turn his back upon all the comforts and conveniences of his native land. He was to go into a strange land not knowing what would befall him there. But we know that this call of Abraham was for his good, it was a great blessing to him and his offspring. God had none but the best of intentions when he led him westward into a new country. God said: “I will make of thee a great nation.” And how wonderfully the Almighty fulfilled this promise! Even in temporal things the descendants of Abraham in Canaan under David and Solomon attained to wonderful greatness.

Early in life our brother was led by the providence of God out of his native land, away from his friends and kindred into what was then to him a strange land. Fifty years ago he landed on the shores of the new world a perfect stranger. He brought with him nothing but hands that were willing to work and a disposition that was not ashamed of honest toil. He set out like hundreds and thousands of other young Germans to seek his fortune in the new world. He was a stranger in a strange land, not knowing what the future had in store for him.

And how did he fare in the new world? America has well been called the land of unlimited opportunities, and here God blessed our brother far beyond his fondest expectations. In all probability, had he remained in the old world he would have eked out a modest living and been content to live and labor, to struggle for a mere existence, as his fathers before him had done for generations. But in the new world with its wonderful natural resources, its liberal social, industrial and political institutions, he rose to wealth and honor. By honest labor and strict economy he attained such

financial standing as it would never have been possible for him to reach had he remained in the fatherland.

He was far too modest to attribute this financial success to his own efforts. In his estimation it was the blessing of God which rested upon his efforts that enabled him to attain wealth and distinction. He believed in the word of Solomon: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich" (Prov. 10:22).

When Abraham entered Canaan, Sarah, his wife, accompanied him; but they had no children. Under the blessing of God the patriarch was enabled to see children and children's children in the land of promise. So our brother was blessed with the comforts of a Christian home in the new world. He left behind him in the fatherland father and mother, brothers and sisters and landed on these shores homeless. But the Lord here blessed him with a new home, making him the head of a family. He became a happy husband and father. He found a life partner after his own heart and the new world became to him a second fatherland. God blessed him with children and his new home in time richly replaced what he left behind him across the seas. God was very kind to the young foreigner and so led him that the land of his adoption became as dear to him as that of his birth. His fellow-citizens appreciated his sterling virtues and he soon rose to distinction and honor among them.

But all these temporal blessings are small when compared with what God did for him in spiritual things. The temporal blessings which God had in store for Abraham were not to be compared with the spiritual as expressed in the glorious promise: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." We know that this refers to the Savior who should be born out of the seed of Abraham in the promised land. And so God had in store for our brother rich spiritual blessings in the new world. He had been baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran church of his native land. The new spiritual life which had been kindled in his heart at baptism was nursed by the influences of a Christian home. He enjoyed the privilege of attending a school in which the Gospel of Christ was made one of the chief branches of instruction. The schooling which he received was permeated by the principle, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111: 10). His confirmation was not an empty ceremony. It made a lasting impression upon his young heart. He never forgot the covenant made with the triune God. He was a Lutheran Christian not only in name but from conviction.

Even in the new world, where so many young men and women forget their early training in the mad rush for money and pleasure, he remained faithful to his baptismal and confirmation vows. God led him into a community where he found a Lutheran church. And he soon made himself at home in her services. The pure preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments appealed to his Christian consciousness. This was the church of his fathers, this was his own spiritual mother and he was not slow to identify himself with the local congregation which confessed his faith. What a blessing it was to a young man of his pious disposition that he found a congregation of the old faith in the new world! For nearly half a century he enjoyed the administration of the means of grace in our congregation. Here the Law showed him his sins and the Gospel pointed him the way to obtain forgiveness. Here he was warned against all manner of spiritual dangers and encouraged in every Christian virtue. Here like a weary traveler in the desert he could spend the Lord's day in the house of God like in an oasis with its refreshing springs of life-giving waters. Here the pious youth found food on which his faith could grow and develop into Christian manhood. Yes, the Lord was surely kind and gracious to our brother in providing every advantage for the maintenance and growth of his spiritual life.

And when old age with its burdens and afflictions came, he was not left without the comfort of the Gospel. It was proclaimed to him on his sickbed in all its rich fullness. Was his soul hungry? Here was food in plenty. Did he thirst after the water of life? Here were never-failing springs. As the shadows of life began to lengthen and the evening of his earthly days drew nigh his thoughts were more than ever occupied with that eternity which God's children look forward to as a place of eternal rest and everlasting joy. God blessed him with a cheerful hope of the life to come through our Lord Jesus Christ. In view of all this he could surely say with the psalmist: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Ps. 16:6).

II. How God blessed others through him.

But when we speak of our brother's life as a life of blessing let us remember that God not only blessed him but through him he also blessed

others. God said to Abraham not only: "I will bless thee," but he added: "And thou shalt be a blessing." Abraham was not only to receive but to transmit God's blessings. He was a blessing first of all to his own house. And so was our brother. His wife and children caught the contagion of his faith. A godly man is a constant source of blessing to those with whom he lives under one roof. Every pious wife is blessed by living with such a life partner. The Scriptures say: "They two shall be one flesh." What a blessing if they are one not only in the ordinary interests of life but one in faith and hope, one in willingness to serve the Lord, one in readiness patiently to bear the crosses and afflictions of life. "Each for the other and both for God" was the inscription on an old wedding ring. How much easier it is to carry the burdens of life when there are two to lift the load!

And what a blessing he was to his children! God used him as his instrument to provide for them food, clothing, and shelter. It was through him that God provided them with a liberal education and enabled them to fill positions of responsibility among their fellow-men. Through him God not only provided them with a good home but sent them forth fully equipped to cope with the problems and battles of life. Yes, through him God did even more than this. They enjoyed not only a comfortable but a Christian home. When the day of the Lord came the father did not say, "Go," but, "Come," let us go into the house of the Lord. He recognized the fact that his children had not only bodies to feed and clothe but minds to develop and souls to save. He was the spiritual head of his house, a real priest in the home, who was not too busy and not ashamed to lead his wife and children in prayer at the family altar. The greatest treasures which he left to his children consisted not in houses and lands, not in money, stocks and bonds, but in the spiritual wealth of a pure faith. Through his example and precepts they were placed in a position to lay up treasures in heaven "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:20).

But he was a blessing not only to his own household but to the congregation of which he was a member. We can well say that God blessed our congregation through him. Abraham was a blessing to all with whom he came in contact. Wherever he pitched his tent he built an altar, offered sacrifice and called upon the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8). Abraham carried the knowledge of the true God and his worship from place to place in the course of his wanderings. He was a blessing to every community

where he dwelt for any length of time. God blessed his neighbors through him. So our departed brother took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of his brethren in our congregation. He was a liberal supporter of its work. He was not only anxious to enjoy the benefits but willing to share the burdens which come with membership in a Christian congregation. He was ready to help not only with money but with his council and personal labor. Few attended the congregational meetings more regularly than he. When elected to office in the vestry he discharged his duty with conscientious care. In all this he was a blessing to our congregation. He was a faithful friend and trusty adviser of the pastor, a man who never abused confidence. At a time when the confessional standing of the congregation hung in the balance he stood, unflinchingly by the truth and was willing even to endure abuse and hatred for the sake of his Lord and Master. Yes, in those days when feeling ran high and many lost their heads because they were not firmly grounded in the faith he stood like a rock “steadfast, immovable,” on the side of truth and justice. In those stormy days it was a blessing to have such a man at the helm of our congregation.

But he was a blessing not only to his household and his congregation but to the church at large. With his ample means he was ever ready to encourage every good work. Our educational and charitable institutions as well as our missions were the special objects of his liberality. And many a poor student preparing for the ministry received substantial evidence of his good will. He took a deep interest in the work of Synod, and was one of the chief promoters of our mission work in this growing metropolis. Several of our younger congregations owe their existence in large measure to his liberality. To whom much is given from him will much be required. This principle he aimed to carry out in his support of the general work of the church. He was an instrument in the hands of God for the bestowal of blessings. Even the memory of such men is a blessing as the Scriptures say: “The memory of the just is blessed” (Prov. 10:7). In view of these facts let us say, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, Praise him, all creatures here below, Praise him above, ye heavenly hosts, Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” Amen.

50. What Lightens The Farewell Of A Christian Father From His Loved Ones In The Hour Of Death? By Rev. H. J. Schuh

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to”warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” – Acts 20:31, 32.

Occasion: On the Death of a Christian Father

Mourning Friends:

In the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 13, the apostle writes: “For here have we no continuous city but we seek one to come.” In the providence of God we must bid adieu to our best friends. When we meet in this world, we meet to part. It is sad to part from good friends even temporarily. But we comfort ourselves on such occasions with the thought that we shall perhaps soon meet again. But how sad is the parting when, at least for this world, there is no such probability! For our departed brother this sad hour came. Death compelled him to bid adieu to friends and family. The parting was sad, and yet in spite of the sadness his departure was cheerful. That which would have been almost unendurable was made comparatively easy by the grace of God. We all look forward to the hour of parting from our loved ones. What kind of a parting will it be? You say: " Oh, I cannot bear to think of it." And yet why should you close your eyes against that which is inevitable? You may die or your loved ones may die any day. The final leave-taking may come at any hour. Let me show you:

What Lightens the Farewell of a Christian from His Loved Ones in the Hour of Death? It is:

I The consciousness of having done his duty toward them. II The assurance that God will be with them, and III The hope of meeting them again in heaven.

I. The Consciousness of Having Done His Duty Toward Them.

Our text presents to us not a death-bed scene, and yet it depicts a parting to meet no more in this world. It is a part of the farewell address of St. Paul to the elders of the congregation at Ephesus. In the 25th verse of our chapter the apostle says: "And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." He knew that he was speaking to these people for the last time. This was their last parting. It was not the parting of a father from his children after the flesh. But Paul was a spiritual father to these Christians at Ephesus and loved them as only a true spiritual father could. And they loved him as only true children can. On that account when he bade them farewell we read (verses 37 and 38): "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." Paul was less disturbed at this parting than were his friends and spiritual children. What was it that made this farewell comparatively easy to him? What cheered him in this sad hour?

We notice in the first place that he parts from them with the consciousness of having done his duty toward them. In the 26th verse of our chapter we read: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God." And in our text we read: "Remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." He had done his duty towards them. There was no occasion for regrets along this line. He had a good conscience. Although in great weakness and with many shortcomings he had endeavored by the grace of God to be faithful to his charge. And this consciousness went a great way toward softening the pangs of parting.

The Christian's only real comfort in death is the grace of God and the merits of Christ. His hope for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life is based not on anything he has done or left undone, but solely on the infinite mercy of God and the all-sufficient merit of his Savior. All merit of his own is excluded for he knows; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy God saved us" (Titus 3:5). He knows himself to be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24).

And yet it is a satisfaction to be able to say on one's death bed: I have endeavored to do my duty toward my family. I have treated my wife not as a slave but as a helpmeet. Toward my children I endeavored to be not a tyrant but a real father. I have raised them not as slaves to lust and avarice but as children of God. How sad when a father must say: I have provided for the bodily wants of my children, but have starved their souls, and this neglect can never be replaced; they are lost for the kingdom of God; their eternal salvation is forfeited, and I am to blame for it; I have failed to do my duty by them; by my own wicked example I have led them astray from the way of life. O how terrible must be the parting of a father from his children if in the last solemn hour his conscience accuses him of such neglect!

You, dear friends, know full well that your father had no occasion for such self-accusations on his death-bed. Although he never made a boast of his faithfulness but was fully aware of his shortcomings yet we may truly say that by the grace of God he endeavored to do his duty toward his own household. His life was not a failure. In stewards we seek no more than that a man be found faithful, and he was faithful as you will all bear him witness. Let us thank God for this and aim to follow his example, so that our hour of departure may not be rendered sad by the consciousness of having failed to do our duty.

II. The assurance that God will be with them

A true Christian's farewell from his loved ones is also lightened by the assurance that God will be with them. St. Paul bade adieu to his spiritual children with the consciousness of having done his duty toward them. By the grace of God he had brought them to faith in Christ. Like a true father he could rejoice in the children whom God had given him. But now the

hour of parting had come. Henceforth he could no longer warn them against falling away from the faith, no longer admonish them to be steadfast in the Christian life. What would now become of his spiritual family? All the more must he have worried over their future when he thought of the dangers and temptations which threatened the Ephesians after his departure. In the 29th verse of this chapter we read: "For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. This was indeed a gloomy prospect. His fatherly heart had reason to be troubled at the thought of their possible apostasy from the pure Gospel. Would they fall in these awful temptations and render all his work and care on their behalf vain? Thoughts like these would certainly serve to make his farewell a sad one.

What was his comfort against all such gloomy thoughts? What was there to cheer him up against such dark forebodings? He tells us in the words of our text: " And now, brethren, I commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up." This was his comfort: God would be with them after his departure. His Word would remain with them even if their spiritual leader, teacher and father was compelled to take leave. He placed the future of his loved ones in the hands of God, and this thought removed all the load of anxious care. With the assurance that God would be with them he could bid them a cheerful farewell.

The anxiety of a father for the future of his family has certainly caused many a sad last farewell. Who among us has not asked the question, What will become of my poor wife and helpless children when I am gone? Who shall care for them and be a father to the fatherless? And this anxiety is not limited to the bodily welfare of wife and children. Many a Christian father has worried over the thought of leaving his children in a wicked world. It is a cold and uncharitable world, a world where thousands have made shipwreck concerning faith. Many a father has asked himself on his death-bed: Will my children do honor to the good name of my house? Will they continue to walk in the way of life? Will they remain faithful to the Savior to whom they were brought in Baptism? Will they keep their confirmation vow? Will my sons take my place in the congregation for whose welfare I labored so diligently? Questions like these must lie heavy on the heart of a Christian father especially in view of the fact that so often after the death of a Christian father his house literally seems to fall to pieces. In view of such

dark forebodings what can serve to lighten the farewell of a Christian from his loved ones? Let him say with St. Paul in our text: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and the word of his grace, which is able to build you up." When the patriarch Jacob came to die he said to his son: "Behold I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers" (Gen. 48:21). When you come to die and think of all the possible dangers which threaten your loved ones after your departure you can do no better than to commend them to the loving hands of your heavenly Father. You must die, but God cannot die. He has promised to be a father to the fatherless. If you have faithfully done your duty toward your household while you lived, then let God take care of the rest. "Casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). This also includes death-bed cares. Even these last anxious cares you may cast on the Lord with the blessed assurance that he will provide for, defend and deliver your loved ones. By so doing you will lighten the farewell from your own in the hour of death. AVhen Dr. Luther was once at the point of death he called his wife and little child to his bedside and when the babe smiled at him he said: "O thou dear child, now I commend my dear Katie and thou dearest orphan to my dear, pious and faithful God. You have nothing; but God who is a father of the widow and orphan, will provide and care for you."

III. The hope of meeting them again in heaven.

And in the third place the hope of meeting his loved ones in heaven lightens the farewell of a Christian on his death-bed. Paul bade adieu to his dear friends and spiritual children at Ephesus and was compelled to say: "I know that ye all, among whom I have preached the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." This then was humanly speaking the last farewell. They parted never to meet again in this world. If on other occasions he departed from them to labor elsewhere on the great harvest field of the world he left with the hope of seeing them again, as he frequently visited the congregations which he had founded to strengthen them in the faith. But this leave-taking was not brightened by such a hope. He never expected to meet these Christians at Ephesus again on this side of eternity. The Spirit of God had revealed to him the fact that his end was near at hand. He never

expected to return to Ephesus. Is it a wonder that we read in the last words of our chapter: "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him. Sorrowing worst of all for the words which he spake that they should see his face no more." It was a sad parting. Their tears were evidence of real sorrow. And who would doubt that even with the apostle it was a solemn hour?

What it was that lightened this sad parting we see from his own words: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God which is able to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." He thought of the inheritance of the saints in light, of the glories of heaven. Yes, they parted to meet again before the great white throne above. He had a joyful answer to the question: Shall we meet again? Yes, surely in heaven. Their separation was only temporary. They were all on the road to a blissful eternity. Their ways parted only for a short time. In heaven they would meet again.

Dear friends, how often your father bid you goodby. Every morning when he went to work, every time when he started on a journey he bid you farewell. Such leave-takings were not especially hard; for you felt sure he would come again. Joyfully you greeted him when he returned from work in the evening or when he came back from a journey. The children ran out to greet him with peals of laughter. But the leave-taking three days ago was not of this character. It was unutterably sad. There was much weeping and shedding of tears. And why? Because you said: "We shall never see him again in this world. This is the last farewell. His eyes are closed forever. The bond that united us is torn asunder for good."

Yes, my beloved, if this were literally true we would all be comfortless at this last farewell. But, thanks be to God, it is not literally true. Your father has not departed that you shall see him no more. He has only gone before and you hope to follow in due time. He has entered the blessed abode which is the goal of the pilgrimage of all God's children. These eyes are not closed forever but only until they open anew on the resurrection morn to the light of heaven. The glorious hope of a blessed reunion in heaven lightens our farewell from those who die in the Lord. Yes, we shall meet again and meet to part no more. At parting we can cheerfully sing:

"God be with you till we meet again,
By his councils guide, uphold you,
With his sheep securely fold you,
God be with you till we meet again.

"God be with you till we meet again,
'Neath his wings securely hide you,
Daily manna still provide you,
God be with you till we meet again.

"Till we meet at Jesus' feet,
God be with you till we meet again."

Amen.

51. A Joyous Cry At The Approach Of Death By Rev. W. E. Tressel

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” – 2 Tim. 4:6-8.

Occasion: For an Aged and Loyal Christian Man

MAN IN HIS NATURAL STATE is afraid of death. And he has abundant reason to fear this king of terrors. A mystery, inexplicable to the natural man, surrounds the dead. The eye that gleamed with intelligence is closed; the face that glowed with health and broke into smiles is pale and impassive; the hand that reached out in warm and friendly greeting is cold and unresponsive. Whither has the soul that once inhabited this tenement of clay taken its flight? Will the grave swallow up the body and never surrender its prey?

The natural man has no adequate answer to these questions. He can only look on death with fear and trembling. He may grow somewhat bold and defiant with the passage of the years; wealth and education, social standing and political influence may lead him, in his haughtiness of spirit, to become seemingly indifferent towards the frightful and all-engulfing grave; but he cannot banish all dread of this hideous monster. In dreams of the night, in hours of waking and working, death stalks him. Fears are allayed for a time only. Amid “the tumult and the shouting” of this busy earth, the warnings of impending death may not always sound with equal distinctness; but the latent fears will soon awaken to fresh activity. The death of relative or friend, the funeral procession, the sight of cemetery, grave and stone, will

stir to life unpleasant thoughts and dormant fears. And when the unregenerate man lays him down to the sleep that knows no waking in this world-age, it is with a shudder at thought of what may be.

In the state of grace man does not experience such torment of fear. The grave has been robbed of its victory, death has lost its sting, the king is shorn of his terrors. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation" has been heard in the tabernacles of the righteous." "The right hand of the Lord" hath done "valiantly." "The right hand of the Lord is exalted." "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord," is the shout of the regenerate man.

The attitude of the children of God toward death was nobly exemplified in St. Paul. With every year spent in the kingdom of God's Son, Christ Jesus, he grew stronger in the faith and bolder in his confession of the only name that saves. Advancing years brought increasing pains and sorrows, persecution and imprisonment; but the greatest apostle of them all remained undaunted. We thrill as we hear, ringing down through the centuries:

St. Paul's Joyous Cry at the Approach of Death

For it is: I A Cry of Exultation, II A Cry of Exaltation.

More than ordinarily earnest and impressive are the contents of this chapter. St. Paul urges his spiritual son to be faithful in his ministry. He is to preach the Word; to be instant in season, out of season; to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. Timothy is warned to be prepared against the time when men will welcome false and self-seeking teachers; when fables, rather than the truth, will successfully appeal to them. "But watch thou in all things," the apostle continues: "Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry"

These admonitions are the more enforced and impressed on the young disciple's mind by St. Paul's reference to his approaching death: "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand." Here is the spirit of the brave and stalwart warrior who has fought long and well in the holy cause, and who now hails with gladness the rest from strife and the dawn of a cloudless, glorious, never-ending day, when the garment of the warrior, no longer rolled in blood, shall be stainless in the beautiful light which shines forth from the Son of Righteousness.

It is a cry of exultation which sounds in our ears as we follow the apostle from scene to scene which his graphic pen describes for us. "I am now

ready to be offered,” he declares. Like a drink-offering, or libation, he is ready to be poured out on the altar, to shed his life’s blood. The nearness of death does not cause him to start and shudder. Foreseeing that cruel death by martyrdom will be his portion, he does not shrink from the ordeal. No cry of terror escapes his lips: his cry is a cry of exultation.

The inspired writer carries his readers, in imagination, from the altar and its sacred surroundings to the busy sea-shore. Ships are entering and leaving the harbor, others are at anchor. The apostle’s own bark is about to be loosed from its moorings: “the time of my departure (‘loosing of anchor and rope’) is at hand.” The seaman looks forward in glad expectancy to the commencement of the voyage. The swelling sail, the foaming wave, the invigorating ocean breezes, all summon him from his haunts and associates on shore. The apostle is full of joy as he prepares to loose from the shores of time and set out for the eternal shore. He longs for this last voyage, “a voyage to the eternal harbor of heavenly peace.” His cry is not one of sorrow and repining: it is the cry of exultation.

And now the reader is transported from the noise and bustle of the teeming shore to the roar and tumult of the arena. The good fight have I fought; the race have I finished; the faith have I kept. The apostle to the Gentiles has engaged in many a desperate conflict. He has been pitted against “wild beasts.” His fighting has not been in the black livery of hell; he has not fought under the flag of traitor or pirate; he has not done obeisance to Satan, the world, the flesh. He has fought the good fight. Christ has been his captain. He has fought for the truth and against error. He has defended righteousness and has assailed all wrong and wickedness. He has maintained the cause of Christ and salvation through him alone. “The good fight I have fought.” Hear the cry of exultation!

“The race have I finished.” Every weight is laid aside, the sin which doth so easily beset us is cast away, and before the saints, that cloud of friendly and approving witnesses, the race set before him is run with patience. Paul says his life has been a race. The course is now about finished; he has entered the home-stretch, and is still looking to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith. He has not fallen by the roadside, he has not faltered. He has been faithful all the way. “The course have I finished.” Do you note the cry of exultation?

“The faith have I kept” – once more rings out the triumphant voice of the apostle. There is a faith of the heart, with which we believe, with which

Christ and his merits are accepted. This faith the great Paul had indeed defended. But it is not of this faith that he here speaks. There is still another kind of faith: the faith which is believed; the body and deposit of truth; “that good thing” which has been committed to us and which we are to “keep by the Holy Ghost” (2 Tim. 1:14). We read concerning this faith in the letter of Jude: “Contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” Time would fail for the recounting of the many occasions when Paul presented with utmost fidelity the faith, the truth, that saves; how, before friend and foe, in the presence of great and small, in many climes, in cities, towns, and hamlets, he proclaimed the Gospel. As his career draws to a close, he shouts: “The faith have I kept.” Once more rings forth the cry of exultation.

All this triumph proceeds, not from the lips of Paul the Pharisee, but from the lips of Paul the Christian. This is no carnal boasting. It is the same spiritually minded Paul who lamented his wretchedness, who announced the universality of sin and death, and heralded the sole Savior-dom of Christ. The victor has not fallen from the heights of grace to the vile depths of work righteousness. He hath done all things through Christ which strengthened him.

“Christ! I am Christ’s! and let the name suffice you;
Aye, for me, too, he greatly hath sufficed;
Lo, with no winning words I would entice you;
Paul has no honor and no friend but Christ.”

My dear friends, you today mourn the death of a beloved father. You should be thankful that he was spared to you through so long a period of years. He had your respect and affection, for he was a man of sterling character, of intellectual power, of sound judgment, of kindly and gracious disposition. He loved his home, and beautified and glorified it not only with the things of this life, but especially with the treasures, heavenly and eternal. Though not a minister, but a layman, our departed father in Israel was a staunch defender of the faith as it is in Jesus. His understanding of Bible teaching was clear; his grasp of the position of our church on the great questions affecting the soul’s welfare was intelligent and strong. In days of stress and storm he did not waver. When weaklings were prone to surrender and to compromise the truth, he stood firm. He contended earnestly for the faith. His pastors found in him a loyal friend and, when days were dark, a

comforter, and, when the battle was fierce, a companion and an ally of no mean caliber. We mourn today. But our father in Christ mourns not. He exults. He has fought the good fight, he has finished the course, he has kept the faith. This was his exultant cry when death was near. This was his triumphant shout as his eyes closed on the scenes temporal and his spirit, loosed from its earthly moorings, was wafted to the heavenly shore. God grant you, his children, grace to live such a life in Christ, and to die in this same spirit of victory. May we all take courage from the life and the death of this Christian father. Oh, let us not deny, but ever confess, the truth as God has revealed it in his holy Word and taught it to the church, and let us hold in unwavering faith to the Savior who bought us with his blood and made final victory possible and certain.

The apostle turns from the past to the future. He would now forget those things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before. He presses “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The things which he beholds in prospect elate him, and now we hear from his lips:

A Cry of Exaltation

In an exalted frame of mind, in a spirit of utter joy and hope, the hope that maketh not ashamed, the veteran of many spiritual conflicts sends out the word, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day: and not only to me, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.”

There remains nothing more to be done save the crowning of the victor. The struggle is ended, the pain and the suffering are over. As he who contended manfully and successfully in the arena is crowned by the judges of the contest; as he who has run his race and won it is borne in triumph by his friends to receive the coveted prize – so the great apostle turns to his Judge, from whose hand he is to receive a reward infinitely more precious than any earthly reward or crown which could be given. The crown of righteousness is to be his portion. The divine command, “Be ye holy,” is now to be accomplished perfectly in the heart and the life of this much-tried apostle. He who exclaimed, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death” (Rom. 8:24)? now is enabled to shout in jubilant tones, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” and, “Thanks

be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:27). The days of sinful flesh are past, the time of temptation is no more – in that kingdom of glory to which the apostle in exalted spirit looks forward. His crown of righteousness will not be merely an imputed righteousness, the righteousness of Christ reckoned to him who in faith accepts it (and who can ever command eloquence golden enough to declare that righteousness, who can summon to his aid melody sweet enough to sound forth the praise of that righteousness?); but his righteousness will be that of a heart pure and undefiled, an intellect delivered from the beclouding and degrading power of sin, a conscience void of all offense. He will then be transformed, and will have renewing of mind in full perfection. glorious hour! unspeakably blessed days and years and ages when sin shall be for him no more!

It is true that not by human might, nor by his own endeavor has the apostle earned the crown of righteousness. It is a free gift, earned by Christ, and now bestowed by him. The apostle still clings to the dear old truth, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). On the borderland between two worlds, St. Paul finds comfort in Christ and in him alone. Yes, it is this very Christ from whose hand the apostle will receive his crown. He who died to win salvation is the man whom God has appointed to distribute final rewards and punishments. He, even the Lord Jesus, who “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,” will appear as the righteous Judge. His judgment is infallible. Therefore, when the crown is placed on the victorious apostle’s brow, no hand dare remove that emblem of triumph. Surely, Paul had ample reason, in view of the Judge’s gracious and irreversible decision and in prospect of the golden crown of righteousness, to cry out in the spirit of exaltation.

“A great additional source of joy to Paul” is exhibited in the following words: “And not to me only.” The victor is not afflicted with selfishness, nor is he inflated with thoughts of himself as are so many who have triumphed in the field of battle or in the arena of scientific controversy. “To all them that have loved his appearing” will a crown be given. How often Paul had urged his pupils and his readers in general to look “for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). All who heeded this injunction, all whose habit of life it was to look forward in faith and hope to the consummation of all things,

would be associated with this unselfish apostle in the glories of “that day.” The cry of exaltation is heard in these sentences of St. Paul. The venerable man, the bruised and scarred warrior is in an ecstasy of joy because of those heavenly treasures which are soon to be his everlasting possession, and which the saints in glory will share with him.

Beloved, you know how your father longed for the home above. He prayed that he might be delivered from the burdens and the cares of time. He asked that he might soon enjoy that rest which remaineth unto the people of God. In prospect of joys which have no end, in certain hope that the crown of righteousness would soon be his, he was uplifted in spirit, and his words as death drew near were a cry of exaltation. Ah, my friends, have you caught from his “joyance (sic) the surprise of joy”? Though sorrowing this day and hour, are you still happy in the thought that your father has gone home to God, and are you happy in the conviction that you are following your father in the way which can bring only exaltation of spirit? I have reason to believe and to hope this of you. God grant you his grace, for Christ’s sake, that you may fight the good fight of faith and in the end receive the crown of righteousness, the salvation of your souls.

We stand, in imagination, on the great shore laved by the waters of eternity. A frail bark looses from its moorings. The sails fill with the favoring breeze. The vessel sets forth on its outbound voyage, and soon is speeding towards the heavenly goal. At the bow stands the mariner, anxiously looking for signs of yonder world. And now he beholds what seems to be a cross.¹ As he draws nearer and nearer to his destination, he sees no longer a cross, but the blessed Savior himself, with arms outstretched in welcome. The bark grates upon the shore. The voyager leaps from his frail craft and prostrates himself on the eternal sands before his Judge and Savior. And as, in exultant voice and spirit of exaltation, the prostrate one exclaims, “I have fought a good fight,” the Savior places on his brow a golden crown and in tones of incomparable sweetness says: “Servant of God, well done; well hast thou fought the better fight.” Amen.

1. Conclusion suggested by a large and beautiful floral cross given by the children of the deceased and placed on the altar during the funeral service.↩

52. What Makes The Christian Willing To Depart? By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to”be with Christ; which is far better.” – Philippians 1:23.

Occasion: The Death of an Elderly Pastor

Brethren of the Ministry, Members of this Congregation, and especially mourning Family:

What many of us have feared for the last two months has come to pass. Our brother and fellow-laborer has been called out of time to his reward. I say, we feared this, because many of us loved him, were united with him by bonds of affection and we dreaded the pain that comes from separation. We did not fear this separation for his sake, because he prayed much to be relieved and was ready and prepared for the end. We feared it for our sakes. It may have been a selfish fear, but it was there. It would have been better to have asked God to give us resignation to his will and to have taken the saints made perfect and the holy angels for our example; for they do the will of God gladly and cheerfully.

Now we are gathered here to give this brother a Christian burial, to speak words of comfort to bleeding hearts, to help these friends to submit their wills to God, to thank the Lord for all the mercy and truth that he has shown the departed, and to admonish all to faithfulness unto the end. Even in our affliction and amid tears, though emotion choke the voice and aroused feelings strive for mastery, we are going to lift up our hearts to the Giver of every good and perfect gift and say: “Father, thy will be done. We

thank thee.” And even while we say it there steals into our hearts gratitude and trust and resignation.

Those who stood nearest our brother during the last months noticed that he was possessed of but one feeling, which developed into a longing. He seemed to have a premonition that the end was at hand. Why should a Christian not have it; why should the Spirit of God not commune with the believing soul and mature this thought within him and so reveal the approach of the end? But in spite of all the encouragement that was given by a devoted wife and children he seemed unable to banish from his mind this thought and that probably because it was born of God. Repeatedly he expressed his willingness to go and made his preparation for it. He felt that his work was done, that he would be better off to be at rest.

God has made us with a love for life. We cling to it most tenaciously. This is especially the case in life’s early stages. Ordinarily a child of God wishes to live and to glorify God by a life of service. Frequently to desire to die is sinful, because it is born of a rebellious, impatient heart. But there may be circumstances that ripen within us the desire to depart. You have an example to prove this statement in so exemplary a Christian as St. Paul. We ask the question:

What Makes the Christian Willing to Depart?

I. The Cross:

At the time that the apostle, Paul, wrote the words of this text he was a prisoner in a Roman prison. The last years of his life are full of adventure and hardship. There was scarcely a hardship to which he was not exposed. He seems to have had a premonition that his end was rapidly approaching and he expresses his willingness to go. He knew that he would experience a great relief if he went from battle to victory. The cross aroused in him such a longing.

OUR DEPARTED BROTHER BORE THE ILLS THAT ARE COMMON TO ALL MEN. The race is under the curse of sin and on some individuals it rests more heavily than on others. No matter how fortunate man’s lot may be, he is in a world of sin and the relation between himself and God is disturbed. Fix it as we will, we cannot escape the toil for bread and the care that goes with the

rearing of families and the trials that necessarily go with our callings. During the last four years our brother was a man in broken health and at times suffered severely. The disease that took him off must have preyed on him a long time.

Is it any wonder that when a man approaches the period of natural decline and in addition is a constant sufferer that weak, human nature cries for relief and that he is ready to depart?

BROTHER S— BORE THE CROSSES THAT GO WITH CHRISTIAN LIFE. There are the constant struggles with self, the battle with sin in the heart. "What makes the struggle without so hard to resist is the weakness within. Read the epistles of Paul if you want an accurate description of the battle that rages within the heart. No man is a Christian who has not experienced it. So long as the Spirit is present the battle rages. By its ferocity the degree of grace is determined. If you are a child of God, review your own experiences. Recall the temptations of Satan, his lies, his cunning, his flattery, his trickery. Then recall the pleadings of the Spirit, his warnings, his chidings, his instructions. The one has impelled you to sin; the other has restrained you, while you have been like a football tossed hither and thither. How often when the battle was hottest, you have been just ready to give up and but for the sustaining hand of God, you would have succumbed. What a relief it will be when the battle is over!

Disabuse your mind of the thought that a minister has no such a battle to pass through and to renew every day. Do not believe that a minister has no besetting sin, no weakness out of which Satan makes capital, that he does not here and there slip and fall and that he is not often thoroughly ashamed of the poor fight that he has put up. Do not think that a preacher is built on different lines from other Christians. He has the same struggle with his temper, his tongue, his hand, his eyes and his heart that other Christians have. Do not believe that a preacher has no dark hours, no periods of gloom and even despondency, no horrible thoughts and Satanic suggestions. Just because he is a preacher, these temptations are all intensified. Satan would rather vanquish the captain than a private. What rejoicing among the wicked when a preacher slips! And how far-reaching the effects when a minister of the Gospel side-steps!

Is it any wonder that a serious-minded Christian will occasionally sigh: "O God, relieve me from this endless struggle, and give me the final victory over my and thine enemies!"

THE DEPARTED BORE THE CROSSES AND AFFLICTIONS THAT GO WITH HIS CALLING. It was his lot to be a preacher. For forty years he stood in the pulpit and if you will go and ask the people whom he served: "What was the central thought of all his preaching and teaching?" I make bold to assert that to a man they will say: "He held up the cross and on it we saw our crucified Lord." He did not stand in front of the cross that his shadow might fall upon the Lord, it was not his person that was to be prominent; but modestly he stood behind the cross where its shadow fell on him. While many preachers find the cross of Christ a tame, and even a threadbare subject, not he. He knew that the supreme desire of a repentant sinner is forgiveness, and he also knew that nothing gives forgiveness, but the blood of Christ. Happy the preacher whose heart has been cleansed by it and to whose soul it has become the highest treasure!

But the man that preaches the cross of Christ with all that it implies, will find out that he must bear it. In every community the man who stands unflinchingly for righteousness, will stir up Satan and his adherents. Preaching Christ implies a clear testimony against sin and an earnest admonition to a holy life. Let your message be saturated with these ideas, that sin is an offense to God, that he will punish it, that repentance implies a rejection of sin and the new life and bear the message that is personal, searching, incisive and let us see whether there is not plenty of opposition. Woe to that preacher who sends the sinner home from church at ease with his life and satisfied with his course! When God calls him to an account how will he stand! But the man who arouses the sinner from his condition, must expect that if he drags a soul out of the kingdom of darkness Satan will retaliate.

I think that I speak truth when I say that in any given community no man has so many friends and no man has so many enemies as the Christian minister. No man is loved more than he, and no man is hated worse. No man is more highly respected and no man is more thoroughly despised than he. Of no man does the community speak more kindly, but no man is more censured and defamed than the preacher. Some love to belittle his person and his work by telling jokes about him and poking fun at him; but no man is more desired on serious occasions and exerts a profounder influence on community life than he.

It is true that some of the crosses which the preacher bears he prepares for himself. We are only human and make mistakes, but they are of the

intellect rather than of the heart. No matter how well intentioned the pastor is he may err and sometimes seriously. This often gives rise to misunderstandings and soon to persecutions. Sometimes in moral questions the pastor may lack tact and a molehill may grow into a mountain. But no matter how careful and tactful the pastor may be, let us not forget that the work is done in opposition to the devil and when you strike at him, he strikes back. There are sometimes treacherous, malicious members in the congregation who take advantage of a minister's weakness and magnify his faults. So the minister as much if not more than the members is a cross bearer.

Brethren of the ministry, have you never said in an hour of weakness: "O God, why hast thou led me into this calling and into the midst of these people?" And when the waters of tribulation threatened to engulf you, have you never said: "O Lord, it is enough; I am ready to depart."

Yes, the cross makes a Christian ready to depart.

II. The Crown:

St. Paul, the writer of this text, looked forward to the crown. He reviews his life. Casting a sweeping look backward he says: "I have fought the good fight of faith, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." And then turning toward the future he sees the crown: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." It is this that gives him hope and that softens the terrors of death.

This crown came to our Lord. His whole life was not spent in the state of humiliation, but this being ended and the work of that state being accomplished, he passed into the state of exaltation and is now crowned with everlasting glory. His life was not made up entirely of suffering and persecution and conflict and death. He did not forever lay aside the use of his divine power and majesty. He did this for a season, that he might pay the penalty of sin. But when that was accomplished he unceasingly exercises his divine majesty and now sits at the right hand of God. It was the prospect of this glory that cheered him. When death stared him in the face, he looked beyond the grave to his resurrection and found support. It was the assurance of victory that gave him courage to enter the conflict.

It was he who said: "Where I am there shall my disciples be also." The members belong to the head and go with it to shame or glory. The soldier goes with his general both to battle and to triumph; and out on the battlefield, amid shot and shell, it is the prospect of victory that gives courage.

The crown was always the symbol of victory and honor. In times past it was placed on the brow of the conqueror, the athlete, the poet, the warrior, or on anyone who had rendered a service of distinction. Frequently among these ancients it was only a wreath of laurel that would fade away, but it was desired for what it represented. It was the sign of the recognition of distinguished service by the people and no price was too great to give in exchange for it. It gratified the natural craving of the human heart. It was for this crown that the victor had trained for and for it he had lived. No sacrifice was too great, no exercise too strenuous, no demand too severe to gain the crown. And when it came, so great was the joy that sometimes fathers fell dead from excitement when their sons were so honored; and sons immortalized their own and the names of their families when they were so crowned.

There will be a special luster about the crown of the preacher. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and they that have led many unto righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "He that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully." Ours it not a calling that is highly esteemed by the world; but it is the most glorious of all callings because it is concerned about souls. There is an abundant reward for that man who points souls heavenward. In this life the greatest reward of our work is the gratitude of a rescued soul. What will it be on the other side! Suppose that some soul shall meet you as you enter heaven and shall lead you down the golden street up to the throne and shall say: "Father, this is the man who taught me the way of life. I am here because he was a faithful servant of thine. Add luster to his crown." That will call forth the shout of the redeemed and the swelling anthem of the saved.

God has not told us much about the crown, nor the life to come. It is enough for us to know that it exists and that it awaits us. In this present state if it were revealed in all its fullness, no doubt, we could not grasp it anyway and if we could see it, its glory would blind us. Yes, here and there a ray of light falls upon us from that better world, but it is just a glint of light that comes through a chink in the wall that separates time from eternity.

Sometimes these revelations are given us in figures of speech to stoop to our weakness because we could not grasp the literal statement. But Paul here gives us a revelation that is literal, that we can understand and that is all that we need. He says: "I will be with my Lord." That's all that I want. I do not care where heaven is, nor what I will do there. I want to be with Jesus and I know that if it comes to pass, I will be happy. All my longings, aspirations and hopes will be fulfilled. If I can be made like him in holiness and righteousness, if I can strip off this garment of sin and put on the robe of perfection, that will be heaven for me. If I can live in his presence and like Moses, look upon his face and absorb his glory till I shine, that will be heaven for me.

Brethren of the ministry, be faithful; there awaits you a crown. Bear, endure, suffer, but do not retreat: for "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And when you contemplate the crown, the prompting of the Spirit will say: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

The old and faithful parishioners of our departed brother have sent in this beautiful floral tribute. It answers the question: "What makes a Christian ready to depart?" "With mute lips and with silence that is more eloquent than speech it answers:"The Cross and CroAvn." Let us hope that our brother now wears the crown. Amen.

53. Our Departure By Rev. M. K. Hartmann

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.” – Luke 2:29-30.

Occasion: A Sermon to the Old

THIS TEXT belongs to the old. Its message of joy and cheer is very acceptable to them. The young too may find consolation here; but especially the old. Our hearts beat for the old. They have been with us so long. Their departure is near at hand. Our tears and our prayers are with them, our tears because we are sorry to see them go, our prayers, we wish them God’s peace on their last long journey.

Life is a gift. Life is a blessing. Undeniably so, if lived according to the precepts of God and faith in Jesus. Such a life after all is the only life well worth living. And such a life Simeon lived. Turn to the Sacred Book, read what the evangelist says about him: “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” What a testimony to this man’s life and character!

We can never grow weary of reading the beautiful story of Simeon’s meeting with the child Jesus in the temple. Led by the Spirit the old man wends his way once more to the temple of God. His mind ever retains in firm grasp the promise of the Holy Spirit: that he should not die, before he had seen “The Hope of Israel.” He firmly believes the promise. In the temple Simeon finds the child, Jesus, joyfully he takes it in his arms, holds it aloft and pours out his soul to God. And this is the burden of his song: “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the

face of all people. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”

Let us, at this hour, center our thoughts about our departure. We are about to lower into the bosom of Mother Earth one who has labored faithfully for many years in the vineyard of the Lord. Peace is now his reward, by the grace of God. But what about our departure? The manner of our departure; this is the most momentous question that faces us. It is important for us that we get along in this life, that we get through it successfully; but far more important to us, is the manner of our departure, how we get out of this life.

I. Depart in peace:

Let our departure be in peace, in peace with our fellow-men if possible, in peace with ourselves, but above all in peace with our God. The Christian longs for peace, strives for peace, finds it in life and retains it in death. Death is but a sleep and then the blessed awakening in the kingdom of God. Simeon departed in peace, be assured of that, my friend. He was ready, he was prepared for the day, it should not come upon him unawares. What a lesson for us all. Be ready, be prepared. God was with Simeon before that eventful hour, in the temple where he found the Messiah. God heard his prayer. Simeon did not fear. The evening shadows, proclaiming the night, descend upon him, death draws near. Simeon bows his head, for God is with him. The Lord is his sun and shield. He will not fail him, but will guide him through the valley of the shadow of death. To die – your conscience at rest and God with you – is bliss. Without, the tempest rages; the breakers roar, the panther cries; within, all is quiet, peace and rest. But to die with a forlorn hope, to die with a stricken conscience, to die in enmity with God: fatal end! indescribable woe! Or to die, a disciple of those who say, “Eat, drink and be merry,” God-forgotten, God-ignored – eternal death! Do not be deceived, the world may offer you peace, beware of her peace. She has no peace to give. Only in Christ Jesus can you find peace.

To depart in peace you must lay hold of the cross. Believe in the atoning power of the blood of Jesus. Confess your sins, strive for better things, follow in the footsteps of the Master, and serve God in fear and love. Paul departed in peace, because he had fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. Death has no terror for the Christian, the thought of judgment no dread. “Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me ... I come, I come.”

II. Heaven our desire:

Peace and heaven go hand in hand. Heaven is the blessed land of peace, perfect peace reigns there; peace, and joy unconfined.

The old must die. All laws point that way. The young, however, are not immune. "So teach us, to number our days; that we may apply our heart unto wisdom." But life, in this world, means something to us all, even to the old. Life here has also a kingdom for the old and faithful: the sun still shines for them; the flowers are still for them; hope never dying is strong within them; faith victorious in many trials buoys their spirit up. And borne on the wings of that faith, the Christian is ever content with his lot. But the future is calling, the land beyond rises before them. "Heaven is my home." Like Simeon's the heart is full of longing and expectation. Like St. Paul we say: "For having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

In death all ties that hold us to the earth are broken. Tender, loving ties must then break. Sometimes we dread the day and occasion when these ties must be severed, and when we must go, we may be tempted somewhat to linger. But let nothing tempt us and put us in an unwilling state of mind. Let us rather hail the day with joy. At death all loving ties are broken. He who will not deny himself, take up the cross and follow Jesus and who lives for this world alone, who is a servant of mammon, such a one is not willing and desirous to depart. And we do not wonder at this. Life after death means in this instance so little. God's loving call to the Promised Land has fallen upon deaf ears. But the Christian feels otherwise. He too loves and with a purer heart the good things in this life. But nothing in all the world, not even those dearest to him, can quench the flame of desire to depart. Like Simeon of old he is waiting for the day when he "shall see him face to face."

III. Be strong in faith:

Faith is indispensable. All the victories we have won, have been won by the grace of God, through faith. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And so shall in time the last enemy be overcome. In death, by faith, we shall conquer death. Simeon was not afraid to die. He was ready and willing to meet the great issues of life and death, he knew but one result: that he should be returned victor. Faith in whom? In yourself, in arm of man, in human power? No! Such a faith means defeat. He who is so minded builds his house upon the sand. "And the rain descended, and the

floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

Believe in God, believe in Jesus. The Lord alone can help and save us. How noble Simeon’s faith! Holding in his arms the little child, he praises God for the coming of the Savior of the world, the Savior of all the world, the Light of all the Gentiles – so Simeon sees him. What reason did he have for his judgment of Jesus? “He sees in this child no royal form nor display, but a form like that of a poor beggar,” and yet he elevates this child to the proud distinction of being the Savior of the world. Again we ask, What reason did he have for his judgment of Jesus? The answer must be: Faith, faith in God, faith in Jesus. Enlightened by the Spirit, Simeon believes what God’s words and promises declare. He believes in Jesus as his only Savior from sin, death and the power of the devil. Happy the man who can thus believe: he shall be saved. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The manner of our departure depends upon our relationship to Jesus, God’s Son. If we believe in him as our Savior and our King and put our lives in God’s hand all will be well.

IV. Confess the Lord:

“Thee, God, we praise, thy name we bless,
Thee, Lord of all, we do confess;
The whole creation worships thee,
The Father of eternity.”

Simeon, with his heart attuned to song and a song upon his lips, confesses the name of the Lord. All God’s children confess him. It is the Lord’s will, it is his desire that we confess his holy name. And what child of God can refrain from glorifying him? What heart full of love toward the heavenly Father can remain mute and dumb in his presence? Mary, Elizabeth praised him; the aged Anna praises him; in the old covenant, in the new covenant, thousands and thousands have glorified and confessed the Lord God Almighty.

The Christian is the recipient of countless blessings; let us not forget that. God is the Good Giver, from him all blessings flow. Let us thank him for his goodness and mercy, let us confess him, his majesty, his power and

glory. And as the years come and go for us, let our confession become stronger and stronger. And when the night draws near, and we must bid the world farewell, let us sing once more – our last song on earth – to the Redeemer’s praise. Such a song signifies a grateful heart, and indicates a believing soul. Confess the Lord at all times. “Bless the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ...who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” We have every reason to confess the Lord. Be a witness unto his mighty acts, proclaim the sweet Gospel of God’s love, sing of him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Confess the Lord in the hour of death. The martyrs of old went to a cruel death, but they died with the name of Jesus on their lips. Our brother, whose mortal remains lie here before us, went to his death confessing the Lord. The goodness of a gracious God had been revealed to him, and he in turn must confess him. But it is the Lord’s work. He opens the eye that we may see him. He loosens the tongue that we may praise him, and confess his name.

But what about our departure? What manner of departure shall it be? This great, vital question looms up before us. What shall the answer be? We must decide for ourselves and decide quickly. Come, Holy Spirit, with light divine, enlighten us, that we may choose rightly, and lay hold on the crown of life. God grant it, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

54. Ripening For God's Garner

By Rev. C. K. Solberg

"Thou Shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." – Job 5:26.

Occasion: For an Elderly Woman

Life at the longest is brief. How fleet and uncertain! "What is life?" asks the apostle, and he answers: "It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:16).

Death makes no distinction of age. It takes life in the bud of childhood and in the bloom of youth, as well as in the ripeness of old age. Beautifully does Longfellow express this when he says:

"There is a Reaper, whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between."

And in God's estimation the little child may be as much a shock of ripe grain out of his field as the weary and worn pilgrim of old age. When he gathers in his harvest, the grain is ripe, whether he takes the babe or the aged person. To him "one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8). As Moses says in the ninetieth Psalm: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

But how especially fitting is the figure of the ripe corn, when we apply it to the remains of the aged! There lies the cold form with the many deep wrinkles of face and the head crowned with the snow-white or silvery gray

hair, reminding us of the shock of ripe corn that has been cut down at harvest time.

Doubly true and beautiful is the figure of our text in its application, when we are gathered at the casket of a dear old saint, as we are today. Not only did she “die in the Lord,” but she lived her long life “in the Lord.” Through a long Christian life she ripened for the Garner of God and she goes to her grave “in full age like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.”

In infancy she was planted by Baptism into the fertile soil of God’s kingdom. In childhood she received the daily impression of God’s sanctifying grace through the prayer, instruction and example of Christian parents. Thus under the sunshine and rain of God’s grace, the bud unfolded into the bloom of youth. However, for a few years after her confirmation, she became neglectful and careless in her spiritual life, but never willfully surrendered herself to the worldly life that so much influenced her young heart. At the age of twenty she passed through a spiritual awakening and gave herself up to a more intimate fellowship with her Savior and a deeper consecration of service. Ever since she has enjoyed a life-long assurance that she was a child of God. At the same time she realized through the years more and more her own weakness and unworthiness and her utter dependence upon the Lord, and rested implicitly upon the promises of God, knowing that his grace through Christ Jesus would save and keep her to the end. In Word and Sacrament she prayerfully sought and found strength to persevere in her fight of faith; and in humble, faithful service she endeavored to use her God-given talents and time. Thus she matured and persevered in a long and beautiful life of consecrated Christian womanhood. She reached the ripe old age of ninety. When she realized that her life was coming to a close, she rejoiced in her hope of eternal rest and reward through Christ Jesus. As she lay there waiting to be called to her heavenly home, some of the last words she uttered were these: “I am lying here thinking so clearly of heaven.” A few minutes after without any pangs of pain she fell “asleep in Jesus.” Her soul left the house of clay and entered into the rest which is in store for the people of God. The shock of ripe corn was gathered into God’s garner. Kept by the grace of God through the springtime of life, she passed safely through life’s lovely summer season, bore the acceptable fruits of faith unto the autumn of life, and then chilling wintry blasts of death took her life, and we shall soon lay the cold form to

rest under the sod, where it shall rest till the dawn of Resurrection Day, when she shall rise to new life and eternal summer. How beautiful is old age under such circumstances! Beautiful in life! She walked with God. Most beautiful in death! God took her home. The weary pilgrim rests. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps. 116:15).

And what a cheering and staying comfort to those who survive! Parting in death with our loved ones is always painful. But when our departed dead go to be with God, the pangs of parting are removed by the blessed assurance that they are sweetly resting in the heavenly home, and we retain that sweet hope of eternal reunion that awaits us beyond death and grave.

The aged brother and sister, who survive this sainted sister, will greatly miss her. But may the sacred memories and the sweet, parting words she left you, be a lasting comfort to you. And may her Savior continue to be yours. Soon shall come the day of eternal reunion.

We do not only wish to talk about the DEAD ___, ALTHOUGH IT IS COMFORTING AND PLEASANT TO PERFORM THIS TASK IN THE CASE BEFORE US TODAY. IT IS NOT ALWAYS THUS WHEN WE GATHER ABOUT THE REMAINS OF THE DEAD. THESE SERVICES ARE RATHER FOR THE ___ LIVING than for the dead. Our departed sister has gone beyond the reach and the need of our assistance. But we are here to continue our pilgrimage, to fight our battles, to win our victories. We need the lessons of this solemn occasion. And the Lord has a vital message to the living in this hour, not only a word of comfort to the bereaved relatives, but an important admonition to all who have gathered here today.

Friends, remember, our harvest-time is coming when the Reaper of Death will be sent to us. We are daily ripening for eternity. ARE WE RIPENING FOR HEAVEN? Are we ready, should death suddenly summon us? As the corn must receive rain, sun, light and fresh air from time it is planted in fertile soil in spring until the fall season, when it stands there with the ripe, golden corn in the dry husk – a finished product, so must we day by day continue to live in union with Christ, take freely into our souls the Bread of Life as it comes to us in Word and Sacrament, bask in the sunlight of God's love, breathe the air of his life-giving and life-sustaining Spirit, and quench our thirst from the "Fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins," and thus growing in the soil of God's grace and deeply rooted by faith in Christ Jesus, we increase in faith and love, mature in our spiritual life and bring forth the fruits of faith in faithful Christian service. Then and only then are we ready to be cut down by the sickle of death and have our soul,

like a sheaf of ripe grain, carried by the angels into God's garner above. We shall not be taken unawares, whether we are taken in the prime of life or when full of years. We shall be in position to welcome the grim messenger of death with a greeting of triumph. Even if, like Paul, we shall be cut down in the midst of our busy activities, like Paul we shall also realize that our life-work is finished and be able to say with him: "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). "But thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

Often death may seem to come out of season – before one's life-work seems finished, or even before it has been entered upon and we say: "What an untimely death!" But it only appears untimely or unseasonable to us. God never harvests out of season. "When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark 4:29). God's grain is always taken in "full age," whether it be an infant, a youth, or an aged person. His ways are not our ways.

Young friend, your harvest-time may soon be here. Are you ready? Are you living the life that counts for good in this world and that has promise of reward in the next? It is not merely a question of being ready for the sickle, so as to be gathered unto God's garner, when we are cut down. But it is of first importance to live the life that glorifies God and benefits man. It must be a life of self-surrender in the fellowship with Jesus. Then you will be ripening for heaven and always ready for the harvest.

My aged friend, what kind of a life have you been living all these years of grace? Can it be possible that you are still living a selfish and sinful life, still a stranger to the mercy of God in Christ? If so, you too are ripening, but for what? Shall I say it? Ripening for hell! A terrible ripening! A dreadful harvest! To stand at the end of a wasted life with all hopes blasted and compelled to say: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved" (Jer. 8:20). The patient Lord again calls you today to repent of your sins, turn to him and cry for mercy. He loves you still and is willing to save.

It is dreadful to grow old in sin and ripen for hell. A long life in that case, is a twofold cause: it is a curse to all who come under the evil

influence of such a life; and it is an everlasting curse to that lost soul itself. Sad and hopeless to stand at the grave of such ones.

What a contrast is this occasion! This is an occasion for rejoicing and thanksgiving as we think of this sainted sister and her glorious gain in death. And let it be to all of us a mighty call to reconsecrate ourselves to a full and faithful life in the fellowship and footsteps of Jesus. Now that our sister has won such a glorious victory, let there be joy among us.

There is joy in heaven among the angels over this ingathering. There should be joy and praise on earth among God's people. Rejoice, brother and sister, over the home-going of your dear one. There she now awaits you. Let it be your daily prayer and endeavor to meet her there.

Rejoice, believing relatives and friends, over the victory she has won. Let heaven be your goal.

Rejoice, Bethlehem congregation, over the triumphal entry this faithful member has made into the church triumphant. Let it be your sole and supreme aim and effort under God's guidance and blessing to help all your members live the Christ-life, so that when they are summoned by death, they may be transferred from your membership to the church celestial.

Her departure is a GLORIOUS GAIN. What a gain to her! To inherit the kingdom, to be crowned in glory, to see her Savior face to face and to sing his praises forever! It is a gain to you, brother and sister, in its deep and sweet sense. Oh, what greater good could you wish your beloved sister, than to know that she is with God! It makes you richer and happier to have her there than if she were here. It is a gain to this church to have one more of its members transferred. And heaven has gained another sainted sinner. God help us all to live the life that is hid with God in Christ! Then friends, whether we live to the ripe old age of ninety, or die young, we shall come to our grave "in a full age as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." The harvesters of heaven, the angels, shall carry us like precious sheaves into the garner of God. May we all realize this by the grace of God. Amen.

55. The Christian's Comfort In The Hour Of Death By Rev. L. H. Schuh, Ph. D.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” – Ps. 23:4.

Occasion: Sudden Death of an Elderly Christian Man

Members and Friends of our Congregation and of this mourning Family:

The announcement, “M—— B—— is dead,” came to this community and our congregation like a flash of lightning from a clear sky. Last Sunday morning, still in good health, he attended the services in this house. It was his custom to be here and to confess Christ with us and edify his soul. On Monday evening the first announcement of the end was made. God in mercy did not cut him off in the twinkling of an eye. “Cut me not off in the midst of my days,” was a prayer that was fulfilled here. But yet what a striking illustration that in the midst of life we are in death. There was one day of preparation vouchsafed. When it was apparent that the death-angel would claim him, his reason was unclouded, and he called for the Holy Sacrament and the prayers of the church. Then the end came. To each man, woman, and child present here today, there comes the same message that was announced to King Hezekiah: “Set thine house in order for thou shalt die and not live.”

We do not advocate the theory that leads a man in health to buy his coffin and to keep it by him in his house and to fill up all his waking hours with visions of the shroud, the bier and the grave. If that is piety at all, it is morbid, to say the least. We would rather urge upon you to think of living

and to glorify God by a life of service. The desire to die in most instances is sinful and has its root in an unwillingness to bear the crosses laid upon us by the Lord, or in despair of God's providence. The Creator made us to live and the desire is deep-seated. It comes from our nature; we cannot help clinging to life.

But do not rush to the other extreme and crowd out of your thoughts every suggestion of death, so that the final summons may find you wholly unprepared. While earthly things are uncertain, there are at least two certainties: "It is appointed to man once to die and after that the Judgment." This was the prayer sent up by Moses in the ninetieth Psalm: "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We are sure of death and it is the part of wisdom to prepare for it.

The idea of passing into death is not pleasant to our nature. We naturally shrink from it since the supreme desire of man and of all other living creatures is for life. We need something to fortify us against that hour. In view of our approaching end and of our need of support, let us ask the question;

What Comforts the Christian in the Hour of Death?

I. The Assurance that Death cannot harm him:

"I will fear no evil." Death has the same sources as all other evil. It is one of the world's greatest evils. We have a natural dread of it, but the Christian to a large extent loses this dread. He needs not fear it because it has been robbed of its power.

The psalmist does not say: "The valley of death," but, "The valley of the SHADOW of death." It has been reduced to a shadow. This may frighten a man, but it cannot harm him. Because a Christian knows this, he "walks" through this valley. A terror stricken man takes to his heels, while the man who is confident that there is no danger walks along leisurely.

St. Paul holds out the same consolation: "O death, where is thy sting?" A viper may hiss; but if robbed of its fangs, it cannot bite. It may look like the same viper and hiss as it did before, but it cannot harm. When a bee stings a man, it usually loses its sting; it can still buzz like a bee; it still looks like a

bee, but it cannot sting again. The shadow of a lion may frighten but it cannot devour. The shadow of a sword may alarm, but it cannot injure. The shadow of a thief may alarm, but it cannot kill. While death is dreadful to the flesh, it cannot harm.

Jesus has robbed death of its power. He says: "I am the resurrection and the life." He came unto the world to undo sin and all its consequences. Death is the direct result of sin. It was unknown until man disobeyed. On the cross the Savior said: "It is finished." The debt of sin was paid and the final proof is his resurrection. He came forth as the Conqueror. Into him death thrust his poisoned fangs and he left them there. Now death is harmless. In death the Christian walks into a passage; it is dark, it is forbidding, it chills; but it opens into eternal light, and he comes out unharmed. Look to the empty grave and if death did not harm your Lord, it will not harm you.

Jesus triumphed over death not only in his own person but in others. He raised Jairus' daughter. He conquered at the gates of Nain. He vanquished the foe at the grave of Lazarus. And at his own death many that slept in their graves came forth and appeared in the Holy City. If he could do that for others, he can do it for the departed. And he gives the promise that he will.

Jesus "became the first fruit of them that slept." In the Old Testament when the harvest was ripe one sheaf was cut and taken into the temple and waved before the Lord. It was an act of consecration. This one sheaf was a representative of the whole harvest. The act signified that as this one sheaf was presented unto the Lord, so the whole harvest was his. There was more to follow. A thing can be first only in reference to the second. If there is no second or third, there can be no first. If Christ was "the first fruit" there must necessarily be those who follow and our resurrection is assured by virtue of his. If we are to arise and come back in a glorified state, then death cannot harm us.

It is self-evident that the unbelieving world finds no comfort in this revelation of the Scriptures. For if there is a resurrection, then there is a life to come; there is a judgment; there is a reward both for the believer and the unbeliever; there is a heaven and a hell; there will be the chidings of an accusing conscience and the memory of neglected opportunities, of abused powers and senses, outraged warnings, of misled companions, and the prospect of wailing and gnashing of teeth. As a timid, frightened lad

whistles in the dark for his own encouragement, so the world laughs and mocks at the resurrection. But they shall see him whom they have pierced.

For this reason the unbeliever goes into the dark valley quaking. His teeth chatter; his knees tremble; his frame quakes. He goes to meet the king of terrors. He cannot deny the existence of death and his exit from the world is at best a leap into the dark.

But the Christian goes down into the valley comforted. This does not necessarily imply an easy death, for he may pass away with excruciating misery. The temporal effects of sin may be just as great to him as to the unbeliever. But the eternal effects are wiped away and his spirit has hope.

The departed brother had this hope. He expressed it. He clung to it in life and in death. And as we lay him to rest we do so believing that death did not harm him.

In the hour of death the Christian has

II. The Assurance that God is with him:

“For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” When a man is hungry, he seeks food. When he is thirsty, he finds drink. When he is weary, he longs for rest. When he is suffering he wants relief. When he is bereft, he needs friends and sympathy. When he is at death’s door, he must have comfort to give him courage. The psalmist finds this comfort in the presence of God at his dying bed.

There is something in our nature which shrinks from solitude. God has made us for companionship" and society, and being deprived of them we are not in our normal state and consequently unhappy. How much less fearful the dark night is with but one companion! How much less dreary and wearisome a long road is with but one wayfarer! How empty the house is when we are in it alone; how just one fellow-being seems to fill it up and to take away what haunts us! The presence of a dog, a cat, or a bird is a relief! In that journey to the other side not even our friends can accompany us, though they might be willing. More than one parent and friend has said at the grave; “Oh, that I might accompany you!” But the traveler to that bourne starts alone. Alone, did I say? Yes, so far as men are concerned, and yet not alone. “Thou are with me.” God, unseen to human eyes, is there to support the dying. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with

thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior.”

God is with the dying by his gracious indwelling. He is an omnipresent spirit and there is no place where he is not. He is everywhere by his creative presence, even in the heart of an unbeliever; but he is with the dying Christian in a still different sense. There is a sense in which God is not everywhere; but only in the heart of a believer. “Jesus answered and said unto him: If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.”

Then there is a sense in which God is not everywhere, for he cannot come where he already is. In a gracious way God is only where he is loved. There he dwells.

You have experienced his presence. You have felt his nearness, you have been aware of the Unseen Guest in your heart. You have felt his warnings and pleadings, his approval and promptings, his comforting and peace. You have communed with him at night upon your bed; you have been in the dark without, yet all was light within. He has accompanied you upon your journey and to your daily task. You have consulted with him in your perplexities and he has shown you the way out. You have been just as sure of his leadings as though he worked visibly by your side.

When Stephen was dying, his face was transfigured and he saw heaven open before him. How many of God’s saints have departed this life with the light of heaven upon their faces, a smile lighting up the countenance, a light beaming from the eye and the song of hallelujah upon the lips! They have felt God’s nearness and they were comforted.

God comforts the dying saint not only with his gracious indwelling, but also with the promises of his Word. What makes death terrible? Sin! But what comfort to hear and to know: “Though thy sins be red as scarlet I will wash them whiter than wool”; “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin”; “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

It is in the last hour that Satan makes his fiercest attack. He paints sin in all its heinousness. He arouses the conscience; he raises doubts; he accuses of imaginary crimes; he magnifies faults and decries the mercy of God.

Now I know why the dying call for the minister of the Gospel and welcome him to their bedside. How grateful the look, how tender the pressure of the hand when he comes and how consoling his ministrations! In the last extremity why did they not call for a banker, a lawyer, a merchant, or even a physician? Because they had nothing to offer. These and all other men in their callings are concerned about the things of this life. But when the world is about to pass away for such a one, he casts an anxious look around and in a feeble tone he says: "Call the pastor." There is not a moment lost. No idle questions are asked and when the servant of God appears no one is so welcome as he. Some one says with a tear-stained voice: "Pastor, we are so glad that you have come. Father has called for you. We all need you. We are so helpless in this hour. Come into the death-chamber and pray with us and the dying." And in that hour, never to be forgotten, there was the administration of the Sacrament and the proclamation of the Gospel. Then the cross was lifted up and souls huddled beneath it and as the water and the blood trickled down there came unto them the peace of God. There was another grateful look, another assuring pressure of the hand, and then for a moment a stillness – and all was over. A soul plumed itself for its heavenward flight. Yes, I understand, why the dying and the bereaved call for the pastor; because he comes when all else fails and he comes with the comforts of the Word and Sacraments. Thanks be to God who has called me to this ministration of comfort.

If you want God to be with you in death, choose him in life. It is possible to be saved "so as by fire." There may be a deathbed repentance that is genuine, but will you chance it? Will you be without him now, hoping that he will be with you then? Will you spend your life in the service of the world and then come and offer God the wreckage of a misspent life? Live close to God. Enjoy his presence in your heart every day; continually hear his comforting message: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and then when you wade into the cold stream, he will be your trusted companion who will guide you to the heavenly shore.

We believe that our departed brother set out on this last journey with one companion. As he led the life that is hidden in God, we comfort ourselves with the thought that he is now with God. May God comfort you all and be with you now, in death and in eternity. Amen.

56. A Soft And Downy Pillow For Our Dying Bed By Rev. R. C. H. Lenski

"I will" both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." – Ps. 4:8.

Occasion: For an elderly lady who held to her church although she received no encouragement from her family, and sank into a condition of coma before her end

THE FOURTH PSALM has frequently been called the Evening Psalm, because its closing verse speaks of lying down in peace and sleeping under the safe protection of the Lord. David of old, the writer of this psalm, did not always lead such a quiet life that when the evening shadows fell he could lie down with no danger hovering near to strike him in the dark. In his earlier days he was beset with enemies threatening his life, and in after years there were times of real danger often enough, to say nothing of the common ills that always hover over us as we pass through this life so full of trouble and affliction. But David had found a soft and downy pillow to rest his head upon when night after night the shadows fell like a curtain around him. That pillow he calls PEACE. "I will lay me down in peace, and sleep." He means the peace of the soul, the safety of protection, the quiet rest without fear of uneasiness which God provides for his children. Ah, blessed the sleeper who closes his eyes night after night – and especially also the last night of life! – on the soft pillow of God-given peace!

It was Jesus himself who spoke of the believer's death as a sleep. When Lazarus lay a corpse in Bethany, Jesus said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." And the disciples answered, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well" (John 11:11, 12). The apostles of Jesus retained the word. St. Paul comforted the

Thessalonians concerning “them which are asleep,” that they should not sorrow even as others did who had no hope. A blessed, comforting truth is enclosed in that one word “sleep.” It is a true description of the Christian’s death. As the shadow of the end sinks down over him, he does exactly what David did night after night, and what every trustful Christian does again and again when the weary body needs rest at evening time – “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety.” He pillows his head in God’s sweet peace and so sleeps calmly and safely till the morning light of the blessed resurrection awakens him.

So lies our dear departed sister now. Years ago she learned the secret of peace through faith in Christ her Savior. Alas, she often received little encouragement from those about her in holding fast to this peace. And there was plenty of affliction during the lengthening years to test her fidelity again and again. But through it all, often indeed in great weakness and with much wavering, she maintained her faith by the Savior’s help. She knew the preciousness of God’s Word and Sacrament, because there the peace she prized could be found. Often, in the hours of affliction that came to her, she crept under the shadow of God’s protection and help, and in his grace found the comfort and rest of peace. When at last the stroke fell that was to end her life, she lay down in peace and slept. And now she still sleeps, in God’s care, and the pillow of Christian peace is under her head – soft, restful, and delightful. blessed peace! – may it be yours and mine beyond a doubt when night falls this day and every day; especially when that night comes which for you and me shall precede the eternal dawn. God grant us all

A Soft and Downy Pillow for Our Dying Bed

What Makes this Pillow so Delightful? Our text gives the answer in the words of one who himself lay upon it and felt its delightfulness, and who was inspired of God to sing of it that we might hear of it and share his experience. PEACE AND SAFETY make the soft and downy pillow for your dying bed.

That is far more than the outward peace of the body, such as when one goes to sleep amid loving friends, in his own sheltered home, surrounded by every bodily comfort and luxury. That, indeed, is delightful, but it is nothing compared with the peace and safety of David’s pillow. Bodily ease may be altogether absent, and yet God’s peace may pillow the head. There

may be the poorest bed of poverty to lie upon, a hot and fevered pillow invaded by many a burning pang, a lonely couch with no loving hand to smooth the pillow, caress the brow, and moisten the parched lips. Lazarus, who once lay helpless at the rich man's door, surely had but a hovel to lie in when he lay down for his last sleep. We know that the dogs alone showed him any signs of friendliness; yet he had the pillow of David for his dying head; he lay down in true peace, and the Lord made him dwell in safety. The trouble with so many of us is, that we are over-anxious about supplying the body its greatest possible ease, while we forget, or neglect the peace of the soul and the safety of the spirit under the shadow of God's grace. The rich man in the parable had a bed of luxury to lie upon and friends and attendants in abundance about him; but he had not the chief thing – that soft and downy pillow in which the beggar Lazarus rejoiced.

It is not just peace of mind either that makes the pillow soft and downy. There are many satisfied and calm enough in their way, and yet have never tasted of the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Can you think of anyone more contented with himself than the proud Pharisee, of whom Jesus has told us, standing in the temple and thanking God for being far better than other people? When he came to die we may well think that he had no fears to frighten his soul, that he felt so sure of heaven that he could die with a smile upon his face. His friends of like mind could comfort him by bringing to his remembrance his fasting, his tithes, and his alms. And being a descendant of Abraham, a member of the chosen people of God, he could surely rest content – and no doubt did. But alas, all this self-made peace of the haughty, self-righteous Pharisee was a delusion of his own mind. It was like the feeling of satisfaction in thousands of hearts today, when night after night they lie down unworried and undisturbed, telling themselves they are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, knowing not that spiritually they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:17). The Word of God, which would give them peace, they will not hear nor accept; and so they go on making a false peace for themselves. They dream that all is well with them, and listen only to comforters who tell them the old Pharisaic lie of self-righteousness in some form or another. And so when their last night comes, they lie down upon the treacherous pillow of their own making, and close their eyes in apparent peace, while true peace – of which Jesus has said: “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be

troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27) – is far from them. If I knew of no better peace than this I would cry aloud to you in despair and never attempt to utter a word of comfort, for I would have none.

David had learned what you must learn, and cannot learn too well; that the only peace for the soul is God’s peace which cometh from the FORGIVENESS OF SINS. When this is yours through faith in Jesus Christ then, and then only, can you lie down in peace and sleep in safety.

As long as our sins are upon us, there is no peace and safety for us, no matter how well our bodies may rest and how deeply our minds are dulled into false security. Our sins are like a great sharp sword hanging over our heads, and death is like a knife reaching out to cut the cord in order that the sword may fall and pierce us with its terrible sharpness. What will it help you to close your eyes against this sword and dream that it is not there? Can that be peace and safety? Have you ever read the story of the poor victim tied fast in a dismal dungeon with a mighty sharp-edged knife swinging like a great pendulum over his prostrate body, sinking ever lower and lower, and at last beginning to cut the garments of his body? "What peace could that captive have as long as that blade swung above him? So is the sin that stands charged against us at the throne of God. Day by day, night by night as the hour of death comes nearer and nearer the moment of eternal doom approaches. Oh, the folly to close our eyes in false security and futile hope, till it is too late for us to escape! Because sin is such a horrible thing, involving eternal destruction, there can be no true peace for us until it is removed altogether and all the deadly danger that lurks in it is forever gone.

For David it was gone, and so he could sing his joyous evening hymn: “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety,” and in those sweet words of the 23d Psalm, when he thinks of his last sleep on earth: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.” David had the forgiveness of sin, and so he had peace. Once indeed he cried: “Day and night, O God, thy hand was heavy upon me.” But he acknowledged his sin, and hid not his iniquity. And behold, the Lord forgave the iniquity of his sin. So he could sleep in peace, all fears forever gone, and the pillow under his head soft and full of down.

It is the same with the children of God today. Everyone of them has had a true vision of sin which is worse than any other foe we have. Every one of them has despaired of ever escaping it by his own efforts. How shall we

undo what we once did against God in blindness and folly, in unbelief and wrong? How many days and hours of our life have there been when we did not fear God, love him, trust in him; when we followed our own will and disregarded his holy and righteous will; when we gave him no honor, but honored ourselves; when we failed to love our fellowmen as God had bidden us, and with selfishness, impurity, deceit and covetousness sinned against man and equally against God? There is only one way to remove all this threatening horror, one true way which will be effective and give us real peace and safety. God himself has provided it when he sent his Son Jesus Christ to our rescue. His blood, shed in sacrifice for us upon the cross, cleanseth us from all sin. Whosoever trusts in Christ receives pardon for his sin and is forever safe. The moment Christ is ours, our sin is gone. In other words, the moment a heart afraid of sin turns to Christ to be relieved by him, its hope is fulfilled; Christ takes the sin away, and bestows upon it all the fruits of his saving work. With Christ every poor sinner is safe. Under his cross we find peace, and there is no other place where it may be found. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," writes the holy apostle, St. Paul. It is another way of saying what David says: "I will both lay me down and sleep: for thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety." With the pardon of Jesus for your pillow there will be no thorns or terrors to disturb you, whether you sleep from one day to another or from this life into the next. This is why our beloved Gerhardt sang:

"Be Thou my consolation
And shield, when I must die:
Let me behold Thy passion,
When my last hour draws nigh.
My dim eyes then shall see Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell;
My heart by faith unfold Thee –
Who dieth thus, dies well!"

And now, dear mourning friends, as you look once more upon this sleeping form so dear to you, thank God that he gave her that last best gift of his, a soft and downy pillow for her final slumber, soft with heavenly pardon and forgiveness, and downy with peace and safety which only such a pardon brings. Then think of yourselves – as you lie down tonight, and presently for the last night. Have you also that true peace of soul which comes from

the forgiveness of sins? Do not rest content until you have, and having it, let its delightfulness continually soothe and satisfy your soul.

There is something more to be said here, something which thousands have found true by their own fullest experience as they rested on this blessed pillow. Let us ask:

How Does It Feel to Lie Upon It?

When David says, "I will lay me down in peace," we must distinguish two things in the word peace. One we have already spoken of, namely, the ESTABLISHMENT__ OF PEACE THROUGH WHICH GOD BY HIS OWN GRACIOUS ACT MAKES PEACE WITH US, FORGIVING US OUR SINS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE AND RECEIVING US AS HIS OWN DEAR CHILDREN. THAT IS PEACE AS A SURE AND CERTAIN FACT; IT IS THE PILLOW ITSELF, SOFT AND DOWNY, UPON WHICH OUR HEADS ARE TO REST. NOW COMES THE OTHER SIDE OF THAT WORD PEACE, NAMELY, THE FEELING OF PEACE, AS IT SWEETLY FLOWS THROUGH OUR SOULS. WHEN PEACE IS REALLY ESTABLISHED, THEN WE MAY __FEEL AT PEACE, and our feeling will not be self-deception.

To be sure, disturbing thoughts will sometimes arise, and because it is the nature of feelings to fluctuate more or less, our feeling of peace may sometimes decrease or vanish altogether. The thing for us always to remember, but especially when our hearts become disturbed, is that we HAVE__ PEACE — WE HAVE IT IN A SACRED TREASURE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN. THEREFORE, THOUGH WE MAY NOT ALWAYS FEEL WHAT WE HAVE, OR FEEL FULLY ITS SWEETNESS AND JOY, YET WE NEED NOT FEAR. THE FEELING OF PEACE IS BOUND TO COME BACK WHEN THE PEACE WHICH CHRIST MADE FOR US BY HIS BLOOD IS OURS. DOES THE MEMORY OF OUR SINS DISTURB US? WERE OUR DEEDS IN THE PAST WICKED AND EVIL? THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S SON, CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN. "HE IS THE PROPITIATION __FOR OUR SINS; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). As we look upon him bleeding for us on the cross, the feeling of peace fills our souls. Ah, it is good to have the pillow of divine pardon to rest upon! Does great suffering, pain, affliction, trouble, distress, misery oppress us? Does it seem as if God had forsaken us, or turned against us? Do we feel that peace is slipping from our souls? Look at the cross again — all our sins are forgiven! Therefore God does not punish us, though he afflict and try us. All his promises of help and support, like stars, shine the brighter for the darkness of our night and of sorrow. And so in the midst of our troubles we can lie

down and sleep in peace. God is only trying us: his love is over us – all is well. Do we ever feel unworthy of the grace of God and all his love? Does our faulty condition stand like an accusation before us? Do we become disheartened as we see the holiness and good deeds of others, besides which our own works are so small and insignificant? The publican in the temple had a feeling like that when he would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast and called himself a sinner. God resists the proud, but exalts the humble. As long as none of us are received by God for our good works and great deeds, but only as repentant sinners for the sake of Christ's deed, you can be at peace in all your humbleness. Yes, despair of yourself and hold to Christ. Thank God for him – and sweet peace and assurance will flow back into your heart.

Besides the feeling of peace, there will be the feeling of SAFETY as we lie upon the soft and downy pillow of David. "For thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety." Perhaps they will come – from time to time – these foes that threaten every child of God, and endeavor to affright us: the devil, the world, and the flesh. What did Luther sing?

“Though devils all the world should fill,
All watching to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill.
They cannot overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
For he is judged – undone;
One little word overthrows him.”

So sang another of God's children and pointed to the soft pillow of safety which the foe is unable to take from us:

“And where no harms, or dire alarms
Their cares to me impart.
Hard by the cross let me recline
And rest O Christ, on this:
That thou art mine, and I am thine –
Thy will is me to bless.”

“In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us,” exclaimed St. Paul. “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor

angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38, 39). What a blessed thing to BE SAFE ___, AND THEN TO ___ FEEL SAFE!

But remember that all this has its comforting significance not only for this life, but also for the approach and hour of death. As we look forward to our last hour, this sure and certain expectation of peace and safety fills us – and must fill us – with hope. No man knows just how he will die. Will the grim foe come upon us suddenly and bear us away in a moment? Shall we lie long and suffer much? Shall we be alone, far from home and friends, or in our own beds with gentle hands to minister unto us? No matter: for everyone who is Christ’s own there will be that soft and downy pillow of peace and safety, and so we need not fear. Our hearts may be filled with deep, satisfying, blissful hope. Paul wrote: “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God... knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5:2-5). God will shape our ends, and, as we lie down to our last rest – wherever and whenever that will be – all will be well with us in Christ Jesus. It is blessedness indeed to feel this hope that maketh not ashamed.

Peace, safety, hope – God gave our sleeping sister a measure of these delightful feelings. She now rests in peace, pillowed in safety for her last slumber, and her soul is already tasting the eternal fulfillment of hope. And you, my mourning friends, would you have these feelings too and know all the blessedness of them? – then learn the divine secret that will give them to you. Find in Jesus that soft and downy pillow for your head of which King David sang. Take peace and pardon from his pierced hands. Then will you lie down in peace and sleep, for the Lord will make you dwell in safety. Amen.

57. A Prayer And A Promise For Old Age By Rev. J. Sittler

“Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.” – Psalm 71:9.

“Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” – Isaiah 46:4.

Occasion: For an Aged Christian

Beloved in Christ:

In the life of everyone there are times and seasons for special prayer. Such a time is the morning of life, the time of youth, when foundations for time and eternity are laid and the choice of life's work and meaning confront us, when many and peculiar temptations assail us. Such a time is the noonday of life, manhood's and womanhood's estate when, in the midst of life's toil and trials we often feel the need of a guiding Presence and a sustaining hand. Such a time, too, is the evening of life, the time of old age when, life's work almost done, we are “waiting, only waiting, till the shadows are a little longer grown,” waiting for the great change and the end. King David is looking forward to the time of old age. He feels that he will then need the Lord in a special way and he prays: “Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

Let us reflect for a moment on the appropriateness of this prayer. In old age strength fails. The physical strength and energy of former days are gone. Weakness, feebleness, and decline belong to old age. The roses fade from the cheeks, and time and trouble leave their unmistakable traces in the furrowed face and the stooped form. After all, there are none of us with whom time deals as kindly as with Moses, of whom it was said: “and he

was an hundred and twenty years old when he died and his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” One of the first and most disheartening discoveries of approaching old age is failing strength. And as the years drag slowly on, disease fastens itself more securely on enfeebled bodies, and the hours and the days of bodily suffering grow longer and more severe. It is then that we realize the appropriateness of the psalmist’s prayer: “Forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

Now, because of failing strength and the infirmities of old age, we also no longer find delight in the pleasures and pursuits of the world. The days come when we say, “I have no pleasure in them.” For the young, the strong, the well, the world can supply many pleasures and pastimes. But there comes a time when men see the nothingness and emptiness of all earthly things; when they no longer care to “grovel here below, fond of these earthly toys”; when the world no longer satisfies; when the real character of a selfish life of pleasure becomes apparent.

When that time of disillusionment comes, and come it must, what if men have nothing to take the place of these vanishing things? What then? Then inevitably comes dissatisfied and unhappy old age. God, in mercy, spare us from that and hear our prayer: “Forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

David had, doubtless, seen and observed the miseries of a godless old age. He knew some cast-offs, and their pitiable condition leads him to pray: “Cast me not off in the time of old age”; and another time he pleads: “Now therefore when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not.” Old age is, more or less, forsaken. The friends of former days often grow cold and indifferent. One by one they lay down their burden to join the silent majority; and a feeling of loneliness steals into the hearts of the old that are left behind. Father and mother are long since gone: children, if there are any, have all left the parental roof, and even they oftentimes show an inclination to forget. In many cases the dear life companion has been laid away, and one or the other remains alone. Old friends are getting fewer and there is little opportunity and inclination to make new ones.

As long as we are surrounded by friends and gay companions, we can manage somehow to get along without God. Many are doing that. But friendless, godless old age – what a wretched condition! Ah, how cruel the world is! It beckons you on and on, away from all that is true and lasting and then, when your step becomes slow and halting, and your strength fails,

it casts you off! The world soon makes you feel that you are old and that it is done with you. Are you going to trust the world then?

An other trial of old age lies in the feeling that one is comparatively useless and a consequent enforced period of leisure. To one who has led an active and busy life it is hard to sit still and see another take his place and do his work. We still have the ambition, but not the strength. We are still willing, but the world does not seem to need us. What a strange sensation it is, the first time it really dawns upon us that the world regards us old and is going to get along without us! It is like a shock from a battery. And there come those long periods of enforced leisure – the silent watches in the night; hours to be spent sitting in an armchair – just thinking, thinking – what? And what reflections must come then! Many have no time in their active, working days for serious reflection – too busy, no time, no convenient season! But in old age meditation and reflection are often forced upon us. We see the past – oh, the unforgiving past! How different we wish much of it had been! We look into the future – before us the yawning grave and a long eternity, both asking mighty_ questions of us. God pity a godless old age! How sad, indeed, is old age without a Savior; earthly props failing and no everlasting arm to lean on; forced to leave this world and no sure hope of heaven. All of us, and especially you old men and women, have need to pray the prayer for old age: “Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

And this your prayer shall not be in vain. God has given to old age a wonderful promise. This is his promise: “Even to old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear; even will I carry, and will deliver you.” Old age needs, above all, a loving Savior and a mighty God. And these are promised: “Even to your old age I am he.” In the light of this Scripture promise we can face the time of old age with a glad, expectant heart. Let old age come: for in failing health and waning strength we trust in him, whose help and strength never fail, and who is especially near to those who are bowed down by the weight of years. Trusting him, we can say with the psalmist: “Why art thou cast down, my soul! And why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God.” In this glorious Scripture promise for old age there are three words whose wonderful import and meaning correspond strikingly to the needs of old

age. Says the Lord: “I will bear” – and twice He repeats – “I will carry you.” Are not these just the needs of old age with its failing strength?

Having the promise of God let the world and worldly pleasure go. Godly old age has its compensations. True, some of the pleasures of youth are forever gone, many of earth’s legitimate joys no longer lure us; but there comes, in place of these things that have vanished, a new pleasure and a new joy, that of ripe spiritual meditation and contemplation that are possible only for old age. And a mighty expectation and a great longing take possession of the soul as it contemplates “the things that God has prepared for those that love him,” whose full enjoyment can now not much longer be delayed.

“Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory
See but the brighter, the heavenly glow;
Ears that are dull to the world and its story
Drink in the songs that from Paradise flow.
All the rich recompense youth cannot know.”

Having God and his promises for our portion, let friends grow few and cold; there remains one Friend who never fails us – “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother,” who has said: “Lo, I am with you always” even unto the end.” Of him we sing:

"What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer.

“Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?
Take it to the Lord in prayer,
In his arms he’ll take and shield thee,
Thou shalt find a solace there.”

How beautiful and happy, then, in old age when cheered by the presence and the promise of the Savior.

Dr. A. J. Gordon met an old man one day going to the place of prayer with a song on his lips.

“Aged friend,” he said, “how is it that an old man is so happy and cheerful?”

“Because I belong to the Lord.”

“Are no others happy at your time of life?”

“No, not one,” said he; and his form straightened and his countenance glowed. “Listen, please, to the truth from one who knows; then tell it everywhere, and no old man can be found to gainsay it – ‘the devil has no happy old men.’”

If this be true, the first condition of a happy old age is to know Jesus Christ. Then our contemplation of sin and death and the judgment cannot affright; for we behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; and “there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” He has risen triumphantly from the dead and said: “He that believeth in me even though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” So we exult: “O death, where is thy sting? grave, where is thy victory?”

Now, the way to have a happy and blessed old age therefore is to believe in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The time to get ready and to lay foundation for old age is now, in our younger years. Old age is harvest time. At harvest time you reap what you sow: “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Without Jesus Christ, no life is complete. Without him, the thought of old age must sadden and depress us. But how beautiful is old age cheered by the presence of Jesus! Grateful for the mercies of the past, it trusts him with the future. The coming days are not filled with gloom and dark visions of helplessness and hopelessness: for we realize that more and more the earthly shall disappear out of our lives, and more and more the heavenly shall come in until at length we shall awake in his likeness and be satisfied. And for those that love him the Lord always has some work to do. It is even so with old age. We can still pray and nothing is more needed in this world than prayer. We can praise God and he never wearies of that. We can talk of his goodness and of his mercy to the sons of men. Standing in the shadow of eternity we may fittingly point the way to many wayfarers. We can be examples of Christlike living, of patience, of cheerfulness, of hope and trust. Yes, even old age, if it be godly, has a mission and a message for the world.

It has its compensations, its peculiar pleasures and experiences that come at no other time of life. And may God abundantly fulfill in all who

pray the prayer of old age his wonderful promise; so that we may walk towards the westering sun, unafraid with a glad heart, knowing that beyond the setting of earth's sun dawns the eternal morning. Amen.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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