

THE HAND OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF A MAN

NO. 1258

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10 1875,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not
 his days also like the days of an hireling?”
 Job 7:1.*

I WAS settling myself down yesterday to meditate upon the Word of God and to prepare my mind to preach the Gospel to you today, when, all of a sudden I had my subject marked out for me by a mournful messenger, for the Angel of Death pointed to it with his finger. There came into my chamber an honored elder of this Church, who in broken accents told me, “Our beloved Brother, Henry Olney, is dead.” He is my near neighbor and I was in his house so lately that I could not believe the news. It seems that when he left the City at noon he felt a severe rheumatic pain in his shoulder, and on reaching home he sent for a doctor, who prescribed a slight remedy and advised him to lie down. He did so, and with a gasp or two, he expired.

A man in the prime of life and apparently in full vigor of health, he went to his business for the last time that morning and returned to die. The blow has fallen so suddenly that I am stunned and staggered by it, nor do I think that either of his three brothers, whose familiar faces we miss this morning, have yet recovered from the amazement caused by the stroke. Many around me were with him so short a time since that it is hard to believe one's own eyes and feel sure that there he lies, a cold corpse, motionless upon the bed. But, oh, my Brothers and Sisters, how true it is that in the midst of life we are in death! And those who often die first are they who least expected to go. If I had said to you this morning that our Brother, *William Olney*, was gone, you would have said, “We are grieved at our loss, but we do not wonder, for he has been long sick.”

But here, the strong and stalwart brother, who ailed nothing, has been taken away, while, thank God, the languishing invalid is still spared to us. Thus do they remain who expected to depart, and they depart who expected to remain. Who among us can reckon upon a single hour? We talk of being *living* men—let us correct ourselves and feel, from this moment on, that we are *dying* men, whose every breath brings us nearer to the grave! We are and are not. We walk in a vain show and are disquieted in vain. We are unsubstantial as the shadows of the flying clouds which on a summer's day flit over the face of the field and are gone!

When I look at that seat where our departed friend sat for years, the Lord seems to have come very near to us. I could almost take my shoes off in awful consciousness of His terrible Presence. We can no longer think of the Lord as far away in Heaven. He has been among us—He who touches the hills and they smoke has set His eyes upon our Brother, and lo, he is not! Let me put it in a gentler manner—our Lord came into His garden to gather lilies and His hand has been filled to our sorrow. When our heavenly Father comes so near to us and in so solemn a manner, let us ask Him why He contends with us. Let us, in solemn reverence, approach Him that we may hear His answer and may be obedient to His Word.

The flower of the field stands amid the grass, unconscious that the mower's scythe is busy, and though swath after swath has fallen beneath the pitiless stroke, the flower smiles gaily! It cares not for its associates in the same field and reckons not of its own speedy fall. Its leaves are wet with dew and its colors are bright in the sun. It mourns not for its fellows, but rejoices in unconsciousness of all that happens around it. In this respect you are not as the grass of the field, but are endowed with *understanding*, so that you are able to be instructed, or at least, warned, by the fall of those around you.

The sheep in their folds remark not that their fellows are taken away to the slaughter. The cattle graze in the meadows in happy ignorance that death is all around. You, however, are not “dumb, driven cattle.” To you it is given to know your own mortality—and you cannot suffer your comrades to be taken away, one after another so rapidly, without feeling emotion and gathering wisdom. You will hear the rod and Him that has appointed it, and this morning you

will ask Divine Grace that the dead may be your schoolmasters and yourselves the scholars who cry, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

As best I shall be able, this morning, I shall try and teach you, by the help of God’s Spirit, one lesson. It is this—*Divine appointment rules human life*. And when we have learned that lesson, we shall, in the second place, *draw inferences from this Truth of God*.

I. First, then, let us consider a Truth of God which, I trust, none of us have ever denied, but have heartily accepted ever since we have been Believers. THERE IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT RULING ALL HUMAN LIFE. Not that I single out man’s existence as the sole object of Divine forethought, for I believe it to be but one little corner of illimitable Providence. A Divine appointment arranges every event, minute or magnificent!. As we look out on the world from our quiet room, it appears to be a mass of confusion. He who studies history and forgets God might think that he was looking out on chaos, for events seem flung together in terrible disarray, and the whole scene is as darkness itself, without any order.

Events happen which we deeply deplore—incidents which appear to bring evil, and only evil—and we wonder why they are permitted. The picture before us, to the glance of reason, looks like a medley of color with dark shades where lights seemed necessary, and glowing color where we might have looked for masses of black. Human affairs are a maze of which we cannot discover the clue. The world appears to be a tangled mess and we weary ourselves with vain endeavors to disentangle it. But, Brethren, the affairs of this world are neither tangled, nor confused, nor perplexing to Him who sees the end from the beginning. To Him all things are in due course and order, and before Him all forces keep rank and file. God is in all and rules all!

In the least as well as in the greatest, Jehovah’s power is manifested. He guides the grain of dust in the March wind and the comet in its immeasurable pathway. He steers each drop of spray which is beaten back from the face of the rock and He leads forth Arcturus with his sons. God is the dictator of destinies and appoints both means and ends. He is the King of kings, ruling rulers and guiding counselors. Alike in the crash of battle and in the hush of peace, in the desolation of pestilence and famine, and in the joy of abounding harvests, He is Lord! He does according to His will, not only in the army of Heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world. Yon fiery steeds, which dash so terribly along the highway of time, are not careering madly—there is a Charioteer whose almighty hands have held the reins for ages—and will never let them go!

Things are not in the hurry-burly which we imagine, but driven onward by a power which is irresistible. They are under law to God, and speed onward without deviation towards the goal which He designs. All is well, Brothers and Sisters! It is night, but the Watchman never sleeps, and Israel may rest in peace. The tempest rages, but it is well, for our Captain is governor of storms! He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm and, at His bidding, winds and waves are quiet. Our main point is that God rules mortal life and He does so, first, *as to its term*—“Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?” He rules it, secondly, *as to its warfare*, for so the text might most properly be read—“Is there not an appointed warfare for man upon earth?” And, thirdly, He rules it *as to its service*, for the second clause of the text is, “Are not his days as the days of an hireling?”

First, then, *God’s determination governs the time of human life*. We shall all acknowledge this as to *its commencement*. Not without infinite wisdom did any infant’s life commence then and there, for no man is the offspring of chance. Not without a world of kindness did your life commence, dear Friend, just where and when it did. Our child’s little hymn, in which he thanks God that he was not “born a little slave to labor in the sun,” contains a good deal of truth in it. A man’s whole life is mainly guided by its commencement—had we been born as thousands are where God was never known, we might have been idolaters at this hour!

Who would wish to have first seen the light at the era when our naked forefathers sacrificed to idols? Who would wish to have stepped upon the stage of life amid the dense darkness of popery, when our childish hands would have been lifted up by superstitious parents in adoration of the Virgin Mary, and we should have been taught to worship some bone fragment or rotten rug, superstitiously believed to be a relic of a saint? ‘Tis no small thing to have been born in the nineteenth century, when works of Grace are to be seen on every side! Many of us should bless the Lord every day because in infancy we lay upon a Christian woman’s bosom and were lulled to sleep with the sound of holy hymns of which the name of Jesus was the theme!

Our tiny feet were taught to run in the ways of righteousness, as far as parental instruction could effect the same, and this was no insignificant advantage. Blessed are the eyes which see the things which we see and hear the things which we hear! All this is by the appointment of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Our presence on earth in this day of Grace was a matter altogether beyond our control, and yet it involves infinite issues—therefore let us, with deepest gratitude, bless the Lord, who has cast our lot in such an auspicious season.

The *continuance* of life is equally determined by God. He who fixed our birth has measured the interval between the cradle and the grave, and it shall not be a day longer or a day shorter than the Divine decree. How many times your lungs shall heave and your pulses beat have been fixed by the eternal calculator from of old. What reflections ought to arise out of this! How willing we should be to labor on, even if we are weary, since God appoints our day and will not over-weary us, for He is no hard taskmaster!

How glad we ought to be, even, to suffer if the Lord so ordains it. It is sweet music, that God draws forth from patient sufferers, and though the strings have to be painfully tightened every now and then with many a grief and pang to us, yet if those dear hands of the Chief Musician can fetch out richer melody from those tightened strings, who among us would wish to have it otherwise, or ask to have the harp withdrawn from that beloved Harper's hand before the wondrous strain is over?

No, let us wait, for He appoints. If our griefs were the offspring of chance, we might pine to have them ended, but if the loving Lord appoints, we would not hurry Him in His processes of love. Let the Lord do what seems good to Him. Here is good cheer for those who have lain so long upon the bed of pain and who are apt to ask—"Will it never end? O Lord, will the chariots of salvation never come? Have the angels quite forgotten Your servant in his sickness? Must he forever remain a prisoner under his infirmity, loneliness and decay? Have You placed me as a sentinel to stand upon my watchtower through a night which will never end? And shall I never be relieved from my weary guard? Shall I never know rest? Must I forever peer into the dark with these eyes so red with weeping?"

Courage, Brother! Courage, Sister, the Lord, the Ever Merciful, has appointed every moment of your sorrow and every pang of your suffering. If He ordains the number 10, it can never rise to 11, neither should you desire it to shrink to nine. The Lord's time is best—to a hair's breadth your span of life is rightly measured. God ordains all—therefore peace, restless spirit, and let the Lord have His way. So, too, has He fixed life's *termination*. "Is there not an appointed time for man upon earth?" A time in which the pulse must cease, the blood stagnate and the eyes are closed? Yes, my Brethren, it is of no use for us to indulge any idle dream of living forever here! A time of departure must come to every one of us, unless the Lord, Himself, should appear all of a sudden and then we shall not die, but be changed.

There is no man among us that lives and shall not see death. In this war there is no discharge. Not only do the Scriptures teach us so, but our common sense and reason put the matter beyond all question. What do the gray hairs mean which fall like snow flakes upon our heads? What do that stooping gait and failing strength mean? What do the dimness of the eyes and the tottering of the limbs mean? Do they not all show that the house is about to come down, for the frame and plaster of it are beginning to give way? Yet our earthly house will not fail us till the time ordained of Heaven! There is an appointed time for death and God has fixed *how* we shall die, *when* we shall die and *where* we shall die—

*"Though plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He pleases I cannot die
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of love sees fit."*

Diseases eager to slay are in ambush all around us, but none of their swords can come at us till Jehovah gives them leave. Behold, the Lord shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust, nor shall nightly pestilence nor midday destruction make you afraid—

*"What, though a thousand at your side
At your right hand ten thousand died,
Our God, His chosen people saves
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."*

We are immortal till our work is done, but that work will not last forever, and when it is concluded we shall have fulfilled our day and shall receive our summons Home. All this is true. None will venture to dispute it, but let us remember that it is true for ourselves at this moment. For you, my Brothers and Sisters, it is true while you sit here. Realize it,

and do not look on others as dying men while you, yourselves, are secure of a long life. Be you, also, prepared to meet your God suddenly, for so you may be called to do. This fact is most solemn. We shall not live, but die, and that death may come in an instant. As I saluted my Brothers, this morning, in the vestry, I could not help expressing my pleasure and surprise that any of us were alive, for certainly it was quite as much a wonder that certain of us were alive, as that our friend should be dead.

We might as readily have been taken away as he, and even more readily. God had ordained *his* death, but He might have ordained ours. “Be you, also, ready; for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes.” Yet this fact, to my mind, is most strengthening. The doctrine of Predestination, when really believed, is like steel medicine. It infuses a deal of iron into the mental system and builds up strong men! I am not such a Predestinarian as Mohammed, who bade his soldiers rush to the fight, “for,” he said, “when your time comes to die you will die at home as well as in the battle, and Paradise is to be found beneath the shadow of swords.” But still I see that while the doctrine makes some men slumber, it is, to nobler souls, a mighty source of energy and a fountain of courage.

If duty calls you into danger—if you have to nurse the sick who are laid low with foul diseases—never shrink, but run all risks if love to God or man demand them of you. You will not die by a stray arrow from Death’s quiver! The Lord, alone, can recall your breath. Your death is not left to chance—it is determined by a heavenly Father’s gracious will—therefore be not afraid. Be not so fearful of pain, or so anxious to preserve life as to be held back where Jesus calls you, for in such a case he that saves his life shall lose it. You may not be reckless and rush on danger without reason—that were madness—but you will, I trust, be brave and never fear to face death when the voice of God calls you into peril.

Moreover, how consoling is this Truth of God for, if the Father of our Lord Jesus arranges all, then our friends do not die untimely deaths! The beloved of the Lord are not cut off before their time. They go into Jesus’ bosom when they are ready to be received there. God has appointed the times for the gathering in of His fruit. Some of them are sweet, even, in early spring, and He gathers them. Others are as a basket of summer fruit and He takes these, also, while the year is young, while yet another company needs to remain among us till autumn mellows them. Each class shall be gathered in its season. Now of all this we are, by no means, competent judges. We know nothing, for we are infants of a day. God knows best. It were better that our friend should die, as die he did, than that he should live, otherwise he had lived. Be sure of that. Yes, God has appointed the commencement, the continuance and the conclusion of this mortal life.

But we must now consider the other translation of our text. It is generally given in the margin of the Bibles. “Is there not an appointed *warfare* to man upon earth?” Which teaches us that *God has appointed life to be a warfare*. To all men it will be so, whether bad or good. Every man will find himself a soldier under some captain or another. Alas, for those men who are battling *against* God and His Truths—they will, in the end, be clothed with dishonor and defeat. I shall, however, speak mainly of the righteous and, truly, their experience shows that life is one long struggle from which we never cease till we hear the words, “Your warfare is accomplished.”

Brothers and Sisters, life is a warfare and, therefore, we are all men under authority. No Christian is free to follow his own devices. We are all under law to Christ. A soldier surrenders his own will to that of his commander. His captain says to him, “Go,” and he goes, or, “Do this,” and he does it. Such is the Christian’s life—a life of willing subjection to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence of this we have our place fixed and our order arranged for us—and our life’s relative positions are all prescribed. A soldier has to keep rank and step with the rest of the line. He has a relation to the man on his right, to his comrade on his left. He bears a relation which he must not violate to each officer and, especially, to his commander-in-chief.

God has appointed for you, then, dear Brother, to be a father or to be a son, to be a master or to be a servant, to be a teacher or to be taught. See that you keep your place. As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place. In our appointed warfare happy is the man who, from first to last, keeps in order with the forces of the Lord of Hosts and cheerfully fulfils the Divine purposes. As we have a warfare to accomplish, we must expect hardships. A soldier must not reckon upon ease. During a campaign he has neither house nor home. Perhaps last night he pitched his tent in a happy valley, but he must be up and away, and his tent must, tomorrow, be exposed on the bleak mountain side.

He has renounced the luxuries of life and the joys of repose. Forced marches, light slumbers, scant fare and hard blows are his portion—he would be foolish to look for ease and enjoyment during a campaign. O you sons of men, the

Lord has appointed life to be a warfare! Why, then, do you wrap yourselves about with silken garments and sew pillows for your armholes, and say to yourselves, “Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years! Eat, drink and be merry”? You must not do so! And if the Lord, by trial, prevents your doing so, you must not quarrel with Him, but must feel that such treatment must be expected in this war.

If life is a warfare, we must look for contests and struggles. The Christian man must not expect to go to Heaven without opposition. A soldier who never meets an enemy at all is not renowned. We count his valor light and reckon him to be as some vain carpet knight, “whose best delight is but to wear a braid of his fair lady’s hair.” The man who is scarred and gashed, maimed and wounded—*he* is the hero to whom men pay homage! You must fight if you would reign! Your predecessors swam through seas of blood to win the crown and, though the form of battle may be changed, yet the spirit of the enemy is unaltered! You must still contend against sin and bear up under trouble, for only through much tribulation will you inherit the kingdom of God!

It is a warfare, Brothers and Sisters, for all these reasons and yet more so because we must always be upon the watch against danger. In a battle no man is safe. Where bullets fly, who can reckon upon life for a moment? Brethren, the age is peculiarly dangerous! Perhaps every preacher before me has said as much and every preacher after me will say the same for his times—yet still, I say—in this peculiar age there are a thousand perils for the soul, from superstition on the one hand and skepticism on the other! From rude self-reliance and indolent trust in others, from a wicked world and an apostate church! You must not marvel that it is so, for war is raging! The enemy has not laid down his weapons. The war drum is still beaten, therefore do not lay down your arms, but fight manfully for your King and country—for Christ and for His Church.

Blessed be God that the text says “Is there not an *appointed* warfare?” Then, Brothers and Sisters, it is not *our* warfare, but one that God has appointed for us, in which He does not expect us to wear out our armor, or bear our own charges, or find our own rations, or supply our own ammunition! The armor that we wear we have not to construct. The sword we wield we have not to fabricate. All things are ready for us! Our great Captain manages the commissariat with unquestioned skill and unbounded liberality. Yes, the warfare is so much His warfare that He is with us in it! The Greek soldiers, when they marched against the Persians, traversed many a weary league, but that which comforted them and made every man a hero was that Alexander marched when they marched!

If he had been carried luxuriously, like the *Persian* monarch, while they were toiling over the hills and dales, they might have murmured. If he had been seen to drink of costly wines while they were parched with thirst, they might have complained. But Alexander, like the great commander he was, marched in the ranks with his soldiers, so that they saw him faint and weary as they were! They saw him wiping the sweat from his brow as they did. And when, as was his due, they brought him the first crystal draught they could obtain, he put it to the side and said, “Give it to the sick soldiers, I will not drink till every man can take a draught.”

O glorious Jesus! Surely You have done the same and more! You have borne resistance even unto blood! You have known toil and agony even to a sweat of gore! Suffering, weakness and self-denial You have drank of, for You saved others, but You could not save Yourself! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, then! Our warfare is of the Lord. Let us go forth to it, conquering and to conquer!

Thirdly. *The Lord has also determined the service of our life.* All men are servants to some master or another, neither can any of us avoid the servitude. The greatest men are only so much the more the servants of others. The Prime Minister is only the first and most laborious of servants. The yoke upon the neck of the Emperor is heavier than that which galls the shoulders of the serf. Despots are the most in bondage of all men. Happy will it be for us if, through Divine Grace, we have chosen Jesus for our Master and have become His servants for life—then, indeed, we are free, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light—and in learning of Him we shall find rest unto our souls.

If we are now the servants of the Lord Jesus, this life is a set time of a labor and apprenticeship to be worked out. I am bound by solemn indentures to my Lord and Master till my term of life shall run out, and I am right glad to have it so. Jacob, when he had served seven years, was glad to serve seven more for the love of Rachel and we, for love of Jesus, would serve 70 times seven if He desired it! But even then, the longest term of life would have an end, even as ours, also, will. Here below our term is fixed, even as the days of an hireling.

Now, a servant who has let himself out for a term of years has not a moment that he can call his own, nor have any of us, if we are God's people. We have not a moment, no, not a *breath*, nor a faculty, nor a farthing that we may honestly reserve. We have transferred ourselves to Jesus Christ forever and we belong wholly to Him. A servant does nothing of his own mind, he does what his master tells him—this also is our condition. We have an appointed service and we receive orders from our Lord, which orders are our Law. A servant has his occupations prescribed. He may have to work indoors or outdoors. He may have to be near the house or far off in the field. He may be sent on errands, or bid to stay at home, but he does not choose his labor or the place of it—he accepts what is chosen for him by his superior. Are we not glad to have it so? Does not our heart say, “anything, everything for Jesus?” That should be our spirit!

The servant, moreover, expects to be sometimes weary and spent, is it not natural? To a servant who applies for your situation and says, “I do not expect to work hard. I want large wages and little work,” you would say, “Yes, there are many of your mind, but I shall not employ one of the sort if I know it.” Your Lord and Master thinks the same. You must expect to toil in His service till you are ready to faint. And then His Grace will renew your strength. A servant knows that his time is limited. If it is weekly service, he knows that his engagement may be closed on Saturday. If he is hired by the month, he knows how many days there are in a month and he expects it to end. If he is engaged the year, he knows the day of the year when his service shall run out.

As for us, we do not know when our term will be complete, but we do know that it will conclude, therefore we would live in view of that conclusion. It is as well that the Lord has not told us when the appointed end will be, or we might have loitered till near the close. But He has left that period unrevealed that we may be always laboring and waiting for His coming. None the less, it is sure that there is an appointed time and our work will come to an end. The hireling expects his wages—that is one reason for his industry. We, too, expect ours—not of debt, truly, but of Grace—still a gracious reward. God does not employ servants without paying them wages, as many of our merchants now do. They are His own children and, therefore, they would be glad enough to serve without a hope of wage, but that is not God's way. He prefers that they, also, should have “respect unto the recompense of reward.”

While the child's relationship shall be carried out with blessed liberality, so shall the servant's relation, too, and wages shall be liberally given. Let us look forward, Brothers and Sisters, let us look forward to the Great Day when the Master shall call His servants together and give them their wages! The reward, if it were of debt, would be a very scanty one, and, in fact, it would be none at all, for we are unprofitable servants. But, the wages being of Grace, there is room for giving every man his penny—room for giving to us exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think!

There I leave the subject of service—it is all appointed for us, let us fulfill it.

II. Secondly, and briefly, THE INFERENCES TO BE DRAWN FROM THIS FACT. First, there is *Job's inference*. Job's inference was that as there was only an appointed time and he was like a servant employed by the year, he might be allowed to wish for life's speedy close and therefore he says—“As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, and as an hireling looks for the reward of his work.” Job was right, in a measure, but not altogether so. There is a sense in which every Christian may look forward to the end of life with joy and expectancy and may pray for it. I wish that some Believers were in a state of mind which would fairly admit of their doing so. Many of us can heartily sympathize with the songster who penned the verses beginning—

*“I would not live always, I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way.
The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life's sorrows, enough for its cheer.
Who, who would live always away from his God—
Away from yon Heaven, that blissful abode,
Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?”*

At the same time, there are necessary modifications to this desire to depart and a great many of them, for, first, it would be a very lazy thing for a servant to be always looking for Saturday night, and to be always sighing and groaning because the days are so long. The man who wants to be off to Heaven before his life's work is done does not seem, to me, to be quite the man that is likely to go there at all! He that is fit to go there and serve God is one who is willing to stop here and do the same! Besides, while our days are like those of a hireling, we serve a better Master than other servants do.

There are employers of such a kind that servants might be very glad never to see their faces any more. They are so sharp, so acid, so domineering.

But our Master is Love itself. Blessed be His name, His service is perfect freedom! We are never so happy and never so truly helping ourselves as when we are altogether serving Him. For my part, I can say of Him that I love my Master, I love His service, I love His house, I love His children and I love everything about Him! And if He were going to discharge me at the end of this life, I would beg Him to let me live here forever, for I could not bear to be dismissed. It is one of my dearest hopes, in going to Heaven, that He will employ me still. Moreover, we are not like other servants, for this reason—we are one with our Master—His brethren, His spouse, His body—and we are under such deep obligation to Him that it is unspeakable joy to work for Him. If He gave us no wages it would be wage enough to be allowed to wait upon Him—

*“For why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love You well?
Not for the sake of winning Heaven,
Or of escaping Hell.”*

But because of Your own sweetness, goodness and dear love to me, ought I not to be Yours forever?

Yes, yes! Under some aspects you might feel that it was better to depart and be with Christ, but from other points of view you see differently and check the wish, so that, like Paul, you are in a strait betwixt the two and you don't know which to choose. It is a great mercy that the choice does not lie with you! All things are settled for us. Thus you see there are facts which modify Job's inference and forbid our excessive longing to close life's weary day. I will tell you *the devil's inference*. The devil's inference is that if our time, warfare and service are appointed, there is no need to care and we may cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, or do any other rash thing, for we shall only work out our destiny. So argues the arch-enemy, though he knows better.

How many men have drawn most damnable conclusions from most blessed Truths of God! And these men know, when they are doing it, that their conclusions are absurd. “Oh,” they say, “we need not turn to Christ, for if we are ordained to eternal life we shall be saved.” Yes, Sirs, but why will you eat at mealtime today? Why do you eat at all? For if you are to live you will live. Why go to bed tonight? If you are ordained to sleep you will sleep. Why will you take down your shop shutters tomorrow and exhibit your goods and try to sell them? If you are predestinated to be rich you will be rich.

Ah, I see, you will not act the thing out. You are not such fools as you look! You are more knaves than fools, and your excuse is a piece of deceit. If it is not so, why not act upon it in daily life? He has a false heart who dares to suck out of the blessed Truth of Predestination the detestable inference that he may sit still and do nothing! Why, Sirs, nothing in the world more nerves me for work than the belief that God's purposes have appointed me to this service! Being convinced that the eternal forces of Immutable Wisdom and unfailing power are at my back, I put forth all my strength as becomes a “worker together with God.”

The bravest men that ever lived, like Cromwell and his Ironsides, believed in God's decrees, but they also kept their powder dry. They relied upon everlasting purposes, but also believed in human responsibility, and so must you and I. Your years are appointed, but do not commit lewdness or drink with the drunk, or you will shorten your days. Your warfare is appointed, O Man, but do not go and play the fool, or your troubles will be multiplied! Your service is allotted you, O Believer, but do not loiter, or you will grieve the Spirit of God and mar your work.

I will now give you *the sick man's inference*—“Is there not an appointed time to men upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” The sick man, therefore, concludes that his pains will not last forever and that every suffering is measured out by Divine Love. Truly, disease is a bitter draught, but Jehovah Rophi often prescribes it as a medicine for *spiritual* disease. When the Lord knows that the appointed affliction has worked out all His purpose He will either raise up the patient to walk among the sons of men, again, or else He will take him to His bosom in Glory. Let him be patient, therefore, and in confidence and quietness shall be his strength.

Next comes *the mourner's inference*—one which we do not always draw quite so readily as we should. It is this—“My child has died, but not too soon. My husband is gone, ah, God, what shall I do? Where shall my widowed heart find sympathy? Still he has been taken away at the right time. The Lord has done as it pleased Him and He has done wisely.” If you have not yet come to mourning over the dead, but have everyday to sympathize with a living sufferer who is gradu-

ally melting away amidst wearisome pain and constant anguish, ask Grace to enable you to feel, “It is well.” It is a grand triumph of Grace when the heart is neither stoic, unsympathetic, nor rebellious—when you can grieve but not rebel in the grieving, mourn without murmuring—and sorrow without sinning. Pray for some who have this trial. Pray for them that Grace may be perfect in their weakness.

Furthermore, let us draw *the healthy man’s inference*. Do you know what inference I have drawn from the sudden death of my friend? I thought—in a moment it struck me—“Ah, if I had died last Saturday afternoon instead of Mr. Henry Olney, should I have left all the concerns that I have in hand quite in order?” I have no end of business—a great deal too much—and I resolved, “I will get all square and in order as if I were going off, for perhaps I am.” Dear Brothers and Sisters, I want you to feel the same. You are healthy, but be prepared to die. Have your will made and your accounts squared and fit for your successor to take up.

What you do, do quickly! Have your will made and if you are wealthy, do not forget the Lord’s work. Mr. Whitfield used to say, “I could not sleep at night if I had left my gloves out of their place, for,” he said, “I would leave everything in order.” Trim the ship, Brothers and Sisters, for you know not what weather is coming. Clear the decks for action, for no one knows when the last enemy will be in sight. Your best Friend is coming, make ready for His entertainment. Be as a bride adorned for her husband, and not as a slovenly woman, ashamed to be seen. Lastly, there is *the sinner’s inference*. “My time, my warfare and my service are appointed, but what have I done in them? I have waged a warfare against God and have served in the pay of the devil, what will the end be?”

Sinner, you will run your length. You will fulfill your day to your black master. You will fight his battle and earn your pay, but what will the wages be? The end comes and the wage-paying—are you ready to reap what you have sowed? Having taken sides with the devil against yourself and against your God, are you prepared for the result? Look to it, I pray you, and beseech the Lord, through Jesus Christ, to give you Grace to escape from your present position and enlist on the side of Christ. I ask you, Sirs, who are sitting in this gallery and who have not believed in Jesus—and you men and women all over this building who are unregenerate—if, instead of the decease of the Brother who has fallen I had to speak of *your* death, where must you have been?

If you had died in sin, we are not among those who would have read a hypocritical service over you and thanked God that you were taken! We would not have insulted the Most High by saying that we, ourselves, hoped to die in that fashion! We dare not so have blasphemed the Majesty of Heaven! You know we should have laid you into the grave very silently with many a tear more salty than usual, because deep down in our spirit there would have been that dreary thought, “He died impenitent. He died unregenerate. He is lost! He is lost!” Weep not for our Brother, dead in his prime, whose children mourn him! Weep not for him, though his sorrowing wife bends over his corpse and cannot persuade herself that his spirit is gone!

Weep not for him, but weep for those who have died and are lost forever, driven from the Presence of God! In their eternal warfare there will be no discharge! And in their dreadful slavery there will be no end, for there is no appointed time for man when once he leaves this earth! Time is over and the angel who puts one foot upon the sea, and another upon the land, swears by the Eternal that time shall be no more and the condition of the lost spirit is finally settled, settled forever! Beware, therefore, and be wise, for Christ’s sake and your own. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 7.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—90, 851, 839.

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