

FEAR OF DEATH

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“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”
Hebrews 2:15.

IT is a very natural thing that man should fear to die, for man was not originally created to die. When Adam and Eve were first placed in the Garden of Eden, they were in such a condition that they might have remained there for a myriad years if they had kept their integrity. There was no reason why unfallen man should die—but now that we have sinned, the seeds of corruption are in this flesh of ours—and it is appointed unto men once to die. Yet, as if the body knew that it was not according to the first decree of Heaven that it should go to the earth and to the worms, it has a natural reluctance to return to its last bed. And this fear of death, so far as it is natural, is not wrong.

In fact, it subserves a very high purpose in the economy of mankind, for there is many a man who might be tempted to end this mortal life were it not for the fear of death. And to end his life by his own hand would be a dreadful deed—it would prove that he was not the child of God, for “you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” I mean, of course, if such a deed were done by anyone in possession of his senses—I am not giving any judgment on those who are not in the possession of reason and who are not accountable for what they do. If any man in his sober senses were to commit suicide, we could entertain no hope of eternal life for him. Yet many would do so were it not that there is impressed upon them the fear of what would result from thus ending their being.

So far, you see, the fear of death answers a good purpose and is, in itself, right. But it can very readily go beyond the point where it is right into the region wherein it becomes evil and I do not doubt that many godly persons have a fear of death about them which is very evil and which produces very evil effects. Some, no doubt, have been hindered from confessing Christ and following Him fully through fear of death, but not, perhaps, so much now, as in the days of the martyrs. Then there were heroic spirits that went *willingly* to the stake, or to some other painful form of death which the tyrant of the hour decreed. They cheerfully, with shouts of victory, laid down their lives which they did not count dear unto them for the sake of Jesus Christ!

But there *were* timid spirits that shrank from such an ordeal—they loved life and they feared death, especially in the terrible forms in which it was thrust upon them. This shrinking would be wrong in any one of us. If the fear of death made us dishonor Christ, we would be guilty of deadly sin. If any man resolves to follow Christ, he must not love his own life in comparison with his love to Jesus Christ, but he must be willing to lay it down for the sake of Him who gave up His life upon the Cross for us.

Fear of death also causes some Christian people to have to endure many needless sorrows. They are ill and likely to die and, instead of being in a calm and serene state of mind, as they ought to be, they are greatly perturbed and distressed. Even while they are well, if something happens that causes them to think upon their last hours, they are burdened and depressed. Now this sorrow is a sorrow of the *flesh* which ought to be avoided. We ought to seek for Divine Grace to conquer it so that we may not have the sorrow of the world which works death. This fear of death is very dishonoring to God. It looks as if you could trust Him in fair weather, but not in storms—could believe in Him while you are well and strong—but could not trust in Him when health and strength are failing you. Never forget what David said, “He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”

We greatly glorify God when we can say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” but if we are afraid to die, it looks as if we had not a whole-hearted trust in God, or that perfect love to Him which casts out fear. And this fear of death also tends very much to dishonor our holy religion in the eyes of those who are not believers in Jesus. The calmness with which the Christian expects his end, or even the holy joy with which he anticipates it, is one of the things which ungodly men cannot comprehend—and even if they will not confess it, they are a good deal impressed by it and often feel their hearts longing to know that blessed secret which can make Christians look forward to their last days on earth in such a cheery spirit.

The Christian who contemplates death with joy is a living sermon! He is a better defense of the Gospel than all the works that Butler and Paley and the other writers of Christian evidences have ever been able to compile. Therefore, dear Friends, the Church of Christ loses this defense and the world loses this evidence when we are troubled by the fear of death. This fear ought not to be found in Christians, but if it ever is, they ought to strive against it until they overcome it—

*“Why should we start, or fear to die?
What timorous worms we mortals are!
Death is the gate of endless joy,
And yet we dread to enter there?
The pains, the groans, the dying strife
Frighten our approaching souls away—
Still we shrink back again to a life,
Fond of our prison and our clay.”*

“How are we to get rid of this fear?” asks one. Well, let us never try to get rid of it, as some do, by forgetting all about death! That would be to live as the brutes that perish! They live their little day here without any thought beyond the present. The ox and the sheep go to the slaughterhouse without the power to look beyond the present life. I would not like to obtain peace of mind by descending to the level of those “dumb, driven cattle.” Yet there are many men whose only peace arises from thoughtlessness and that is a sorry peace which cannot endure contemplation and consideration. Why, we know men who are bold enough in company and who can even blaspheme God—but set them down in a room by themselves, compel them to think in solitude even for a single hour—and you could not condemn them to a greater misery! They cannot bear the idea of parting with their present joys. Venturing into another world seems, to them, such a hazardous enterprise that they forget all about it and shut their eyes to all thoughts beyond this life!

It is not in that way that Christians seek to overcome their fear of death. They are thoughtful and they wish to always ponder, to consider and to judge concerning the future as well as the present. They desire to look beyond this mortal state. They ask for brighter vision and clearer eyesight and do not need to shut their eyes to the future, whatever it may have in store for them!

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning this fear of death. First, *where shall we look to be delivered from it?* Secondly, *what shall we further think of to help us conquer it?* And, thirdly, *what shall we do to overcome it?*

I. First, then, WHERE SHALL WE LOOK TO BE DELIVERED FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH?

The answer is, Beloved, that you must look for that where you are bound to look for *everything*, namely, TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, for there is no true deliverance from the fear of death except by looking unto Him whose death is the death of death! The verse before our text suggests this when it tells us that Jesus Christ became Man, “that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

How does Christ take away from us the fear of death? He does it, first, *by taking away from us the sin which is the sting of death*. To die *forgiven*, “accepted in the Beloved,” is not really to die, but to depart out of this world unto the Father! Unforgiven sin is that which makes it hard to lay the head upon the dying pillow. But when sin is forgiven and we know that it is and we have perfect peace with God, we can even *long* for that last evening of life to come that we may undress and sleep in Jesus! Be sure, Beloved, that you are forgiven—“make your calling and election sure.” Know for a certainty that Jesus Christ’s words apply to you, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.” Rest completely upon that Sacrifice which He once offered upon the Cross when He made a full atonement for all

who believe an Him! Understand that He has washed you from your sins in His blood and made you kings and priests unto God—and then I do not see how the fear of death can live in you any longer!—

*“If sin is pardoned, I m secure!
Death has no sting beside.
The Law gives sin its damning power,
But Christ, my Ransom, died.”*

Next, Christ has delivered you from the fear of death *by changing the very character of death, itself*. You know what He said to Martha, “Whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” And Believers never do die in the sense in which others die. They die in order to endure the penalty of sin, but for us, that penalty was borne by Christ! All our iniquities were laid upon Him and all the penalty of them was borne by Him. Death to the Believer is no penalty—it is a development from this time state to another and a higher one—a breaking of the shell that now confines us! It is a snapping of the cable that holds the vessel to the shore; a severing of the chain that holds the eagle to the rock. Death releases us so that we may soar away to that land of light and love where Jesus is, as John Newton sings—

*“In vain my fancy strives to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint
When yielding up his breath.
One gentle sigh the fetter breaks!
We scarce can say, ‘They’ re gone!
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the Throne.”*

Death to the Believer is not an execution—it is his deliverance, his freedom from slavery and admission into the Glory of God!

Christ has taken away the fear of death from those who truly know Him *by assuring us that our soul shall not die or become extinct*. There is a vital principle within us, as He has said, “Because I live, you shall live also.” One of His last solemn declarations was, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” We sorrow not as without hope concerning those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, for we know that they are forever with the Lord! “To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord,” is the Divine Revelation concerning all who are in Christ Jesus by a living faith! Because our souls shall never die, we are not afraid to venture into the world of spirits.

Then there is that master doctrine of the Christian faith which was not revealed to men in all its fullness until Jesus came. I mean, *the doctrine of the resurrection of the body*. It is for this body that we have any fear—corruption, earth and worms are its heritage—and it seems a hard thing that these eyes, which have seen the light, should be blinded in the mold; that these hands which have been active in God’s service, should lie still in the grave—and that these limbs, which have trodden the pilgrim path, should be able to move no longer. But courage, Believer! Your body shall rise again! Laid in the earth it may be, but *kept* in the earth it *cannot* be! The voice of Nature bids you die, but the voice of the Omnipotent bids you live, again, for the trumpet shall sound and then the bodies of the saints shall rise—

*“From beds of dust and silent clay,
To realms of everlasting day.”*

This is our consolation, that, as Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead, “even so they, also, who sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.” As we have this double comfort for soul and body, what more do we need?

Thus I have shown you that to overcome the fear of death, we must look to Jesus Christ on the Cross atoning for us, in the Resurrection rising for us, in the Glory taking possession of our home for us and at the right hand of God preparing our place for us, possessing all power and using it so that He may bring us unto His eternal Kingdom—and soon to come again, in all the glory of the latter days, to raise the bodies of His people from the dead unless they are still alive at His coming. This is He who conquers for us the fear of death! It is to Him we are to look—“looking unto Jesus.” Let your eyes be always looking to Him—then the fear of death will not make you subject to bondage.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT SHALL WE THINK OF THAT MAY FURTHER HELP US TO OVERCOME THIS FEAR OF DEATH?

First, let us remember that if we are called to die, *we are called to do no more than Jesus Christ has done before us*. When my body goes down to the grave, it will not be the first tenant of the sepulcher! Myriads of the saints have been there before and, best of all, the saints' Master and Lord has slept in the tomb! You remember that Jesus left the napkin folded by itself that mourners might use it in drying their tears—but the linen clothes, in which He had been wrapped—remained together so that our last bed might be well-sheeted, that our last sleeping room might not be unfurnished. More than that—

*“There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”*

Should not the servant be as the Master? Does he ask for more? If the King, Himself, has passed this way, shall His body-guard, His soldiers, His companions be afraid to pursue the same downward path? No, Beloved, as you follow the track of the Crucified to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, you may, yourself, walk safely there! If the footprints of the flock have often encouraged us, how much more should the footprints of the Shepherd! So, Believers, be not afraid to die, for Jesus died.

Remember, also, that *death will not separate us from the love of Christ, nor from Christ Himself*. He is with us *now* and He will be with us *then*. And after death we shall be with Him forever! He loves us today and He will love us tomorrow. He will love us all our lives. He will love us in death and He will love us throughout eternity! It was this Truth of God that Paul proclaimed when he wrote, “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.” In one of his inventories of the Christian's possessions, he writes, “Life or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours so death is yours if you are in Christ Jesus.” If the pangs of death could separate the members of Christ's mystical body from their Head, it would be death, indeed. If that grievous sorrow could divide the heart of Jesus from the heart of His elect, then might we dread to die—but it is not so! If death makes any difference to us, the bonds that unite us to Christ shall become still firmer and the Revelation of Christ shall become yet brighter—and Jesus shall be nearer and dearer to us in our departure from earth than He ever was before! “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

Next, let us remember that *death will not even separate us from all our friends*. It will take the wife from the husband and the child from the mother—and we must leave behind us many who have been our comrades in the battle of life. But, especially to you who are growing old, it ought to be a very comforting thought that probably most of your best friends have already crossed the river! If you were to count up those who have been dear to you from your youth up, you would find that the majority have gone on before you as you have advanced in years. And there are some above who, a long way behind our Lord, of course, will be among the dearest friends that we hope to see up yonder! The mother will find her babies who were lent to her for a brief season and then caught away to Heaven, safe on the other shore. And grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters and many a fellow Church member with whom we went to the House of the Lord in company—are all there ready to welcome us when we shall be newcomers in the Celestial City! Do not, therefore, have a fear of death because of the separation from friends below, but rather cheer yourself with the prospect of a blessed *reunion* with friends above! You may, perhaps, regret that you have to leave some behind, but think of the friends ahead and let your spirit rejoice to remember that you are going “to the general assembly and Church of the first-born which are written in Heaven.” Again, I say to you, “Comfort one another with these words.”

I think the fear of death ought to vanish from us when we remember that *it will be an answer to a great many of our prayers*. I am not sure we always do right to sing such words as these—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode.”*

I remember a minister, an old friend of mine, who went into the pulpit one Lord's-Day morning, stood up and read that verse—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God!”*

As he uttered those words, he sat down in the seat, fell back—he had gone to be with his God! We should not venture to say or sing such words as these unless we are fully prepared for such a sudden change as came to my aged friend. But how often you and I have prayed to be rid of troubles! Well, we shall be rid of them, *then!* How often have we prayed to be rid of sin! We shall be rid of it, *then!* We have prayed to be delivered from temptation—and we shall be—*then.* We have asked to be like Jesus and we shall be, *then!* We have prayed for a clearer vision of Him and we shall have it, *then.* Why, our prayers, except when we pray, “Let the whole earth be filled with Your Glory,” can scarcely go further than when we say, “Let us be with You where You are.” By our death, the Lord will answer our prayers. One kiss on our lips from His dear mouth will kiss away our soul and we shall be where we shall see His blessed face in all the splendor of His Glory! So then, if death is the answer to your prayers, why need you dread it?

Remember, too, that *death is attended by very special comforts.* I remember a sermon by my grandfather which stuck in my youthful memory and is still fresh in my memory. I forget the text, but I think it was, “Grace to help in time of need.” And at the end of the first head the old gentleman said, “But there is one kind of Grace that you do not want.” Then he went on to a second head and mentioned another kind of Grace and, again, he said, “But there is one kind of Grace that you do not want.” He had five or six heads to his discourse, but at the end of every one of them he said, “But there is one kind of Grace that you do not want.” We were all wondering what he could mean and then he finished up with this remark, “You do not want *dying* Grace till dying moments come!” There was truth in that observation!

I may say to myself, “Do I feel, now, that I could die calmly or even triumphantly?” I may put the question if I like, but it is hardly a fair one, for I am not yet called to die! Yet my experience and observation of others lead me to believe that very remarkable Grace is often given to Believers in their last hours. I have seen the timid become more strong than the brave! I have seen the retiring become more bold than the courageous! And I have known some who seemed to be almost dumb, before, speak with matchless utterance! And some, whose faces have been lit up with supernatural joy—who, before, appeared to be amongst the doubting and the trembling ones of Christ’s family. There are choice revelations, special manifestations, nearer approaches to Christ, wider outlets of love from Him and greater inlets into the soul of the brightness of His Presence in those times, than ever before!

When the body is strong, it often seems like a thick wall that shuts out the light. But when disease comes and shakes the tenement, it makes great rifts in wall and roof—and through those rifts the Light of God comes streaming in as it had never come in before! I never can doubt the truth of our holy faith, or the reality of religion after what I have witnessed at the deathbeds of the Lord’s people. I could tell you of one, who died this week, and who had long been a member of this Church. She was unconscious in her last hours, but up to the time when unconsciousness came on, it would have been a joy to any of you to see her! She almost incessantly requested her friends TO sing such songs as—

“Safe in the arms of Jesus.”

As long as she could do so, she took her part, joining better than any of them in the real joy of the song, for they were sorrowful at the thought of losing one whom they loved—but she was joyful in the prospect of soon beholding the face of Him whom her soul loved so intensely! I believe there is no joy in life that equals the joy of departing Believers!

You may visit the haunts of folly, if you will, and search for joy, there, but you shall not find any joy worth the having. You may go to the palaces of kings; you may go to bridal chambers; you may go where health, strength, fame and honor contribute to worldly mirth—but you shall not find such deep, intense joy anywhere else as you shall find in that room where the death-sweat is on the Believer’s brow—and the Glory of Heaven is shining upon his face! I have heard some say that it was worth while to live for the sake of the joy they have had when they were dying! So there is no cause for a Christian to fear death if such an experience as this awaits him.

But it is not so much the joy of dying that can console us as *the life that is beyond death.* I never like to hear people quote the first part of that text and omit the latter portion, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Christians know that there is a joy unspeakable and eternal which will be their portion as soon as they shall depart from this world to be with the Father. Well did we sing just now—

*“Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose,
They only make Heaven more sweet at the close!”*

*Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall
An hour with my God will make up for them all."*

What will be the sensations of the first hour in heaven? I will not try to picture them—I will leave you to imagine them. But what will be your sensations when you realize that you are not merely to be there for an hour, or a day, or even for 70 years, but forever and ever? Of him that overcomes, Christ says, "He shall go no more out." He shall be blessed forever and ever in the Presence of his Lord! The righteous are to go "into life eternal." Take away that word, "eternal," and you have taken away our all! But while that remains, the Heaven of Heaven is the fact that it will last forever and ever! I cannot stay to speak at length upon all this, but I do entreat every child of God to think much upon these comforting themes and then, surely, he will be helped to overcome the fear of death.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT SHALL WE DO, as well as what shall we think of, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY OVERCOME THE FEAR OF DEATH?

I would say, first, *let us die every day*. "I die daily," said the Apostle Paul. The man who practices dying every day, the man who has, as it were, a daily rehearsal of it, will not be afraid of the reality when it comes! We are wise to talk of our last hours, to be familiar with the thought of our departure from this world. Every night, when we go to our bed, we ought to have a rehearsal of death. We lay aside our clothes for the night just as we shall have to lay aside our bodies in death. I like that idea best on Saturday night, for then we take off our work-day clothes and they are put away—and we fall asleep. And then, in the morning, there are our Sabbath-Day garments laid ready for us and oh, what wonderful Sabbath-Day clothes we shall have when we awake in the morning in Heaven and are "arrayed in fine linen: clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints."

So, die daily, Brothers and Sisters, in this fashion! Get into the habit of so doing. I remember an old Christian woman who used to say that she had dipped her feet in the river of death every morning before she left her bedroom, so she did not mind when she was called to go through it, she was so accustomed to "die daily."

The next piece of advice I have to give you is this—*hold very loosely everything on earth*. Have you a great many possessions and friends? Mind that you do not cling too closely to them, for there is danger about them all. As one once observed to a rich man who took him over his parks and gardens, "Ah, Sir, these are the things that make it hard to die!" The poor have little enough to leave and when they go, they have not the regrets which the covetous and avaricious rich man oftentimes has, or the man who has added field to field and farm to farm, till he owns all the land in the region where he lives. "Must I leave you? Must I leave you?" has often been the miser's cry, as he has tried to clutch his moneybags with his dying fingers! O Beloved, hold everything loosely! You are in a dying world and everything about you is like yourself—shadowy and fleeting. Do not build your nest here as if you were to abide here forever.

We ought to live in this world like lodgers at an inn. There was a good bishop who used to say that he should like to die at an inn because he felt as if he should then be in a similar position, both literally and spiritually. And truly, that is the spirit in which Christians should always live. A man on a journey goes to an inn to spend a night—he does not trouble himself because the room is not quite to his taste, for he will be off in the morning. You, Believer, are only at an inn, so do not fret about the little inconveniences here, for you are to be off in the morning and, you may depend upon it that your Father's carriage will be at the door at the right time—so have everything packed up ready for your departure! Do not go buying a lot of lumber here, for you cannot carry it with you! Have very little and have it all ready. And a very good thing is to send as much as you can on before you!

Somebody said, the other day, that the best way to travel was to send all your goods on by the luggage train in advance and then go, yourself, by the first-class express passenger train. He explained that he meant that you were to give away as much as you could to the poor and to the Church of God—and so send it on by the luggage train. "What I spent, I *had*," said a man. "What I kept, I *lost*. What I gave away, I *have*." And truly it is so when Believers die. Still is that theirs which they have given to God and to His poor, "but whose is that which they have left behind?" Perhaps some ungrateful heir will sinfully squander it. I have often admired the difference between a rich man's funeral and a poor man's. It grieves me, sometimes, to think of the rich man's funeral. What do the sons and daughters of the miser think about it? They are most concerned to get home to hear the reading of the will! But when the poor man dies, it is quite another matter. There is his daughter, Jane, who is employed as a servant—she contributes a little towards the cost of the funeral. Then there is a son, John, who has a wife and four or five children—but he pinches himself so as to contribute a little. All

the children do something to help and those are honest tears that they shed for the poor old man, for they have nothing to gain by his departure and the grief at his funeral will be real and true. But whether you are rich or poor in this world's goods, make sure that you are among "the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

But the main way to overcome the fear of death is *to believe firmly in your Lord*. You will generally find that in proportion as your faith gets stronger, your fear of death will vanish—and as your faith gets weak, fear will come in to take its place. Realize that Christ is your Savior, that He loves you and has given Himself for you—and saved you with an everlasting salvation! Realize that He has inscribed your name upon the palms of His hands. No, more—that He has engraved it upon His heart! Remember that although a woman may forget her sucking child, your Lord *never* can forget you and that He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"—and then will you be able to say, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

The next thing I exhort you to do is to *walk much with God*. Pray for Grace to never get out of fellowship with Him. You cannot have the fear of death while you walk with Him! There was a man, you remember, who never died—and the reason was because he walked with God! If any man would escape all dread of death, he must pursue Enoch's path. It is the only way to rise superior to the natural fear that comes upon us all at times.

Next, to get rid of the fear of death, I urge you to *serve God every day with all your might*. Live each day as if it were to be your last day. If any Christian man knew that he had only one more day to live, what a great deal of work he would crowd into that day! Then do that *every* day since any night, when you fall asleep, you may do so for the last time on earth! Press as much service as you can into each day—live at a quick rate, serve the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength—and try to get a full day's work done in every day.

I met, the other day, with a piece of poetry which struck me very forcibly. I wonder whether it will strike you in the same way as I read it—

*“My work is done, I lay me down to die.
Weary and travel-worn, I long for rest.
Speak but the word, dear Master, and I fly,
A dove let loose to nestle on Your breast.’
‘Not yet, My child; a little longer wait,
I need your prayerful watch at Glory’s gate.’
‘But, Lord, I have no strength to watch and pray,
My spirit is benumbed and dim my sight.
And I shall grieve Your wakeful love, as they
Who in the garden slept, that paschal night.’
‘My child, I need your weakness, hour by hour,
To prove, in Me, your weakness is power.’
‘Not for myself, I urge the suit,
But loved ones lose, for me, life’s priceless bloom
And tender, patient, uncomplaining, mute,
Wear out their joy in my darkened room.’
‘Enough, My child! I need their love to you;
Around your couch they minister to Me.’
‘It is enough, dear Master, yes, Amen!
I will not breathe one murmur or reply.
Only fulfill Your work in me and then
Call me, and bid me answer, ‘Here am I.’
‘My child, the sign I waited for is given.
Your work is done. I need you now in Heaven.’”*

I admire that utterance of Mr. Whitefield, which I have quoted to you before, "I try to keep all my affairs so arranged that if I were to die at any time, they would be no trouble to those who come after me." He was so particular in his habits that he would not fall asleep if he had a pair of gloves out of place! And I like to feel that as far as it can be, all is right with my own affairs.

I do not wonder that some Christian people would be afraid to die, now, for they remember that they have not made their *wills*. Simple as that remark may seem to be to you, it is a very important matter, for it is a terrible thing for a man to be taken suddenly ill and, instead of having to think about departing to his God, he has to send for a lawyer! And when his own wits are scarcely ready for it, he has to be planning about what is to be done for his wife and children and others whom he wishes to benefit. Get that matter settled as soon as you can and see to everything else that needs attention—so that you may be able to say—“Here am I, standing like a passenger at a railway station. My luggage is all ready and I am only waiting to step into the carriage and be gone.” Happy man who is in that prepared state, for he need have no fear of death!

And, Brothers and Sisters, if you would get rid of the fear of death, my last word of advice is, *use the telescope very frequently*. Look away up to the eternal hills where your heavenly inheritance lies, for all the Glory which Christ has with the Father is yours! You shall sit upon His Throne, even as He sits upon His Father’s Throne. You shall be crowned, even as He is crowned. Look away from this mist and fog, this frost and snow—to the land where the sun goes down no more and the days of your mourning shall be forever ended! Let your spirit rejoice that as you are one with Jesus, you have already, by faith, taken possession of the land where you shall be no more subject to any pain, or trial, or sorrow, or sin, or death! Happy are the people who have such a blessed place to go to when they die!

But I am afraid there are some here who have not any such prospect before them. To them I will repeat a simple story which I have told to some of you before. I have heard of a certain king who had a jester or, “fool,” to make fun for him, as kings used to have. But this “fool” was no fool! He had much sense and he had thought wisely about eternal matters. One day when he had greatly pleased the king, His Majesty gave him a stick and said to him, “Tom, here is a stick which you are to keep till you see a bigger fool than yourself—and then you may give it to him.” One day His Majesty was taken ill and it was thought that he would die. Many went to see him and Tom also went and said, “What is the matter, Your Majesty?” “I am going, Tom, I am going.” “Where are you going?” asked Tom. “I fear it is a very long way,” said the king. “And are you coming back, Your Majesty?” “No, Tom.” “You are going to stay a long while, then?” “Forever,” said the king.

“I suppose Your Majesty has a palace ready over there.” “No.” “But I suppose you have provided everything that you will need there if you are going such a long way and never coming back? I suppose you have sent a good deal on and got everything provided for on ahead?” “No, Tom,” said the king, “I have done nothing of the kind.” “Here, then, Your Majesty, take my stick, for you are a bigger fool than I am.”

And if there is a man here who has made no provision for eternity and who has no mansion, no abiding place, no treasure, no Friend, no Advocate, no Helper there, he is a gigantic fool, be he who he may! The Lord give that fool a little sense and lead him to confess his folly and look to Jesus, who is Savior, Friend and Heaven all in one! God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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