

A Voice From Heaven

by C.H. Spurgeon

To be blessed when we die, we must be saints who have the patience of the saints, keep the commandments of God, and keep the faith of Jesus.

Duration: 48:35

Scripture: Numbers 23:10, Psalm 56:8, Matthew 25:21, 1 Corinthians 3:13-14, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Revelation 14:12-13

Topics: "Perseverance Of Faith", "Rewards In Heaven"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of Christians resisting the temptations and allurements of the world. He encourages believers to have the patience and endurance of the saints, even in the face of persecution and hardship. The preacher also highlights the significance of living a righteous and principled life, even if it means being unfashionable or experiencing poverty. He reminds the audience that good works done in the power of the Spirit will be rewarded in heaven, and encourages them to continue abounding in the work of the Lord.

Transcript

The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit. A Voice from Heaven. Sermon delivered by C. H. Bergen at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

Revelation 14, verses 12 and 13. Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God in the faith of Jesus.

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. The text speaks of a voice from heaven which said, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

The witness of that voice is not needed upon every occasion, for even the commonest observer is compelled to feel concerning many of the righteous that their deaths are blessed. Balaam, with all his moral short-sightedness, could say, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. That is the case when death comes in peaceful fashion.

The man has lived a calm, godly, consistent life. He has lived as long as he could well have wished to live. And in dying he sees his children and his children's children gathered round his bed.

What a fine picture the old man makes as he sits up with that snowy head supported by snowy pillows. Hear him as he tells his children that goodness and mercy have followed him all the days of his life, and now he is going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. See the seraphic smile which lights up his face as he bids them farewell, and assures them that he already hears the harpers harping with their harps.

Bids them stay those tears and weep not for him but for themselves. Charges them to follow him so far as he has followed Christ, and to meet him at the right hand of the judge in the day of his appearing. Then the old man, almost without a sigh, leans back and is present with the Lord.

Heaven waits not the last moment. Owns her friends on this side death and points them out to men. A lecture silent but of sovereign power to vice confusion and to virtue peace.

Even the blind bathside worldling can see that blessed are the dead which die in the Lord in such a fashion as that. Nor is it difficult to perceive that this is the case in many other instances. We have ourselves known several good men and women who were afraid of death and were much of their lifetime subject to bondage, but they went to bed and fell asleep and never woke again in this world.

And as far as appearances go, they could never have known so much as one single pang in departure, but fell asleep among mortals to awake amid the angels. Truly, such gentle loosings of the cable, such fordings of Jordan dry sherd, such a sense of the celestial hills with music at every step are beyond measure desirable. And we need no voice out of the excellent glory to proclaim that blessed are the dead who in such a case die in the Lord.

But that was not the picture which John had before his mind. It was quite another, a picture grim and black to mortal eye. The sounds which meet the ear are not those of music, nor the whispered consolations of friends, but quite the reverse.

All is painful, terrible, and the very opposite of blessed so far as strikes the eye and ear. Hence it became needful that there should be a voice from heaven to say, blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. I will give you the picture.

The man of God is on the rack. They are turning that infernal machine with all their might. They have dragged every bone from its place.

They have exercised their tortures till every nerve of his body thrills with agony. He is flung into a dark and loathsome dungeon and left there to recover strength enough to be led in derision through the streets. Upon his head they have placed a cap painted with devils.

And on his garments they have bedizened with the resemblance of fiends and flames of hell. And now, with a shaveling priest on each side holding up before him a superstitious emblem and bidding him adore the Virgin or worship the cross, the good man loaded with chains goes through the streets, say, of Madrid or Antwerp to the place prepared for his execution. An act of faith, they call it.

An act of heroic faith it is indeed when the man of God takes his place at the stake in his shirt with an iron chain about his loins and is fastened to the tree where he must stand and burn quick to the death. Can you see him as they kindle the faggots beneath him and the flames begin to consume his quivering flesh till he is all ablaze and burning, burning without a cry, though fiercely tormented by the fire? Now assuredly is that voice from heaven wanted and you can hear it. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

Blessed even when they die like this. Here is the patience of the saints. And in the esteem of angels and of glorified spirits, such a death may under many aspects be adjudged to be more blessed than the peaceful deathbed of the saint who had some fellowship with Jesus but was not so made to drink of his cup and to be baptized with his baptism as to die a painful and ignominious death as a witness for the truth.

It must have been a dreadful thing to watch the rabble rout hurrying to Smithfield to stand there and see the burning of the saints. And it would have been a more fearful thing still, if possible, to have been in the dungeons of the low countries and seen the Anabaptists put to death in secret in a dungeon, dark and pestilential. There is placed a huge vat of water and the faithful witness to scriptural baptism is drowned, drowned for following the lamb whithersoever he goeth, drowned alone where no eye could pity and no voice from out of the crowd could shout a word of help and comfort.

Men hear only the coarse jests of the murderers who have given the dipper his last dip, but the ear of faith can hear ringing through the dungeon the voice, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. True, through the connection of their names with a fanatic band, these holy ancestors of ours have gained scant honor here. Yet, their record is on high.

Blessed they are and blessed they shall be. Wheresoever on this earth, whether among the snows of Piedmont's valleys or in the fair fields of France, saints have died by sword or famine or fire or massacre for the testimony of Jesus because they would not bear the mark of the beast either in their forehead or in their hand. This voice is heard sounding out of the third heavens.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. It matters not, my brethren, where they die who die in the Lord. It may be that they have not the honor of martyrdom in man's esteem, but yet are witnesses for the Lord in poverty and pain.

Here is the patience and here also is the blessedness of the saints. Yonder, poor girl, lies in a garret where the stars look between the tiles and the moon gleams on the ragged hangings of the pallet where she bravely suffers and without a murmur gradually dissolves into death. However obscure and unknown she may be, she has been kept from the great transgression.

Tempted sorely, she has yet held fast her purity and her integrity. Her prayers, unheard by others, have gone up before the Lord and she dies in the Lord saved through Jesus Christ. None will preach her funeral sermon, but she shall not miss that voice from heaven saying, Right, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

We repeat it. It matters not when you die nor in what condition. If you are in the Lord and die in the Lord, right, blessed are ye.

Now it is quite certain that very soon every one of us must leave this world. We know that we are no more immortal than our fellow men, though by a sad piece of imposition upon ourselves we count all men mortal but ourselves. Right, surely mortal we are and pass away out of this world.

Each one of us shall in due time. The saints themselves must die, though to them death is far other than to sinners. It is greatly wise to be ready for our undressing, prepared for the sweet sleep in Jesus.

And if we are not in Christ, it is all the more imperative upon us to consider our latter end that we rush not forward in the dark. I therefore want for a few minutes only to disengage your mind from the two abundant

snare of this world and the thralldom of human cares that you may look across the border into the great future so surely yours, perhaps so nearly yours, oh, that you might be helped to prepare for that future, that by such preparation through divine grace you may be numbered among the blessed who die in the Lord. First we shall briefly describe their character, then mention the rest which constitutes their blessedness and conclude by meditating upon the reward which is a further part of that blessedness.

First then let us describe the character. Here is the patience of the saints. To be blessed when we die, we must be saints.

By nature we are sinners and by grace we must become saints if we would enter heaven for it is the land of saints and none but saints can ever pass its frontiers. Since death does not change character, we must be made saints here below if we are to be saints above. We have come to misuse the term saint and apply it only to some few of God's people.

What means it but this? Holy, holy men and holy women, these are saints. It is not Saint Peter and Saint John merely. You are a saint, dear brother, if you live unto the Lord.

You are a saint, my sister, however obscure your name, if you keep the Lord's way and walk before Him in sincere obedience. We must be saints and in order to be this we must be renewed in spirit for we are sinners by nature, we must in fact be born again. All unholy and unclean we are by nature, nothing else but sin and we must be created anew by the power of the eternal spirit or else holiness will never dwell in us.

Our loves must be changed so that we no longer love evil things but delight only in that which is true, generous, kind, upright, pure and godlike. We must be changed in every faculty and power of our nature by that same hand which first made us and across our brows must be written these words, holiness unto the Lord. The word saint denotes not merely the pure in character but those who are set apart unto God, dedicated ones, sanctified by being devoted to holy uses, by being in fact consecrated to God alone.

My dear here, do you belong to God? Do you live to glorify Jesus? Can you honestly put your hand on your heart and say, Yes, I belong to Him who bought me with His blood and I endeavor by His grace to live as He would have me live. I am devoted to His honor, loving my fellow men and loving my Lord, endeavoring to be like unto Him in all things. You must be such, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

But how am I to attain to holiness? You cannot rise to it save by divine strength. The Holy Spirit is the sanctifier. Jesus who is our justifier is also made unto us sanctification and if we by faith lay hold on Him we shall find in Him all that we want.

Let this be a searching matter with everyone here present as I desire to make it with myself. And may God grant we may be numbered with the saints. But the glorified are also described in our text as patient ones.

Here is the patience of the saints. Or if you choose to render it differently you may lawfully do so. Here is the endurance of the saints.

Those who are to be crowned in heaven must bear the cross on earth. No cross, no crown is still most true. Many would be saints if everybody would encourage them.

But as soon as a hard word is spoken they are offended. They would go to heaven if they could travel there amidst the hosannas of the multitude. But when they hear the cry of crucify Him, crucify Him straightway they desert the man of Nazareth.

For they have no intention to share His cross or to be despised and rejected of men. The true saints of God are prepared to endure scoffing and jeering and scorning. They accept this cross without murmuring remembering Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

They know that their brethren who went before resisted unto blood striving against sin. And as they have not yet come to that point they counted foul scorn that they should be ashamed or confounded in minor trials. Let their adversaries do what they may.

Those who are to sing Christ's praise in heaven must first have been willing to bear Christ's shame below. Numbered with Him in the humiliation must they be or they cannot expect to be partakers with Him in the glory. And now, dear brethren and sisters, how is it with us? Are we willing to be reproached for Christ's glory? Can we bear the sarcasm of the wise? Can we bear the jest of the witty? Are we willing to be pointed at as Puritanic, punctilious and precise? Do we dare to be singular when to be singular is to be right? If we can do this by God's grace, let us further question ourselves.

Could we endure this ordeal if its intensity were increased? Suppose it came to something worse, to the thumbscrew or the rack. Could we then bear it? I sometimes fear that many professors would cut a sorry figure if persecuting times should come. For I observe that to be excluded from what is called society is a great grievance to many modern Christians.

When they settle in any place, their inquiry is not where can I hear the gospel best, but which is the most fashionable place of worship? And the question with regard to their children is not where will they have Christian associations, but how can I introduce them to society? Introduction to society frequently being an introduction to temptation and the commencement of a life of levity. Oh, that all Christians could scorn the soft witcheries of the world. For if they cannot, they may be sure that they will not bear its fiery breath when, like an oven, persecution comes forth to try the saints.

God grant us grace to have the patience of the saints, that patience of the saints which will cheerfully suffer loss rather than do a wrong thing in business, that patience of the saints which will pine in poverty sooner than yield a principle, though a kingdom were at stake, that patience of the saints which dreads not being unfashionable if the right be reckoned so, that patience of the saints which courts no man's smile and fears no man's frown, but can endure all things for Jesus' sake and is resolved to do so. Can you plead to your Lord when the many turn aside? Can you witness that He hath the living word and none upon earth beside? Can you watch with Him when all forsake Him and stand by Him when He is the butt of ribald jest and scorn and bear the sneer of science, falsely so called, and the politer sarcasm of those who say they doubt, but mean that they utterly disbelieve? Blessed is that preacher who shall be true to Christ in these evil days. Blessed is that church member who shall follow Christ's word through the mire and through the slough or the hill and down the dale, caring nothing so that he can but be true to his Master.

This must be our resolve. If we are to win the glory, we must be faithful unto death. God make us so.

Here is the patience of the saints. It cometh not by nature. It is the gift of the grace of God.

Farther on, these saints are described as they that keep the commandments of God. This expression is not intended for a moment to teach us that these people are saved by their own merits. They are saints to begin with and in Christ to begin with.

But they prove that they are in Christ by keeping the commandments of God. Let us search ourselves upon this matter. Brethren and sisters, we cannot hope to reach the end if we do not keep the way.

No man is so unwise as to think that he would reach Bristol if he were to take the road to York. He knows that to get to a place he must follow the road which leads thither. There is a way of holiness in which the righteous walk, and this way of obedience to the Lord's commands must and will be trodden by all who truly believe in Jesus and are justified by faith, for faith works obedience.

A good tree brings forth good fruit. And if there be no fruit of obedience to God's commands in you or in me, we may rest assured that the root of genuine faith in Jesus is not in us at all. In this age, the keeping of Christ's commandments is thought to be of very little consequence.

It is dreadful to think how Christians in the matter of the law of God's house do not even pretend to follow Christ and His appointments. They join a church and they go by the law of that church, though that church's rule may be clean contrary to the will of Christ. But they answer to everything, that is our rule, you know.

But then, who has a right to make rules for you or for me but Christ Jesus? He is the only legislator in the kingdom of God, and by His commands we ought to be guided. I should not, I could not feel grieved if brethren arrived at contrary conclusions to mine. I being fallible myself, but I do feel grieved when I see brethren arrive at conclusions, not as the result of investigation, but simply by taking things just as they find them.

Too many professors have a happy-go-lucky style of Christianity. Whichever happens to come first, they follow. Their fathers and mothers were this or that, or they were brought up in such and such a connection, and that decides them.

They do not pray, Lord, show me what Thou wouldst have me to do. Brethren, these things ought not so to be. Has not the Master said, Whosoever shall break one of the least of these my commandments and teach men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven.

I would not stand here to condemn my fellow Christians for a moment. In so doing, I should condemn myself also. But I plead with you, if you do indeed believe in Jesus, be careful to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded you.

For He has said, If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, He shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. And again, if ye love me, keep my commandments. A worldling once said to a Puritan, When so many make great rents in their consciences, cannot you make just a little nick in yours for peace's sake? No, said he, I must follow Christ fully.

Ah well, you say, these things are non-essential. Nothing is non-essential to complete obedience. It may be non-essential to salvation, but it is selfishness to say, I will do no more than I know to be absolutely necessary to my salvation.

It is essential to a good servant to obey his Master in all things. And it is essential for the healthiness of a Christian soul that he should walk very carefully and prayerfully before the Lord, else otherwise he will miss the blessing of them of whom it is said, These are they which followed the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. To be blessed in death, we must keep the commandments of God.

The next mark of the blessed dead is that they kept the faith of Jesus. This is another point upon which I would speak thunderbolts if I could. For to keep the faith of Jesus is an undertaking much ridiculed nowadays.

Doctrines, says one, we are tired of doctrines. For forms and creeds let graceless bigots fight. He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

The opinion is current that to be fluent and original is the main thing in preaching. And provided a man is a clever orator, it is a proper thing to hear him. The Lord will wither with the breath of his nostrils that cleverness in any man which departs from the simplicity of the truth.

There is a gospel, and there is also another gospel, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you. There is a yea, yea, and there is a nay, nay. And woe unto those whose preaching is yea and nay, for it shall not stand in the great day when the Lord shall try every man's work for what sort it is.

Search ye, my brethren, and know what the gospel is. And when you do know it, hold it. Hold it as with a hand of iron, and never relax your grasp.

Grievous wolves have come in among us. Wolves of another sort to what were wont to be in the churches, yet verily after the same fashion they come disguised in sheep's clothing. They use our very terms and phrases, meaning all the while something else.

They take away the essentials and vitalities of the faith, and replace them with their own inventions, which they brag of as being more consistent with modern thought and with the culture of this very advanced and enlightened age, which seems by degrees to be advancing. Half of it to paganism with the ritualists, and the other half of it to atheism with the rationalists. From such advances may God save us.

May we be enabled to keep the faith and uphold the truth which we know, by which also we are saved. I, for one, cannot desert the grand doctrine of the atoning blood, the substitutionary work of Christ, and the truths which cluster around it. And why can I not desert these things? Because my life, my peace, my hope hang upon them.

I am a lost man if there be no substitutionary sacrifice, and I know it. If the Son of God did not die, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God I must be damned, and therefore all the instincts of my nature cling to the faith of Jesus. How can I give up that which has redeemed my soul and given me joy and peace and hope hereafter? I beseech you, do not waver in your belief, but keep the faith lest ye be like some in old time who made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience and were utterly cast away.

Woe to those who keep not the doctrines of the gospel, for in due time they forget its precepts also and become utterly reprobate. In departing from Christ, men forsake their own mercies both for life and death. The blessed who die in the Lord are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Notice that these people continue faithful till they die. For it is said, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord. Final perseverance is the crown of the Christian life.

Ye did run well. What did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? Vain is it to begin to build. We must crown the edifice, or all men will deride us.

Helmet and plume, armor and sword are all assumed for nothing unless the warrior fights on till he has secured the victory. Those who thus entered into rest exercise themselves in labors for Christ. For it is said, They rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.

The idle Christian can have little hope of a reward. He who serves not his master can scarcely expect that his master will at the last gird himself and serve him. If I address any here who are not bringing forth fruit unto God, I can say no less than this.

Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. The rule is invariable. It must be so.

If there be no works and no labors for Christ, no suffering or patient endurance, we lack the main evidence of being the people of God at all. To close this description of character, these people who die in the Lord were in the Lord. That is the great point.

They could not have died in the Lord if they had not lived in the Lord. But are we in the Lord? Is the Lord by faith in us? Dear here, are you resting upon Jesus Christ only? Is he all your salvation and all your desire? What is your reply to my inquiry? You are not perfect. But Jesus is.

Are you hanging upon him as the vessel hangs upon the nail? You cannot expect to stand before God with acceptance in yourself. But are you accepted in the Beloved? That is the question. Accepted in the Beloved? Are you in Christ and is Christ in you by real vital union, by a faith that is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul? Answer, I charge you.

For if you cannot answer these things before one of your own flesh and blood, how will you answer in your soul when the Lord himself shall come? So much with regard to the character. And now a very few words with regard to the blessedness which is ascribed to those who die in the Lord. They rest from their labors.

By this is meant that the saints in heaven rest from such labors as they performed here. No doubt they fulfill service in heaven. It would be an unhappy heaven in which there should be nothing for our activities to spend themselves upon.

But such labors as we can do here will not fall to our lot there. There we shall not teach the ignorant or rebuke the erring or comfort the desponding or help the needy. There we cannot oppose the teacher of error or do battle against the tempter of youth.

There no little children can be gathered at our knee and trained for Jesus. No sick ones can be visited with the word of comfort. No backsliders led back.

No young converts confirmed. No sinners converted. They rest from such labors as these in heaven.

They rest from their labors in a sense that they are no longer subject to the toil of labor. Whatever they do in heaven will yield them refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose.

They serve Him day and night in His temple, and therein they rest. Even as on earth by wearing our Lord's yoke we find rest unto our souls, so in the perfect obedience of heaven complete repose is found. They rest also from the woe of labor.

For I find the word has been read by some, they rest from their wailing. The original is a word which signifies to beat, and hence as applied to beating on the breast it indicates sorrow. But the beating may signify conflict with the world or labor in any form.

The sorrow of work for Jesus is over with all the blessed dead. Not to that place approaches their sweet peace to molest. They shall no more say that they are sick, neither shall adversity afflict them.

Their rest is perfect. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us whose work exceeds our strength it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter, and I hope we all have.

But to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure, the prospect of a bath in the ocean of rest is very pleasant. They rest from their labors. To the servant of the Lord it is very sweet to think that when we reach our heavenly home we shall rest from the faults of our labors.

We shall make no mistakes there, never use too strong language or mistaken words, nor err in spirit, nor fail through excess or want of zeal. We shall rest from all that which grieves us in the retrospect of our service. Our holy things up there will not need to be wept over, though now they are daily salted with our tears.

We shall there rest from the discouragements of our labor. There no cold-hearted brethren will damp our ardor or accuse us of evil motives. No desponding brethren will warn us that we are rash when our faith is strong and obstinate when our confidence is firm.

None will pluck us by the sleeve and hold us back when we would run the race with all our might. None will chide us because our way is different from theirs and none will foretell disaster and defeat when we confidently know that God will give us the victory. We shall also rest from the disappointments of labor.

Dear brother ministers, we shall not have to go home and tell our Lord that none have believed our report. We shall not go to our beds sleepless because certain of our members are walking inconsistently and others of them are backsliding why those that we thought were converted have gone back again to the world. Here we must sow in tears.

There we shall reap in joy. There we shall wear the crown or rather cast it at the master's feet. But here we must plunge deep into the sea to fetch up the pearls from the depths that they may be set in the diadem.

Here we labor. There we shall enjoy the fruits of toil where no blight or mildew can endanger the harvest. It will be a sweet thing to get away to heaven, I am sure, to rest from all contentions amongst our fellow Christians.

One of the hardest parts of Christ's service is to follow peace and to maintain truth at the same time. He is a wise chemist who can in due proportions blend the pure and the peaceable. He is no mean philosopher who can duly balance the duties of affection and faithfulness and show us how to smite the sin and love the sinner, to denounce the error and yet to cultivate affection for the brother who has fallen into it.

We shall not encounter this difficulty in yon bright world of truth and love. For both we and our brethren shall be fully taught of the Lord in all things. We shall be free from the clouds and mists of doubt which now cover the earth and clear of the demon spirits which seek to ruin men's souls beneath the shadow of deadly falsehood.

Blessed be God for this prospect. It will be joy indeed to meet no one but a saint, to speak with none but those who use the language of Canaan, to commune with none but the sanctified. Truly blessed are the dead which die in the Lord if they reach to such a rest as this.

To this our laboring souls aspire with ardent pangs of strong desire. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. The last matter of our consideration is the reward of the blessed dead.

They rest from their labors and their works do follow them. They do not go before them, they have a forerunner infinitely superior to their works, for Jesus and his finished works have led the way. I go, says he, to prepare a place for you.

In effect, he says to us, not your works but mine, not your tears but my blood, not your efforts but my finished works shall lead the van. Where then do our works come? Do they march at our right hand or are left as subjects of cheering contemplation? No, no, we dare not take them as companions to comfort us. They follow us at our heel.

They keep behind us out of sight and we ourselves in our desires after holiness always outmarch them. The Christian should always keep his best services behind, always going beyond them and never setting them before his eyes as objects of congratulation. The preacher should labor to preach the best sermons possible, but he must never have them before him so as to cause him in self-satisfaction to say, I have done well, nor should he have them by his side as if he rested in them or leaned upon them, for this were to make antichrist of them.

No, let them come behind. That is their proper place. Believers know where to put good works.

They do not despise them. They never say a word to depreciate the law or undervalue the graces of the Holy Spirit, but still they dare not put their holiest endeavors in the room of Christ. Jesus goes before.

Works follow after. And note well that the works are in existence and are mentioned. Immortality and honor belong to them.

The works of godly men are not insignificant or unimportant as some seem to think. They are not forgotten. They are not as the seer leaves of last year's summer.

They are full of life and bloom unfadingly. They follow the saints as they ascend to heaven, even as the silver trail follows in the wake of the vessel. I picture just now a man burning at the stake.

His enemies thought they had destroyed his work, but they only deepened its hold upon the age in which he suffered and projected his influence into the effect for ages to come. They made a pile of his books, and as they blazed before his eyes, they said, There is an end of you and your heresies. Ah, what fools men have been! Truth is not vanquished with such weapons, nay, nor so much as wounded.

Think of the case of Wycliffe, which I need not repeat to you. They threw his ashes into the brook. The brook carried them to the river and the river to the sea till every wave bore its portion of the precious relics,

just as the influence of his preaching has been felt on every shore.

Persecutors concluded beyond all question that they had made an end of a good man's teaching when they had burned him and thrown away his ashes, but they forgot that truth often gathers a more vigorous life from the death of the man who speaks it, and books once written have an immortality which lasts at fire. Thousands of infidel and heathen works have gone, so that not a copy is to be found. I hope they never may be unearthed from the salutary oblivion which entombs them.

But books written for the master and his truth, though buried in obscurity, are sure of a resurrection. Fifty years ago, our old Puritan authors, yellow with age and arrayed in dingy bindings, wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented. But they have been brought forth in new editions.

Every library is enriched with them. The most powerful religious thought is affected by their utterances and will be till the end of time. You cannot kill a good man's work, nor a good woman's work either, though it be only the teaching of a few children in the Sunday school.

You do not know to whom you may be teaching, Christ, but assuredly you are sowing seed which will blossom and flower in the far-off ages. When Mrs. Wesley taught her sons, little did she think what they would become. You do not know who may be in your class, my young friend.

You may have there a young Whitfield, and if the Lord enable you to lead him to Jesus, he will bring thousands to decision. Ay, at your breast, good woman, there may be hanging one whom God will make a burning and a shining light, and if you train that little one for Jesus, your work will never be lost. No holy tear is forgotten, it is in God's bottle.

No desire for another's good is wasted, God has heard it. A word spoken for Jesus, a might cast into Christ's treasury, a gracious line written to a friend, all these are things which shall last when yonder sun has blackened into a coal and the moon has curdled into a clot of blood. Deeds done in the power of the Spirit are eternal.

Therefore, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. Good works follow Christians, and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all grace, but there will be rewards.

You cannot read the scripture without perceiving that the Lord first gives us good works, and then in His grace rewards us for them. There is a well done good and faithful servant, and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You who live for Jesus may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come.

I repeat it, the reward will not be of death, but of grace, but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing when you are gone that the truth you preached is living still. Methinks the apostles, since they have been in heaven, must often have looked down on the world and marveled at the work which God helped twelve poor fishermen to do.

They must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in one by one? Methinks, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Eh, not a few shall I welcome as my children there.

Blessed be the name of the Lord, but what a joy it will be! You, teachers, you, my good sister, you have brought so many to Christ, I cannot but believe that it shall multiply your heaven to see your dear ones entering it. You will have a heaven in every one of those whose feet you guided thither. You will joy in their joy and praise the Lord in their praise.

No, no, the good old cause shall never die and the truth shall never perish. As I have lately read many hard things that have been spoken against the gospel, and as in going up and down throughout this land I have seen the nation wholly given to idolatry, I have felt something of the spirit of the Paul who, wherever he wanders, says to himself, No, Poland, thou shalt never perish. Despite the darkness and ill savour of the times, the gospel nears its triumph.

It can never perish. Great men may fall, great reputations may grow obscure, grand philosophies may be cast into the shade, monstrous infidelities may win popularity, and old superstitions may come back again to darken us. But thy cross, Emmanuel, thy pure and simple gospel, the faith our fathers loved and died for, must continue to be earth's brightest light, her day star till the day dawn, and the shadows flee away.

The vessel of the church can never be wrecked. She rocks and reels in the mad tempest, but she is sound from stem to stern, and her pilot steers her with a hand omnipotently wise. Her bow is in the wave, but see, she divides the sea and shakes off the mountainous billows as a lion shakes the dew from his mane.

Fiercer storms than those of the present have beat upon her, and yet she has kept her eye to the wind, and in the very teeth of hell's tremendous tempests she has ploughed her glorious way, and so she will till she reaches her appointed haven. The Lord liveth and the Lord reigneth. And Christ from the tree has gone to the throne, from Gethsemane to Golgotha up to the glory, and all power is given unto him in heaven and on earth.

We have nothing to do but to go on preaching the gospel and baptizing in his name according to his bidding. And the day shall come when the might with the right and the truth shall be, and the right hand of Jesus with the iron rod shall break his adversaries and reward his friends. The Lord own every one of us as being on his side, and if we are not on that side, oh, that we may speedily become so by repentance and faith.

May the Lord turn us, and we shall be turned. For if blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, depend upon it. Cursed are they that die out of Christ, a curse with a curse, and their work shall follow them or go before them unto judgment to their condemnation.

May infinite mercy save us from being howled at by our works in the next world. Save us from being hunted down by the wolves of our past sins, risen from the dead, for except we are forgiven, our transgressions will rise from the grave of forgetfulness and gather round us and tear us in pieces, and there shall be none to deliver. May we fly even now to Jesus, and through faith in his blood be delivered from all evil, that we also may have it said of us, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

The Lord bless you for Christ's sake. Amen.

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