

# Comfort for Mourners

by Henry Law

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*God allows suffering to bring us to a deeper knowledge of Himself and to refine us, making us more like Christ.*

**Scripture:** Isaiah 33:24, Isaiah 57:1, Matthew 11:28, Acts 14:22, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Hebrews 12:23, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 14:13, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Eternal Rest", "Heavenly Hope"

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## Description

Henry Law preaches about the profound comfort and joy that believers can find in the midst of sorrow and loss, emphasizing the assurance of eternal rest and peace in the presence of God. He highlights the scriptural promises of being reunited with loved ones in heaven, free from pain, sickness, and the troubles of this world. The sermon encourages gratitude for the hope of resurrection and the ultimate perfection awaiting believers in the glorious presence of the Triune God.

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## Transcript

Sorrow has crossed the threshold of your home, and sits a downcast inhabitant in your heart. You mourn as one from whom all joy is fled. The saddened countenance--the open fount of tears--the swelling sighs--the shrinking from needless discourse--the pensive musing--clearly prove your burden of distress. This grief must spring from some most crushing cause.

It is so. You drink affliction's bitterest cup. Death has approached with withering power, and one, most tenderly beloved, has fallen. BEREAVEMENT, ever working its relentless work, now touches you. You bow beneath its desolating blow. The form on which you joyed to gaze no longer lives. The voice, so charming to your ear, can never more be heard on earth. A vacant seat tells of a sadder vacancy within. The dear one--dearer far than self--must now be covered in the grave. You mourn with grievous mourning. Who can marvel? Who would restrain?

With weeping friends the Christian ever weeps. Do not think that gracious spirits are unfeeling. Grace tenderly transforms the heart. It makes a dreary waste to bear sweet fruit. It wholly sweetens the inner man. It implants new hopes--new prospects--new affections--new desires: but they are all high--unselfish--heavenly. Its province is to melt, and not to freeze. It is no stoic sternness. It is love going forth in amiable emotion. It never checks the tears of broken-heartedness. Hence be assured your grief is not exclusively your own.

Scripture with melting pathos shows many pictures of the bereaved. It states, but never chides their grief. Mourners pass the sacred page attractive and endearing. We honor, while we sympathize.

There is no eclipse of holy dignity in Abraham, when he "came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her."--Gen. 23:2. Where is the heart which disesteems the agony of Jacob, when, supposing Joseph to be slain by beasts, "he tore his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." He refused to be comforted; and he said: "For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."--Gen. 37:34, 35. How many sighs re-echo David's wail: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son! Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son! my son!"--2 Sam. 18:33. The blessed Jesus with approving love joins in the tears of Bethany's sad sisters. The Psalmist consecrates the sorrow of an orphan child in the similitude: "I bowed down heavily, as one that mourns for his mother."--Ps. 35:14.

It then would be harsh philosophy--far alien from Christian love--showing no lineaments of the heart of Jesus--crudely ignoring the endearments of domestic life, which could now counsel you to dry your tears, and do revolting violence to man's best instincts. Christian sympathy regards you with much softer mind. "Behold! he mourns," is a key which unlocks the chamber of condolence. The question arises, and will not be put aside--Can access be obtained to that bereaved house? Can any wings convey some words of loving comfort? Without intrusion or disturbing presence, can tender whispers soothe; can quiet entrance be gained; can an unseen finger point to true solace; can the mourner weep alone, and still hear truths strong to minister relief?

These humble pages venture the attempt. Oh! may they come as a reviving shower on the mown grass! May our gracious Jesus, whose office it is "to comfort all that mourn--to appoint unto those who mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes--the oil of joy for mourning--the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," now show that He is and ever will be, all that this Word portrays. May it be found that He who smites, is near to heal--that the arm which prostrates, is ready to upraise--that this cup of woe is mixed with precious balm--that the valley of grief often leads to pastures of enduring peace! Holy Spirit! give Your smile, and then the sting of suffering is gone.

No comfort can be sound, except God's Scripture is its base. Let, then, the Word be heard. It thus exhorts the stricken: "Hear the rod, and him who has appointed it."--Micah 6: 9. Therefore the rod is graciously ordained. "Affliction comes not forth of the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground."--Job 5:6. It is not chance which thus bereaves you. Death has not hurled a random-shaft, which undesignedly has found your dwelling. Your beloved is not borne from you by the tide of casual current. "God's never-failing providence orders all things in heaven and in earth." No sparrow falls to the ground without the counsel of His will. Matt. 10:29.

This arrow flew, then, from a well-poised bow; therefore no rebel thought may swell. Mercy, wisdom, love, are the inscription of this trial. Humble yourself with more than meek submission. Let patient lips, with true sincerity, profess, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him." Remember Aaron. When the keenest edge of affliction harrowed his very soul, no murmur, no complaint was uttered. Deeply he felt--bitterly he mourned--but "he held his peace."--Lev. 10:3. Emulate the Psalmist's meekness, "I was silent, I opened not my mouth, because You did it."--Ps. 39:9.

When the sun of prosperity is in its zenith, gratitude adores the giving hand. Now under this dark cloud let grateful love still testify: "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the

Lord." Job 1:21. Forbid it that mere formality should breathe the often-repeated prayer: "Your will be done." In this rod read the appointment of your God, the author of your being--the gracious disposer of your every concern--your constant and all-loving Benefactor, and acknowledge, "It is well." The love which gave Christ Jesus to the cross, writes goodness on all minor dealings. Realize that it is His hand which presses you so heavily, and in its very weight you will find elements of comfort. Out of the darkness there will spring up light. Only say, My Father--the Father of all mercies--the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ--the God, whose name is love, thus smites, and heavenly calm will lull the waves of sorrow to repose.

Mark not the appointment only--hear, also, the rod. The rod surely speaks, and its voice is the voice of God. Your trial is not silent. It pleads with heavenly eloquence. Breathe, then, the inward prayer: "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears."--1 Sam. 3:9.

In its approach it may appal, as the loud thunder's clang. It may shake terribly the very center of your heart. But pause, and you will hear a still small whisper dealing calmly with your conscience. It calls you apart to quiet meditation. It bids you, while severed from the world's intrusions, to ponder your ways--to consider your state--to hold frank, upright, manly converse with yourself. It presents a mirror, faithfully reflecting self. It asks most pointedly--How stands your soul with God? Do you know Him as your Father in Christ Jesus? Have you received His Son--the gift of gifts--as all your salvation and desire? Have you welcomed Him as bringing redemption on His wings? Has your faith gazed on Him hanging on the accursed tree, and pouring out His soul unto death, that He might thus atone for all your guilt, and cleanse you by His precious blood? Do you trust Him as exhausting to the last dreg the cup of wrath so justly due to each of your innumerable sins? Do you bless Him as paying to the uttermost the debt of curse incurred by your transgressions? Do you believe in Him satisfying, as your surety, all the demands of all the holy attributes of God? Have you the happy knowledge that this perfect expiation, makes your every crimson dye whiter than the whitest snow, and levels every mountain of iniquity, until all disappear. Have you put on His pure obedience, as the wedding garment, which decks believers for the courts of heaven? Deeply conscious of your miserable guilt--trembling at the loud threats of vengeance--renouncing all hope in self--have you fled to the all-atoning, all-covering, all-beautifying Jesus? Have you enshrined Him on the throne of your soul, as "made of God unto us, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?"--1 Cor. 1:30. Do you act loving reliance on the Gospel-message, and personally embrace its glorious hopes? Can you truly aver, O blessed Jesus, thrice-ador'd Lord, "You know all things;" You know that I have committed my soul to You in full assurance of Your power and willingness to save!

If so, happy is your state. You are one with Christ, and Christ is one with you. No power in heaven or earth can part you from the love of God. In this affliction, He, too, is afflicted. These things all work together for your good. Yet a little while and you shall dwell with God, having His name written on your brow, and "God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying--neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."--Rev.21:4.

Is there not sweetness in the present sorrow which helps you thus to prove the sure foundation of your hopes, and to uplift, more loudly than before, the voice of praise for mercies without bounds? But it may be that, tremblingly, you hesitate. Conscience cannot admit that faith has raised you to this eminence. You fear that you are still a stranger to the Spirit's indwelling and converting presence--an alien to the covenant of grace--not sheltered in the saving ark.

If so, be persuaded. While you thus mourn domestic loss, bemoan your deeper misery. Weep not for the dead alone--weep too for yourself. Death has opened your door. No human means could stay its step. It may relentlessly return with icy hand to tear you hence. You are helpless to withstand. But where, ah! where would it bear you? Hear one warning out of many: "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life; and he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him."--John 3:36.

But yet you live. Yet you have space, and Jesus is beside you--full of all grace. In this bereavement He seems to stand at the door of your heart and knock. Rev. 3:20. Open immediately. Admit the willing Savior. Fall low on your knees in this your house of death. No longer spurn the mercies of the Cross. Cast yourself into the expanded arms of reconciling love. Arise a living soul. "Awake, you that sleep and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light"--Eph. 5:14. Thus may this present sorrow prove to be God's blessing in the highest!

It may be that your heart, believing in the Lord, is conscious of much recent coldness. The flame which once burned brightly is now sadly dim. The love which warmly beat in every pulse is partially repressed. Your former joys droop as a frost-touched leaf. Close walk with God and His dear Son; and watchful waiting for the Spirit's beckoning hand; and happy study of the Word; and prayer uplifting above earth; and holy converse redolent of heaven, no longer are your pleasure-ground. The cheating world has reassumed some sway. You are not happy. You have tasted Canaan's grapes; therefore all other fruit is tasteless. You have walked with your Lord as in a paradise of joy--other companionship must be a weary blank.

Now, while you bewail your dead, bewail yourself. Depressed in shame, catch the echo of the many calls--the gracious promises--the tender exhortations, which throng around backsliders. "Return, O backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever."--Jer. 3:12. Plead such tender words. Claim them meekly as now become your due. The answer will surpass belief. You will find that while a friend on earth is gone, your Friend in heaven cannot die. You will realize the sweetness of the truth: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."--Heb. 13:5. Your dead one cannot be restored, but this death may restore your soul.

Your case may yet exceed in wretchedness. While, in your pensive loneliness, you search the tablets of your heart, you may read clear, unanswerable accusations. Some hidden lust may lurk like Achan in the camp. Some evil embers, not yet thoroughly extinct, may smoulder. Some sin may still detain you with bewitching cords.

Rich is the mercy which brings this misery to light, and warns of an entangling net, and of a leak imperiling the vessel, and of a precipice before your feet. Be wise. Flee this Delilah's lap. Dash resolutely this poisoned goblet to the ground. Do not let this vampire prey on your life-blood. Loathe yourself in dust and ashes. Confess the aggravations of your guilt, and wrestle for pardon through Christ and the all-expiating cross. When penitence and faith thus plead, they cannot plead in vain. A voice will issue from the mercy-seat: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins."--Isa. 44:22. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."--Heb. 8:12. You will soon sing with grateful heart: "I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy; for You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities."Ps. 31:7. Thus a friend lost may issue in salvation found, and the void which this bereavement makes, may be filled up by God.

But no delay must intervene. Gain from your present loss may be obtained today. No man may reckon on tomorrow. Fruit, when ripe, not gathered, will decay. The soil which showers soften, soon becomes dry.

Perhaps you think this weeping will be life-long--joys will be buried in this grave--the sun of earthly happiness is set. But the darkest night will have a dawn. Time's hand has art to efface the writing of an iron pen, and to heal the scars which sorrow has infixed. To customary employ you will return; and as you have been, so you may be again. Unless you come forth wholly changed, you will remain more hopelessly the same. The furnace, which refines the ore, hardens the flint. The sun, which melts the snow, converts the clay to stone. Your sorrow brings a blessing or a curse. The warmth which opens flowers, revives the frost-bound adder.

Ponder the dreadful testimony: "They would have none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof."--Prov. 1:30. Remember the solemn admonition: "Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more."--Isa. 1:5. This call may be your last. If you still slumber, you may be left to sleep unto perdition--quiet, undisturbed, forsaken. No second affliction may shake your fatal rest. Nahum 1:9.

It is not written in vain: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."--Gen. 6:3. He was resisted by sinners before the flood. He is resisted oftentimes now. He may be resisted by you this day, even beside a lifeless form.

You have heard, too, of a "reprobate mind." This is no unmeaning sound--no shadow of an unreal form--no figment of imaginary state--no term invented to give groundless terror. It is a sad description of a sadder woe. It is a current drifting to blackness of darkness forever. If no grace mingles with present tears, your mind, now seemingly so soft, may harden into hopeless hardness. Forbid it, gracious God, for Jesus' sake!

Many are prone to lull the mourner with vain fantasies, and bring false opiates to his lips. But these pages heal no wound deceitfully. They show no comforts which are empty sounds. At once they point to Christ, knowing that in Him alone there is salvation and all peace. Receive Him. All consolations follow in His train. He is the fount of solace. Heaven is happiness because He is there; and earth is happiness when He is known.

Your sorrow brings, too, especial hopes. Showers of blessings often fall from such dark clouds. They have this fringe of cheering light: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."--Rev. 3:19. The path, smooth only with unchanging ease, in which no thorns afflict the feet, is not the road familiar to the heirs of life. Through much distress--through a waste wilderness of woe--over huge mountains of affliction--through deep waters of grief--through heated furnaces of trouble--with weeping eye--with agonizing breast the heavenly home is often reached.

Your present anguish, then, is hopeful sign, that hidden purposes of love are ripe. God seems to charge this trouble, as David his captains, eager for the fight. Deal gently for my sake with my son.--2 Sam. 18:5. He thus prunes His vines to multiply the fruit. The knife is sharp, but it removes encumbering boughs. The north wind hardens the stem before the south wind calls forth the buds. The process is not purposeless. These rigid means are now astir to wean you from the world, whose ways are death--to unmask the hollow treachery of creature-charms--to expose the utter vanity of earth's delights. The lesson is now taught, that all is fleeting emptiness apart from God. He, and He only, is unfailing portion--a cup of overflowing joy--a garden in which calm happiness is ever blooming, ever fragrant, ever new.

Often on these wings of sorrow the Spirit flies to make glad the heart. In sable garb He comes the harbinger of saving good. In a grim mask He casts down Satan from His wrongful throne--expels the troops of vile desires--subdues ungodly lusts--establishes the reign of righteousness, and peace, and purity, and holiness, and brings down heaven to abide on earth.

Thus sorrow is the dawn of hope. Unless her only son had died, the widow of Nain might not have beheld her Lord. He meets the mourner following the coffin. When God's mysterious ways are known, death will appear as often used to bring new comforts. Many in heaven will gratefully confess, We would have died in hopeless state, unless death had borne off some friend. But by inflicting death, Christ showed Himself the Prince of life--giving life to lifeless souls, or life more abundantly to those who lived before.

May these blessings now be richly yours! Through your fast-falling tears may heavenly love be seen in heavenly light! May Jesus' presence fill the new made void. And while your happy smiles reflect His saving smile, may you hear the storm-allaying voice: It is I, be not afraid--look unto Me and moderate your grief--cast all your care on Me, and be sustained--receive Me, and be comforted.

And when your secluded days shall end, may you go forth a light to enlighten--a sweet savor to refresh--a mighty power to attract to Christ! May He from this day be your total life! Then when you lie down to die--and die you must, except His coming shall prevent it--may death, which is a Christian treasure (1 Cor. 3:22), be welcomed with no shrinking fear. May you extend a willing hand. The messenger, though black, will bear you to your waiting Lord. You will then learn, what words of man can never teach, how great a Savior is the blessed Jesus; and how salvation infinitely exceeds what hope can paint, or heart conceive, or flesh and blood inherit.

But you must wait until your change shall come. Job 14:14. Take heed that all your waiting days be chastened--savored--hallowed by this grief. The house of mourning is a teaching school. The painful lessons are severely kind. Turn not away--the harshness is but seeming--the profit may endure forever. Distasteful weeds supply the thrifty bee, and give large stores of honey. Juicy berries hang on a prickly briar. Samson found sweets in an unlikely hive. Lasting impressions come from heavy blows.

Lose none of the improvements of the recent scene. You witnessed death accomplishing its work--irresistible--unrestrained--mocking all opposing means. It came and conquered. At its touch the strength declined--the vital powers ebbed--the luster of the eye grew dim--the color faded--the senses laid aside their functions--the fluttering pulse stood still--animation was no more--the heart no longer moved--the spirit fled its tenement of clay--nothing remained, but a stranded wreck--a tenantless abode--an empty casket--a deserted shell. Death displayed its ruthlessness and might. It put forth its barbed sting and laughed resistance into nothingness.

It is instructive now to ask, How is death armed with this tremendous sway? What furnished, what supplied its weapons? What placed a helpless world beneath its conquering feet? Whence its commission to give the inhabitants of the palace and the hut alike, a banquet to devouring worms?

Now ponder the enlightening reply; SIN is the origin of death. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."--Rom. 5:12. Learn that sin slew your friend, and all who ever died. Sin locks earth's offspring in its foul embrace, and so consigns them to the arms of death. Survey the lifeless frames from Abel to this hour--huge is the pile--the whole is piled by sin. It digs all graves--constructs all vaults--peoples each graveyard. In all the tears which have bedewed the dying and the dead--in all the mourning which now racks your heart, and has made earth the home of

sighs, behold the work of death through sin. You see it now in your own house. Oh! see it rightly, and you will largely gain.

Profit will not be small, if henceforth you hate sin with deadlier hate. View well the monster in true light--the enemy of God--the enemy of man. It changed fair Eden into a wilderness of thorns, and blackened angels into fiends of hell. Never give truce to such a foe. Cry for the Spirit's help to drive it from each corner of your heart. Unless you slay it, it will be your ruin. Nail it to the Savior's cross. It will fight hard, and struggle long; but cease not the encounter. Take courage. Play the man. The believer can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Phil. 4:13.

Grace will expand, while, thus abhorring sin, you steel your breast in earnest opposition. This is rich gain. Your sorrow thus yields profit.

But richer gain is near. Look now with more loving gaze on Jesus. He seeks you with most fitting comfort. Of every ill He is consummate remedy. He more than heals each wound--repairs each breach--retrieves each loss. But especially He comes the mourner's healer. He bids you mark His death-subduing work. Behold Him as annulling sin--annihilating death. He sprinkles sin with His most precious blood, and it is blotted out--no trace remains. He sets His conquering feet upon the power of death, and it is crushed--it lifts no more its head. As you bewail your dead, hear His triumphant shout, "I am He that lives and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."--Rev. 1:18. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he dies, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."--John 11:25, 26. Clasp now to your heart the record, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."--1 Cor. 15:22. Drink the full cup of comfort, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."--1 Thess. 4:14.

Anticipate this promised day, and tears will cease. It speeds apace. It may be very near. The angels may be standing now with wings all ready for descending flight. Earnest expectation listens for "the shout of the Archangel and the trumpet of God." Let faith go forth to meet the conqueror coming in His power. We too, so many as are His, shall bear our part. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."--Col. 3:4.

"We shall all be changed." How changed! Thought staggers, while it strives to picture. Words fail in utter impotence to tell. But the Spirit's hand uplifts the veil, and we are called to gaze. Amazing glories are portrayed, and the reality will gloriously exceed.

The body crumbles into dust touched by corruption--the prey of loathsomeness--offensive to the shunning sight. But it shall rise--how changed! No flower blooming from its wintry tomb--no bright-winged flutterer bursting from its grub-shroud, can give similitude. It shall rise in incorruption--ever fresh in undecaying beauty--ever shining in immortal luster. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."--1 Cor. 15:49.

"It is sown in dishonor." We hide it as less than worthless in our eyes. We consign it to its native dust--we lay it low, lest it should taint the air. "It shall rise in glory." The brightness of the mid-day sun is black as sackcloth beside its brilliancy. Concentrate all the rays that ever shone, it shall outshine them all. Image our Lord's transfigured glory, the new body shall not be less bright.

"It is sown in weakness." No log can be more impotent. It has no power to stir. Raise the hand--it falls. It shall rise with more than giant-might--girded with strength--clothed with power, as a warrior's panoply. We reckon angels to be strong--one smote in the camp of the Assyrians in a night 185,000. A glorified saint is not inferior in power.

During its fleshly state, the frame was animal--linked to all the littleness, and ills, and clogs, and weights which burden nature. It shall rise wholly spiritual--light--agile as the very air--fleet as the wings of wind. "Though you have lived among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."--Ps. 68:13. But the power and beauty of the resurrection-robcs cannot be fully known until their clothing be put on.

Where, then, shall death appear? No search can find it. It is wholly and forever gone. It has vanished as the fabric of a dream, or as the morning dew. It is utterly destroyed. It is swallowed up in victory.

Fully drink the comfort of this prospect, and smiles will dry up tears. Uplift your downcast eyes, and watch for the streaks of the approaching day. Think, how brief is death's apparent triumph, how soon its chains will all be severed--and all its captives regain liberty! Go forth in faith, and mark its final abolition. Hear the shout of resurrection multitudes: "O grave, where is your victory! O death, where is your sting!"

Do not your comforts swell as a wide-flowing river, while buoyant on these wings of thought you give due praises to our Lord? His is this victory. His the commanding voice which calls to deathless glory. Give Him full thanks, and happiness will surely brighten. Adore Him and rejoice. Pour out your ardent hearts. It is sweet exercise.

Brief is the time in which your gratitude can be evinced. Waste not another grain. Let thoughts of death and deathlessness quicken your tardy spirit. Then these days of mourning will bring life-long joys. It will be heaven begun to take each step intently riveted on Christ--ever listening for His voice--measuring the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of His salvation--soaring high above the charnel-house of earth--watching for His sure return--inhabiting by faith "the building of God--the house not made with hands--eternal in the heavens;"--2 Cor. 5:1--going forth to join the white-robed multitude whom He shall lead unto living fountains of waters--who shall obtain joy and gladness--and from whom sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The loss which brings these comforts to your heart should not be regarded as hostile arrow from an adverse bow.

This trial calls you to especial prayer. It is the Spirit's rule. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."--James 5:13.

Happy affliction which inspirits prayer! Our hearts are prone to cleave to earth--to nestle in soft ease--to shun the effort of wrestling with God. Such indolence is injury, and tends to poverty of soul, and is a barrier to a flood of joys. It is a loving hand which shakes this rest. The rod is kind which drives a truant son to school. Absalom fires the fields of Joab to obtain an interview.--2 Sam. 14:30. The voice of mercy in this trial calls, My son, come hold more close and constant converse with Me. What! if an ear on earth be dead, your gain is vast if you talk more with God. Unlock your care. Pent up vapor may do deadly hurt. Let it fly heavenward. The dove will return with olive-leaf.

Quicken now the art of communion with heaven. Live more above. Then when you, too, go hence, you will but move from God to God. In better place, you will retain like company. Converse of prayer will end in converse of praise. In happier nearness communion will be the same. The grief is gain which thus enlivens prayer.

Here faithfulness must warn that ENEMIES infest the mourner's path. Double the watch on every avenue of Satan's entrance. He now draws near, expectant of admission. He well knows his favorable times. Dark clouds encompass you. You sit alone. In darkness the thief goes forth. The lonely traveler is attacked. Jesus, alone and weak, is tried by all the powers of hell. Job's solitary woe lays bare his breast. The arrow quickly seeks him, "Curse God and die."--Job 2:9. Unnerved by sadness, you will hear the wily whisper, Is this the proof of heavenly love? is this the pressure of a tender hand? are these the dealings of beneficence? surely this sorrow might have been withheld! Thus Satan will strive to inject hard thoughts.

You may not listen or hold par lance. In holy horror turn the back. The sun is not removed when clouds obscure the rays. God seems to leave, that we may seek Him with more speed. It is a noble word, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him."--Job 13:15. This gale is rough, but let it drive you to a Father's arms, and it will not be adverse. Win now another victory for unwavering faith, and show its power to trust amid all storms.

You now have precious opportunity. Let it not escape unused. Many eyes observe you. Let them see your shining light and godlike lineaments. Let meek submission--Christ-like patience--unmurmuring acquiescence gild as a halo your bereaved state. Let it be seen how firmly you trust God--how confidently you drink the bitter cup--how lovingly you bow before the rod--how unreservedly you bless the chastening hand. Thus the reality of your experience may convince, where previous arguments have failed. Thus many may be led to say, Surely the anchor is strong which holds the ship in such a storm--the rock is firm which such a billow cannot shake--the joy is true which even now faints not--the help is precious, which can thus sustain. Is there not comfort in the hope that your demeanor may win others to receive the truth of God, and cause some doubting hearts to cry, "This people shall be our people--this God our God--this Savior our Savior--we will now welcome Christ as ours forever!"

You will reap comfort too, if from this grief more Christian ZEAL shall spring. Perhaps hitherto your soul has slept on downy beds of hopes and promises. Precious indeed they are. Their cup is filled to the brim with joy, and we may drink abundantly. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."--Phil. 4:4. But it is sickly faith which only muses and plucks flowers. Real grace will toil with hands on the plough, and feet in the furrows. Without activity health fails. By motion the limbs and sinews strengthen. By exercise we grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

At this moment ask your conscience, whether you are laboring--your lamps burning--your spirits ardent in well-doing. Is it your morning question, "Lord, what will You have me to do?"--Acts 9:6. Rest not until you can reply, "Lord, here am I, send me."--Isa. 6:8. Another cannot indicate your special call. But urgent work is surely at your door. The poor--the sick--the ignorant encircle you. These you may visit--relieve--comfort--teach. A chair awaits you beside dying beds. As deer pant for the water-brooks, so many a broken spirit longs for the tidings which your lips might bring. Haunts of misery and vice invite your steps. With loving words you may arrest the wandering sheep. Timely counsel may rescue many from hell's gates, and pluck brands from eternal burning. Angels have no such privilege.

While then you sorrow, arm yourself for work. And limit not your zeal to home--to family--to parish--to neighborhood--to a native land. Much need is here. More is beyond. Traverse the globe in thought. What deserts of heathen night! What nations, tribes, and peoples, fast locked in chains of death! Perishing masses cry aloud, "Come over and help us."--Acts 16:9. Behold those countless idols--each seems to reproach you for allowing it so long to rule and to deceive.

Do not say that you have no wings to fly to distant climates. Be it so. But you have means to speed heroic champions longing to go forth. You may forego some luxury--deny some cost--restrain some lavish taste, and thus have means to swell missionary funds. You may collect and circulate the gospel message. Your fire may kindle many energies. Your example may proclaim the Christian duty. Your tongue may tell the heathen need.

Thus your friend's death may be the birthday of new happiness. It is ever true that in activity there is a glow of healthy joy. In the delight of holy work mourners have no time to mourn. Self and distress give place to lively guests.

You will find too that in his toil the Gospel-laborer receives good wages. There is repayment in the thought, "By grace I do my best for Him, who has done all for me. By the Spirit's help I live for Him, who lived and died and lives again, my Savior and my God. His eye is ever on me. So too my eye is ever toward Him. He has my all, who is my all. Poor and scanty is my best service--but such as it is, I place it at His feet, and realize by faith an accepting smile--and foretaste the welcome, Well done, good and faithful servant." May you resolve in your affliction thus to labor--thus to joy--thus to win jewels for your heavenly crown!

This comfort now seeks mourners. May many through it gain conformity to Jesus--our elder Brother--the Man of Sorrows--the acquainted with grief--who drank of the brook by the way, and now lifts up the head.

When the deceased lived 'one with Christ'--when holy walk reflected genuine faith--when pious course proved the indwelling Spirit, a legacy of solid comfort is bequeathed. This should be duly prized. It is the spring of happiest thought. It may be with devoted love--with anxious watching--with ceaseless care to smooth the dying road--with all devices to minister relief, you nursed your loved one to the gate of death. Perhaps looks of love were interchanged, and parting words affectionately breathed. In a moment the spirit winged its flight. The cage was opened, and the bird was gone.

You anxiously inquire, "Where, ah! where is it fled? This earth is left--what is the new home reached? The fleshy house is void, where is the recent inhabitant?" The lifeless clay gives no reply. Reason may guess, and darken counsel with mists upon mists of vain surmise. Conjecture may dream dreams. Long labyrinths of thought may puzzle and fatigue, and mazy wanderings leave you wandering still.

But here the Bible dissipates all doubt, and guides to an enchanting and delightful view. The upraised veil reveals a scene, in which reality of blessedness resides. Open the eye of FAITH and soberly behold. Speculation has no need to lend its wings. A faithful record courts attention. Receive its plain message. It is true as the truth of God--bright as the heaven of heavens--resplendent with a blaze of bliss. It fills a cup of comfort to the brim.

Paul is again inspired to speak. Hear and believe. "I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."--Phil 1:23. No doubt can cloud the fact, that to go hence is to join Christ. The saint's departure bears him to the Savior's side.

Again, approach the Cross and listen while the dying speak. Amazing light breaks on the contrite thief. He finds a Savior on the accursed tree. In lively faith he cries, "Lord, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom." There is no pause--no hesitation--no demur--no doubtful answer. At once a sparkling promise is announced--a promise cheering mourners through all time--cheering you in this hour of trial. "Truly I say unto you, Today shall you be with Me in paradise."--Luke 23:42, 43.

What sunbeams shine from Calvary! Amid them bright is the truth, that death conveys believers to the company of Christ. The hour of death is new birth to transcendent life.

Come, listen yet again. Jesus speaks. Mysteriously He communes with the Father. "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me--for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."--John 17:24. He prays--the prayer is surely heard. He more than prays. He states His will--the will as of Jehovah's fellow. The prayer and will doubly secure a blessed union. Dying believers must then go to Him.

Can you need more? Heaven's signet ring seals this truth.

Blessed announcement! happy tidings! most enrapturing news! most cheering revelation! What joy--what ecstasy--what transport--what delight here sound with trumpet-tongue! All that most ardent hope expected, becomes fruition--all that faith pictured, is outshone--all that Scripture taught, is fully verified. The faithful pastor--the assuring friend--gave but the faint outline. Jesus--the precious Jesus--the adored Lord of salvation--the wondrous purchaser of wondrous redemption is now seen--seen with no intervening mist--seen not remotely by the telescope of faith--but face to face in all His beauty--all His glory--arrayed in all His majesty--bright in all His smiles of love. There is no dull obscurity--the blissful spirits view Him as He is. There is no distance--nearness cannot be more near. There is no partial discovery--they know Him, even as they are known. This is no momentary glance--they gaze forever.

Can you repine, while the unfettered spirit thus bathes in an ocean of unfathomable bliss? Think of the recent state. Think of the sure exchange. Do you not hear a voice, 'Weep not for me?' The blessed Jesus seems to touch this chord. Let it now vibrate through your thankful heart. His followers heard, "I go away." They heard and sorrowed. He checks in tone, betokening reproach--"Do you thus show the truth of your affection? This grief is selfishness. Would kindness hold Me back from glory? If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father--for My Father is greater than I." Should you not similarly joy, because another saint has reached the Lord?

With Scripture guidance we may yet advance. It is proved, that eternal union with the Lord is gained. This is the crown of crowns. This is the pinnacle of joy. But this high tree has branches laden with diversity of fruit. We are invited to partake of all. This central light shines in the sky of many stars. We may examine each.

We read, that "he who overcomes, shall no more go out."--Rev. 3:12. There is rich transport in this knowledge of UNCEASING DWELLING. Paradise is really reached. Its threshold is indubitably passed. The soul is truly safe. Salvation verily is won--eternal happiness is a grasped prize--heaven's portals have received a permanent inhabitant. Admitted spirits abide forever.

Ponder this bliss secure from diminishing. While the body held the spirit, fears and tremblings were its daily lot. Timidity often dimmed the Gospel-page, and veiled the promises, and closed the ears to the assuring voice, and raised all phantoms of distracting doubts. Mountains on mountains raised their

heights. The way appeared to be both long and steep. Threatening pitfalls and entangling snares beset the path. Satan came forth with all his legion mighty to impede. The thought arose, 'How can this my bark reach the safe haven through foaming billows--against raging winds--amid such rocks--such shoals--such treacherous sands.' David's misgiving brought faintness to the heart. "I shall now perish one day by the hands of Saul."--1 Sam. 27:1.

Where now is this vast host of haunting fears? As smoke before the wind they are dispersed. They are buried deeply, never more to rise. The journey is accomplished--the race is run--the crown of victory is gained--the perils of the voyage are passed--the peaceful haven has received the bark--it floats in waters ruffled by no storm. Safety cannot be more safe. Picture the joy of apprehensions left behind, and certain bliss most tightly grasped. This certainty is real to all the dead in Christ. What solace to surviving friends!

Scripture presents a page of larger joy. It shows the spirit reposing in meadows of sunny rest. REST! how sweet the term to worn-out laborers on earth. But this is the heaven-sent word--"Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may REST from their labors, and their works do follow them."--Rev. 14:13.

Earth to the Christian is a scene of toil. He is a soldier in a warring army. Daily he fights the fight of faith. The foe rests not. His arrows ever fly. Here is the open conflict--there is the secret ambush. One arm must hold the shield of faith--the other must upraise the Spirit's sword. Each day brings battle, and in battle is no rest.

His home, also, is a constant watch-tower, not only from the foe outside, but also from indwelling traitors. The heart swarms with inborn corruptions, each striving to gain sway. The word is sadly true, "The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh--and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would."--Gal. 5:17. There are daily sighs, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "I delight in the law of God after the inward man--but I find another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."--Rom. 7:21-23. A sentinel must guard the portals of the lips. Vigilance must keep the feet from evil ways, and turn the eyes from wicked sights, and close the ears to graceless converse. Thus every day is weary watchfulness.

There is, also, the husbandman's employ. The heart is a field requiring constant culture. What fallow ground must be ploughed up! what seed from Scripture must be cast abroad--what tares--what weeds must be uprooted! what budding graces must be diligently tended! what fences must be raised against destroying beasts! Early and late with agonizing prayer the work must be pushed on. Such is the ceaseless toil. Ease takes not heaven by storm.

But the happy dead now rest. The flesh is left behind--corruptions are deep buried in the grave--evil suggestions can no more disturb--the devil sets no foot in Paradise. This rest cannot be broken. Let us consider and give thanks!

It must not be ignored, that here believers have sweet tastes of rest. There are "green pastures" where the sheep repose. "Still waters" court their feet. Each one can sing, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste."--Canticles 2:3. The precious invitation calls, "Come unto Me, all you who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."--Matt. 11:28. But this repose of soul consists with outward conflict. It is rest amid incessant tossings of unrest.

True is the testimony, "We who have believed enter into rest."--Heb. 4:3. This rest of faith is real, precious, reviving. Faith sees salvation fully purchased by the work of Christ--redemption earned by His most perfect merits--all sins washed out by His all-expiating blood--all the Church beautiful in His beauty--bright in His righteousness--consummately complete in Him. It marks the fabric towering above heaven, and ceases from all efforts to add needless stones. But faith falls short of sight. It fluctuates--it wavers--it flags--it totters--at times it seems to be inertly dying. But the rest of sight is changeless. It never ebbs--it is the tide in fullest flow. It never wanes--it is the sun in mid-day blaze. It never fades--it is a full-blown flower--ever fresh. Such rest is undisturbed, and undisturbable. The faithful dead have reached it.

Let us draw near to our Gospel-record. These bodies are liable to countless pains. No care of ours, can totally avert. No skill can give sure cure. Afflicted sufferers find no ease by day, and tossings to and fro wear out the hours of night. But pain expires, when the body dies. It is distinctly said, "Neither shall there be any more pain."--Rev. 21:4. And again, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick--the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."--Isa. 33:24. Keen was your sorrow when perhaps you witnessed pains beyond relief. Will you not now give thanks for those whom malady can no more touch?

Believers, although taught that death is their friend, draw back with shudder from its touch. The blessed Jesus shrunk from the repelling cup. Faith truly tells, that "when they pass through the waters, he will be with them; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow them; when they walk through the fire, they shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon them."--Isa. 43:2. But nature is averse to chilly waters and the scorching flame. Thus dread anticipations trouble.

Perhaps you know well these solemn thoughts. Then count them happy who have passed the shadows of the valley. Scripture says, "There shall be no more death."--Rev. 21:4. Reject not this consoling thought.

The godly have most grievous anguish from ungodly men. Such openly oppose--and secretly malign--and cruelly reproach--"The poison of asps is under their lips." The Spirit testifies, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted."--Micah 2:10. The Psalmist sighs, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest." Death bears the godly to the realms "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."--Job 3:17.

Shall we not give thanks for those delivered from such harrowing grief? No wicked man will vex again--no evil sound be heard--no calumny give pain. The atmosphere around is heaven's own peace, and purity, and love. Each face is bright with sincere smiles.

It is a Gospel rule, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven."--Acts 14:22. Happy they who have these tribulations in their past! It is so with the blessed dead. But we are warned that coming woes shall terribly exceed what earth has hitherto endured. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."--Matt. 24:21. Appalling miseries will usher in the Lord's return. But saints at home with Christ are high above these fears. This is the signal mercy promised to Judah's humbled king. "Behold, I will gather you unto your fathers, and you shall be gathered unto your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see the evil which I will bring upon this place."--2 Kings 22:20.

Mark too the comfort of the word, "The righteous perish, and no man lays it to heart; merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace--they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."--Isa. 57:1, 2. Consider this. In

happy thought behold the blessed company screened in their peaceful Zoar, while earth is unprecedented woe.

But higher ground invites us to ascend, and brighter scenes still court our eyes. The sight of Jesus implies perfection. Are we not taught that to behold Him as He is, we must be like Him?--1 John 3:2. Dissimilarity excludes clear sight. The spirits clearly see Him; therefore perfect likeness must be theirs, and spiritual faculties must be strengthened to the full.

Former vision was obscure. Previous knowledge was the pupil's alphabet. The earthly state was childhood. Now manhood is attained, and tutors teach no more. Spiritual powers are fully ripened. There is union with the "spirits of just men made perfect."--Heb. 12:23.

By them God is now truly known--the mind of Jesus is thoroughly perused--entangled providences are clear--perplexing purposes are no longer a closed book. The open page reveals how He loved--and why He loved, and all the mysteries of redemption's scheme. The significance of each sorrow, trial, and distress is understood. A mirror is presented, which displays in shining light the wisdom and the love which ordered every step of every saint from cradle to the grave. Intelligently the chorus swells, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Your ways, O King of saints."--Rev. 15:3. Oh! the transport of gazing on the blaze of all the love of the Triune Deity! Oh! the delight of reading the whole history of each redeemed soul! Such is the joy of Paradise. Can you believe this, and withhold your thanks?

Into this Paradise Paul was caught up. He witnessed more than he might fully tell, but still he tells enough to give the clue to happy contemplation. "He heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."--2 Cor. 7:3. There was no silence. Converse and praise resounded. Words surely prove the interchange of thought, and such communion supposes recognition.

Happy spirits mutually know, and are known. To Jesus doubtless adoring voices mainly turn. But perfect spirits have no limits of knowledge. The child beholds the mother at whose knees the earliest prayer was learned--and from whose lips the precious name of Jesus was first heard. The fond mother renews praise when she smiles on her offspring, washed in the redeeming blood, and saved before the throne forever. The pastor sees a number, more than he dared to hope, won by his teaching to the saving Cross. Converts gladden while faithful teachers claim them as their joy and crown of rejoicing. Heroes of faith, whom ages, climates, and distance parted, now compose one recognizing company. Patriarchs--apostles--prophets, whose writings taught us--whose examples cheered--whose warnings checked, pass in review, while every sight awakens Hallelujahs.

But the pen must pause. Who can conceive the glories of the scene, where all are known, and all are loved by all! where all are blissful in each other's bliss! and all give thanks for universal joy! and one harmonious chorus ascribes salvation to our Triune God! There is no jar in all their praise--no discord in their worship--no jealousy in all their joy. Grace reigns. Pure praise prevails. The only rivalry is rivalry of love. Such is the joy which meets believers when they soar away. Is not the thought now joy to you!

This joy is vast indeed, but it is not complete. It is perfect so far as the spirit parted from the body can rejoice. But the BODY is required to constitute entirety of man. The absence of this essential part makes happiness but partial. Perfect consummation tarries for this reunion. For this, the happy spirits wait. They know this fullness to be sure. They know it to be near. They joy in the prospect, that yet a little while they shall surround their Lord descending to revisit the earth. Then he will call their sleeping bodies from their

graves. Then the awakened dust will be arrayed with glory, and spiritual tenements receive their former inhabitants. This is perfection--perfection in glory--perfection without end.

Who will not cry, "We bless You, O God, for the redemption in Christ Jesus! We bless You for all the joys of faith on earth. We bless You for those now living in Your holy service--we bless You for those departed in Your faith and fear--we bless You for all the bliss of disembodied spirits in Your presence--we bless You for the coming consummation of resurrection-life. To Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be glory without end!"

Let mourners say, 'Amen!' and in their mourning they will smile.

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