

THE GLORIOUS MASTER AND THE SWOONING DISCIPLE.

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**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” — Revelation 1:17,18.

LOW thoughts of the Lord Jesus Christ are exceedingly mischievous to believers. If you sink your estimate of him you shift everything else in the same proportion. He who thinks lightly of the Savior thinks so much the less of the evil of sin; and, consequently, he becomes callous as to the past, careless as to the present, and venturesome as to the future. He thinks little of the punishment due to sin, because he has small notions of the atonement made for sin. Christian activity for right is also abated; as well as holy horror of wrong. He who thinks lightly of the Lord Jesus renders to him but small service; he does not estimate the Redeemer's love at a rate high enough to stir his soul to ardor; if he does not count the blood wherewith he was redeemed an unholy thing, yet he thinks it a small matter, not at all sufficient to claim from him life-long service. Gratitude is weak when favors are undervalued. He serves little who loves little, and he loves little who has no sense of having been greatly beloved. The man who thinks lightly of Christ also has but poor comfort as to his own security. With a little Savior I am still in danger, but if he be the mighty God, able to save unto the uttermost, then am I safe in his protecting hand, and my consolations are rich and abounding. In these, and a thousand other ways,

an unworthy estimate of our Lord will prove most solemnly injurious. The Lord deliver us from this evil.

If our conceptions of the Lord Jesus are very enlarged, they will only be his due. We cannot exaggerate here. He deserves higher praise than we can ever render to him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high is he above our loftiest conceptions. Even when the angels strike their loudest notes, and chant his praises most exultingly on their highest festal days, the music falls far short of his excellence. He is higher than a seraph's most soaring thought! Rise then, my brethren, as on eagle's wings, and let your adoring souls magnify and extol the Lord your Savior.

When our thoughts of Jesus are expanded and elevated, we obtain right ideas upon other matters. In the light of his love and atoning sacrifice, we see the depth of the degradation from which such a Redeemer has uplifted us, and we hate, with all our hearts, the sins which pierced such an altogether lovely one, and made it needful for the Lord of life to die. Forming some adequate estimate of what Jesus has done for us, our gratitude grows, and with our gratitude our love — while love compels us to consecration, and consecration suggests heroic self-denying actions. Then are we bold to speak for him, and ready, if needs be, to suffer for him while we feel we could give up all we have to increase his glory, without so much as dreaming that we had made a sacrifice.

Let your thoughts of Christ be high, and your delight in him will be high too; your sense of security will be strong, and with that sense of security will come the sacred joy and peace which always keep the heart which confidently reposes in the mediator's hands. If thou wouldst thyself be raised, let thy thoughts of Christ be raised. If thou wouldst rise above these earthly toys, thou must have higher and more elevated thoughts of him who is high above all things. Earth sinks as Jesus rises. Honor the Son even as thou wouldst honor the Father, and, in so doing, thy soul shall be sanctified and brought into closer fellowship with the great Father of Spirits, whose delight it is to glorify his Son.

My object, this morning, is to suggest some few truths to your recollection which may help to set the Lord Jesus on a glorious high throne within your hearts. My motto, this morning, will be —

***“Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all.”***

My anxiety is that he may be crowned with many crowns in all these many hearts, and that you may now perform those exercises of faith, those delightful acts of adoring love, which shall bring to him great glory.

I. Coming to the text, the first thing we notice in it is THE DISCIPLE OVERPOWERED. We will meditate a little while upon that. John writes, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.”

The beloved disciple was favored with an unusual vision of his glorified Lord. In the blaze of that revelation even his eagle eye was dimmed and his holy soul was overwhelmed. He was overpowered, but not with ecstasy. At first sight it would have seemed certain that excess of delight would have been John’s most prominent feeling; it would appear certain that to see his long lost Master, whom he had so dearly loved, would have caused a rush of joy to John’s soul, and that if overpowered at all, it would have been with ecstatic bliss. That it was not so is clear from the fact that our Lord said to him, “Fear not.” Fear was far more in the ascendant than holy joy. I will not say that John was unhappy, but, certainly, it was not delight which prostrated him at the Savior’s feet; and I gather from this that if we, in our present embodied state, were favored with an unveiled vision of Christ, it would not make a heaven for us; we may think it would, but we know not what spirit we are of. Such new wine, if put into these old bottles, would cause them to burst. Not heaven but deadly faintness would be the result of the beatific vision, if granted to these earthly eyes. We should not say, if we could behold the King in his beauty as we now are, “I gazed upon him, and my heart leaped for joy,” but like John we should have to confess, “When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead.” There is a time for everything, and this period of our sojourn in flesh and blood is not the season for seeing the Redeemer face to face: that vision will be ours when we are fully prepared for it. We are as yet too feeble to bear the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. I do not say but what we are so prepared by his grace that, if now he took us away from this body, we should be able to bear the splendor of his face; but, I do say, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and that when, as an exception to the rule, a mortal man is permitted to behold his Lord, his flesh and blood are made to feel the sentence of death within themselves, and to fall as if slain by the revelation of the Lord. We ought, therefore, to thank God that “he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.” That face which shines as the sun in its strength, manifests its love by wearing as yet a concealing veil. Be grateful, that while you are to be here

to serve him, and to do his will in suffering for him, he does not deprive you of your power to serve or suffer, by overwhelming you with excessive revelations. It is an instance of the glory of God's grace that he conceals his majesty from his people, and wraps clouds and darkness round about him; this he does not to deny his saints a bliss which they might covet, but to preserve them from an unseasonable joy, which, as yet, they are not capable of bearing. We shall see him as he is, when he shall be like him, but not till then. That for a while we may be able to perform the duties of this mortal life, and not lie perpetually stretched like dead men at his feet, he doth not manifest himself to us in the clear light which shone upon the seer of Patmos.

I beg you to notice with care this beloved disciple in his fainting fit, and note first, the occasion of it. He says, "I saw him." This it was that made him faint with fear. "I saw Him." He had seen him on earth, but not in his full glory as the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. When our Savior dwelt among men, in order to their redemption, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant; for this reason he restrained the flashings of his Deity, and the godhead shone through the manhood with occasional and softened rays. But now, Jesus was resplendent as the ancient of days, girt with a golden girdle, with a countenance outshining the sun in its strength, and this even the best beloved apostle could not endure. He could gaze with dauntless eye upon the throne of jasper and the rainbow of emerald, he could view with rapture the sea of glass like unto crystal, and the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, but the vision of the Lord himself was too much for him. He who quailed not when the doors of both heaven and hell were opened to him in vision, yet fell lifeless when he saw the Lord. None either in earth or heaven can compare with Jesus in glory. Oh for the day when we shall gaze upon his glory and partake in it. Such is his sacred will concerning us. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." To bear that sight we shall need to be purified and strengthened. God himself must enlarge and strengthen our faculties, for as yet, like the disciples upon labor, we should be bewildered by the brightness.

Here was the occasion of his faintness. But what was the reason why a sight of Christ so overcame Him? I take it we have the reason in the text, it was partly fear. But, why fear? Was not John beloved of the Lord Jesus? Did he not also know the Savior's love to him? Yes, but for all that, he was

afraid, or else the Master would not have said to him, "Fear not." That fear originated partly in a sense of his own weakness and insignificance in the presence of the divine strength and greatness. How shall an insect live in the furnace of the sun? How can mortal eye behold unquenched the light of Deity, or mortal ear hear that voice which is as many waters? We are such infirmity, folly and nothingness, that, if we have but a glimpse of omnipotence, awe and reverence prostrate us to the earth. Daniel tells us that when he saw the great vision by the river Hiddekel, there remained no strength in him, for his comeliness was turned in on him into corruption, and he fell into a deep sleep upon his face. John, also, at that time, perhaps, perceived more impressively than ever the purity and immaculate boldness of Christ: and, being conscious of his own imperfection, he felt like Isaiah when he cried "Woe is me, I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of Hosts." Even his faith, though fixed upon the Lord, our righteousness, was not able to bear him up under the first surprising view of uncreated holiness. Methinks his feelings severe like those of the patriarch of Uz, when he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The most spiritual and sanctified minds, when they fully perceive the majesty and holiness of God, are so greatly conscious of the great disproportion between themselves and the Lord, that they are humbled and filled with holy awe, and even with dread and alarm. The reverence which is commendable is pushed by the infirmity of our nature into a fear which is excessive, and that which is good in itself is made deadly unto us; so prone are we to err on the one side or the other.

There is no doubt, too, that a part of the fear which caused John to swoon arose from a partial ignorance or forgetfulness of his Lord. Shall we charge this upon one who wrote one of the gospels, and three choice epistles? Yes, it was doubtless so, because the Master went on to instruct and teach him in order to remove his fear. He needed fresh knowledge or old truths brought home with renewed power, in order to cure his dread. As soon as he knew his Lord he recovered his strength. The wonderful person who then stood before him bade him know that he was the first and the last, the ever living and Almighty Lord. The knowledge of Jesus is the best remedy for fears: when we are better acquainted with our Lord we part company with half our doubts — these bats and owls cannot bear the sun. Jesus in his person, work, offices, and relations, is a mine of consolation; every truth which is connected with him is an argument against fear: when our

heart shall be filled with perfect love to him fear will be cast out, as Satan was cast down from heaven. Study then your Lord. Make it your life's object to know him. Seek the Holy Spirit's illumination, and the choice privilege of fellowship, and your despondency and distress will vanish as night birds fly to hide themselves when the day breaketh. It is folly to walk in sorrow when we might constantly rejoice. We do not read that John was any more afraid after the Lord had discoursed lovingly upon his own glorious person and character. That divine enlightenment which was given to his mind, purged from it any secret mistake and misjudgment which had created excessive fear.

But, while we thus notice the occasion and the reasons, we must not forget the extent to which John was overpowered. He says, "I fell at his feet as dead;" He does not say in a partial swoon, or overcome with amazement: he uses a very strong description, "I fell at his feet as dead." He was not dead, but he was "as dead;" that is to say, he could see no more, the blaze of Jesus' face had blinded him; he could hear no more, the voice like the sound of many waters had stunned his ear; no bodily faculty retained its power. His soul, too, had lost consciousness under the pressure put upon it; he was unable to think much less to act. He was stripped not only of self-glory and strength, but almost of life itself. This is by no means a desirable natural condition, but it is much to be coveted spiritually. It is an infinite blessing to us to be utterly emptied, stripped, spoiled, and slain before the Lord. Our strength is our weakness, our life is our death, and when both are entirely gone, we begin to be strong and in very deed to live. To lie at Jesus' feet is a right experience; to lie there as sick and wounded is better, but to lie there as dead is best of all; a man is taught in the mysteries of the kingdom, who comes to that. Moses with dim legal light needs to be told to put off his shoe from off his foot in the presence of the Lord of Hosts, but John is manifestly far in advance of him, because he lies lower, and is like a dead man before the Infinite Majesty. How blessed a death is death in Christ! How divine a thing is life in him. If I might see Christ at this moment upon the terms of instant death, I would joyfully accept the offer, the bliss would far exceed the penalty. But as for the death of all within us, that is of the flesh and of fallen nature, it is beyond measure desirable, and if for nothing else; my soul would pant more and more to see Jesus. May that two-edged sword which cometh out of his mouth smite all my besetting sins; may the brightness of his countenance scorch and burn up in me the very roots of evil: may he mount his white

horse and ride through my soul conquering, and to conquer, casting out of me all that is of the old dragon and his inventions, and bringing every thought into subjection to himself. There would I lie at his dear conquering feet, slain by his mighty grace.

Only one other reflection while we look at this fainting apostle, observe well the place where he was overpowered. Oh, lovely thought. “I fell as dead;” but where? “I fell at his feet as dead.” It matters not what aileth us if we lie at Jesus’ feet. Better be dead there than alive anywhere else. He is ever gentle and tender, never breaking the bruised reed or quenching the smoking flax. In proportion as he perceives that our weakness is manifest to us, in that degree will he display his tenderness. He carrieth the lambs in his bosom, and doth gently lead those that are with young; feebleness wins on him. When he sees a dear disciple prostrate at his feet, he is ready at once to touch him with the hand of his familiar love, and to revive him by his own strength. “He restoreth my soul.” “He giveth power unto the faint.” He saith unto our pitiful weakness, “Fear not, I am the first and the last.” To be as dead were not desirable, but to be as dead at Jesus’ feet is safe and profitable. Well doth our poet say, when expressing his desire to escape from all worldly bonds.

*“But oh, for this, no strength have I,
My strength is at his feet to lie.”*

II. And now, having seen the disciple overpowered, I shall ask your consideration of THAT SAME DISCIPLE RESTORED. He was not long in the condition of death, for the Master laid his right hand upon him, and said to him, “Fear not.” Here then, we shall notice, that when the children of God become exceeding faint and feeble, and their own sense of impurity and nothingness becomes painful, and even killing to them, the Lord has ways of restoring and reviving their spirits.

And first, he does it by a condescending approach. “He laid his hand upon me.” It is noticeable, that in the great cures which our Savior wrought, he almost always touched the patient. He could with a word have healed, but to prove his fellowship with the sick, he put his hand upon the leper, and upon the blind eye, and touched the deaf ear; thus manifesting his condescending contact with the infirmities of our nature. The Master could have spoken a word to John, and have revived him; but he did not stand at a distance, or guard himself with a “Touch me not” but, instead of that, he commenced his care with a touch. No other hand could have revived the

apostle, but the hand which was pierced for him had matchless power. There is mighty healing in the royal hand of our Immanuel. When the Holy Spirit inspires us with a sense of the relationship which Christ bears to us, of the sympathy which Christ feels with us, of the kinship and fellow-feeling which reign in Jesus' breast, then are we comforted. To know that he is not ashamed to call us brethren is a wellspring of comfort to a tried child of God; to feel his presence, to perceive the touch of his hand, and to hear him say: "I am with thee, be not dismayed, for I am thy God," this is new life to our waning spirits. Oh what bliss is this. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." He is a brother born for adversity, a sympathetic and tender friend touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He laid his hand upon me." "O child of God, pray for a manifestation of the kinsman Christ to thy soul; ask that he would instruct thee as to the fact that he enters into thy grief, having himself endured the like. Thou art one with him, and he is one with thee; and as surely as the head feels the pain of the members, so does Jesus share in all the sorrows of his people. Let this be a comfort to thee, thou who art now lying as dead before the risen Lord. He comes near to thee, not to kill thee, but to revive thee by most intimate intercourse, talking with thee as a man speaketh with his friend. O man, greatly beloved, be not so overwhelmed with the greatness of thy Lord as to forget his love, his great love, his familiar love, which at this moment lays its hand upon thee.

The same action implies the communication of divine strength. "He laid his right hand upon me." It is the hand of favor, it is also the hand of power. God gives strength to those who have none. He puts power into the faint. When the child of God is brought very low, it is not a mere subject for consideration or theme for reflection that can lift him up: sick men want more than instruction, they require cordials and supports. There must be actual strength and energy imparted to a swooning soul, and, glory be to God, by his own Holy Spirit, Jesus can and does communicate energy to his people in the time of weakness. He is come that we may have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. The omnipotence of God is made to rest upon us, so that we even glory in infirmities. "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness," is a blessed promise, which has been fulfilled to the letter to many of us. Our own strength has departed, and then the power of God has flowed in to fill up the vacuum. I cannot explain the process: these are secrets and mysteries to be experienced rather than expounded; but as the coming of the Spirit of God

into us first of all makes us live in regeneration, so the renewed coming of the power of God into our soul raises us up from our weakness and our faintness into fresh energy. Be thou encouraged, then, thou fainting spirit today. They that trust upon the Lord shall renew their strength. All power belongeth unto the Lord, and he will give it plenteously to those who have none of their own. Be of good courage and wait upon him for none shall be ashamed who make him their confidence.

Then there followed a word from the Master's own mouth. He spoke and said, "Fear not." Here he applied the remedy to the disease. Christ himself is our medicine, as well as our physician. His voice which stilled the sea, also casts out all our fears. The word of God, as we find it in this book, is very consoling; the word of God, as we hear it from Christ's ministers, has great power in it; but the real and true power of the word lies in Jesus THE WORD. When the truth falls fresh from his own lips, then is it power. Right truly did the Master say, "the words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." With what power did those syllables fall on the fluttered heart of John — "Fear not." Oh that we might hear the same voice by the Spirit in our inmost souls.

*"Oh might I hear thine heavenly tongue,
But whisper 'Thou art mine.'
Those gentle words should raise my song
To notes almost divine."*

Truly there are many voices and each has its significance, but the voice of Jesus has a heaven of bliss in its every accent. Let but my beloved speak to me, and I will forego the angelic symphonies. Though he should only say, "Fear not," and not a word beyond, it were worth worlds to see him open his mouth unto us. But you say, can we still hear Jesus speak to us? Ay, by his Spirit. His Spirit still hath fellowship with the hearts of men, and he can bring the word of Scripture right home into the soul, until it becometh no more the letter but the living, quickening word of Christ. Do you know what I mean by this? If you do not, it is not possible to tell you; and if you do, you will need no explanation. Jesus speaks to the heart, the truth comes not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. O thou troubled believer, thou who art abashed by the very glory thou hast been made to see, be assured that Jesus will draw near unto thy soul, and touch thee, and speak with thee, so that thou shalt be strengthened with might by his Spirit in thine inner man. Had John not fallen as dead, he

might never have heard the voice and felt the touch of his Lord. Sweet is the fall which leads to such a rise again.

In order to complete the cure of his servant our Lord went on to give him fuller instruction in that very matter which had overpowered him. Sometimes like cures like. If in a certain sense it is true of divine revelations, that “shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,” it is assuredly true that “drinking largely sobers us again.” If a glimpse of Christ makes holy men to faint, a clearer sight of him will set them on their feet again. Our Lord went on to instruct John in the glory of his person and power, that his fears might be removed. And truly, brethren, John was in a right state for such celestial instruction; he who is lowly is ready to learn mysteries. He was like wax ready for the seal; or as paper cleansed of all other writing. Because we think we know, we know not; but the death of the pride of knowledge is the birth of true understanding. The Lord loves best for pupils those who lie lowest before him. “The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.” “With the lowly is wisdom.” Where Jesus is the teacher, and instructs the heart in the things concerning, himself, the soul is made to inherit substance, and its treasures are filled. Blessed are the men who are taught by him who is the wisdom of God, even though while they watch at the posts of his doors they lie as dead men; they are blessed, for they shall find life, and obtain favor of the Lord.

III. We will now advance to the third point of our discourse which contains the pith of it. We have observed the beloved disciple overpowered and we have seen him afterwards revived; now we shall consider for awhile THE SAME DISCIPLE STILL FURTHER INSTRUCTED. Let me have your attention, dear friends, to the glorious truth which is now opening up before us in the text. John was first of all instructed as to the Lord’s person. “Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead.” As to the Lord’s person, Jesus revealed to his disciple that he was most truly divine. “I am the first and the last.” This language can be used of none but God himself; none but he is first; none but he is last; none but God can be first and last. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ was evidently first. He existed before he was born into the world. We read, “a body hast thou prepared me.” Then Christ was a previously existing one for whom that body was prepared; and he it is who said, “Lo, I come, to do thy will O God.” He came into the world, but he had from old eternity dwelt in the bosom of the Father. John the Baptist was born into the world before the Savior, of whom he was the forerunner, but what does he say? His

testimony is “he, coming after me, is preferred before me, for he was before me.” He is first in order of honor because first in order of existence. John was the elder as man, but as God the Lord Jesus is from everlasting. Go back in history as far as you will; with one leap ascend to the days of Moses, and there is Christ before you, for we read: “Let us not tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” There was Christ, then, in the wilderness vexed by the people. He it was whose voice then shook the earth, but who will yet shake not the earth only but also heaven. Go further back to Abraham, and we find the angel of the covenant there. Our Lord expressly says, “Before Abraham was I am.” Mark you, not “I was,” but “I am;” — he speaks in a God-like manner. Ascend even to the age of Noah, the second parent of our race, and there we discover Jesus Christ preaching to those spirits who are now in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing.” It was Christ in Noah, who by the Spirit preached to the antediluvian sinners. We go further back to the creation of the world, and are find “In the beginning was the word, and the word was God;” and if we fly back to old eternity, before the creating hand commenced its work, we find in Proverbs, the eighth chapter, the witness of the incarnate wisdom himself. “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled. Before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.” Our Lord is thus the first: and so assuredly will he be the last; for all things consist and subsist through the perpetual emanations of his infinite power; and when the kings of the earth shall sleep in the dust, and the popovers thereof shall have passed away, when the treasures of time shall have melted, and its most enduring memorials shall have gone like the mists of the morning, he shall be the same, and of his years there shall be no end. Christ is the true Melchisedec, without beginning of days or end of years, “made a priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” This was revealed to John for his comfort, and it stands true to us to-day, and is equally fraught with consolation.

Moreover, by the words “the first and the last” are signified, in most languages, the sum and substance of all things. We say sometimes the top and the bottom of it is so and so; we mean that it is the whole of it. And

the Greeks were wont to say, "This is the prow and stern of the business," meaning that it is the whole. And so Jesus Christ, in being first and last, is all in all. And, truly, it is so in the working of redemption and salvation; he begins, carries on, completes; he asks no creature help and will have none. To us he is the author and the finisher of our faith, the alpha of our first comfort, and the omega of our final bliss. We worship Christ as the sum and substance of all good. Herein is wealth of comfort, and, therefore, did the Lord instruct his servant, John, therein, he did as much as say, "John, thou needest no ear, for I am no enemy, no stranger, no avenging spirit, but God himself, in whom thou has learned to put thy trust. Thou believest in God, believe also in me." To every trembling believer we would say, Why dost thou fear? Jesus is all. Art thou afraid of him, thy brother, thy Savior, thy friend. Then, what dost thou fear? Anything old? He is the first. Anything to come? He is the last. Anything in all the world? He is all in all, from the first to the last. What dost thou want? If thou hast him thou hast all. Dost thou need more than all? Hast thou discovered a need within thy spirit, a grievous lack which troubles thee? How can that be when thy Lord Jesus fills all things, and all things are yours in him. If thou hast, indeed, placed thy confidence in him, and made him all thy salvation, to what end and for what cause shouldst thou be troubled with any sort of fear? Having a divine person to be thy protector and thy Savior, Why shouldst thou be afraid?

In addition, however, to rendering to John the comfort derived from his person, our blessed Master went on to comfort him with the truth of his self existence. "I am he that liveth," saith he, "or I am the living one." Creatures are not living in themselves, they borrow leave to be; to God alone it belongs to exist necessarily. He is the I AM, and such is Christ. Why then dost thou fear? If the existence of thy Lord, thy Savior, were precarious and dependent upon some extraneous circumstances, thou wouldst have cause for fear, for thou wouldst be in constant jeopardy. If he had to borrow permission to be, derived strength from creatures, and needed to look hither and thither for strength to sustain his own existence, thou wouldst be ever in danger, and consequently in distress; but, since Jesus cannot possibly cease to be, or be other than he is, or less than he is, what occasion canst thou have for alarm? A self-existent Savior, and yet a troubled Christian! Oh, let it not be so. "Fear not, I am he that liveth."

And, if these two sources of consolation should not suffice, the Lord in the glory of his tenderness mentions a third — viz, his atoning death. He says,

“I was dead,” the original more correctly rendered is “was made dead.” Here we come upon the human nature of our Redeemer. As God and as man he had two natures, but he was not two persons. As one person he ever lives, and yet he was made to die. He came into this world in human form that he might be capable of death; the pure spirit of God could not die, it was not possible that he, the I AM, could be subject to death; but he allied himself with humanity, and in that human form Jesus could die, and did die. In very deed, and truth, and not in semblance; Jesus bowed his head, and gave up the ghost, and they laid his corpse in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Here to the child of God is a fruitful source of consolation. He died, then the atonement is complete; without the shedding of blood there is no remission, but the death of the Son of God brings plenteous pardon. There must be in the death of such a one of sufficient merit to remove guilt and cleanse transgression. Is it not written, “He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood?” Dost thou not hear that song in heaven? Will not its music make thee glad? His own blood hath washed thee; if thou believest in him thou art clean. Look to Calvary, and as thou lookest there and perceivest that he was dead, “fear not.”

And then the master declared his endless life, “I am alive for evermore.” He who offered up the atonement lives again to claim the effect of his sacrifice. He has presented the meritorious sacrifice, and now he has gone to heaven to plead the sacrifice before the throne of God, and to lay claim to the place which he has prepared for them that love him. Thou hast no dead Savior to trust to: thou reliest in him who once died — this is comfort to thee, but he lives, the great Redeemer lives. He has risen from the tomb; he has climbed the hills of heaven; he sits at the right hand of the Father, prepared to defend his people. If thou hadst a Christ in the sepulcher that were sorrow upon sorrow; but thou hast a Christ in heaven, who can die no more. Be thou of good cheer.

And then, to close the whole, the Master said “Amen, and hath the keys of hell and of death.” The mediatorial office which Christ now occupies is one of great power. He is “God over all, blessed for ever.” His dominion is over land and seas and over heaven and the regions of the dead. There is nothing hid from the energy of his power. He is Lord of all. “He hath the keys of hell and of death.” By the word “hell“ may be meant here the entire invisible land, the whole realm of spirits: Christ is Lord there, adored in heaven and feared in hell. But, if we restrict the sense to the common meaning of the word in our language, he is Lord of hell. The devil despite

his malignity can do nothing but what Christ permits him. He is a chained enemy; he may rave and rage, but he cannot injure the child of God. Christ hath him ever in check, and when he permits him to wander abroad, he makes the wrath of man and the wrath of devils to praise him, and the remainder he doth restrain. Why dost thou fear therefore? Thou sayest, "I am a sinner — Satan will prevail against me." But Christ saith "I am master of Satan, I am Lord of hell, he cannot prevail against thee." He cannot leave hell unless Christ permits him, for Christ can turn the key and lock him in. He could not take thee there, for Christ has locked thee out and keeps the key. Thou art eternally and perpetually safe from all the machinations of the powers of darkness. And dost thou tremble at death? Is it that which alarms thee? Have the pains and groans and dying strifes sounded in thine ear till thou art timid and afraid? Then remember Christ hath the keys of death. Thou canst not die until he permits. If men of blood should seek thy life, they could not smite thee till thy Lord should allow it; and if plagues and death should fly about thee, and thousands die at thy right hand, and ten thousands at thy left, thou canst not die till the Lord wills it. Thou art immortal till he saith "return." The iron gate of death opens not of its own accord to thee, a thousand angels could not drag thee to the tomb; thou comest there only at his call. Fear not, therefore, but remember that death is no longer death to the saints of God, they fall asleep in Jesus. Since thy Lord will be with thee, it will not be death to die; thou shalt find death to thee an enemy muzzled and chained: the wasp shall have lost its sting, it shall be a bee that shall bring thee honey; out of the lion, as Samson did, shalt thou get sweetness to thyself. Death is overborne, and when it arrives, Jesus will come with it, and make thy dying bed most soft to thee.

Remember one thought more. He that hath the key of death will annihilate death; for thy body shall not become the prey of the worm for ever. At the trump of the archangel thy body shall rise again. There shall not a bone or a piece of a bone of one of his people perish, their very dust is precious in his sight. They sleep awhile, and rest from their labors; but, from beds of dust and silent clay, the Lord of life shall call them all. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, wherein thy victory! Since Jesus who died and ever lives has the keys of death and hell at his girdle, we will not fear to die, let the time appointed be when it may. So that you see there was abundance of comfort for the sinking spirit of the apostle John.

Let me close by saying, in the glory and exaltation of Christ is the saint's cordial. Some of us have tried it when our mouths were full of bitterness, and we have rejoiced and been exceeding glad at the thought. A reigning Savior makes a joyful people. Run there for comfort, ye sons of sorrow: rejoice ye in your king all ye his saints.

But this same glorious Savior will be the sinner's terror. They shall hide their faces at the last from the brightness of his glory; they shall ask the hills and mountains to conceal them from his face who sits upon the throne. A glorious monarch is the rebel's horror. By so much as he whom you have rejected is great and glorious, by so much shall the punishment from his right hand be intolerable. Oh that you were wise enough to cease from fighting with the Almighty Lord.

But, lastly, he is also the penitent's hope; for now, to-day, if you would be forgiven, the exalted Savior presents himself to you most freely. He is exalted on high, but what for? It is to give "repentance and remission of sins." The greater he is the better for those who need great mercy; the more royal and kingly he is the better for humble, broken, bleeding hearts. "Oh, kiss the son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way while his wrath is kindled but a little." From the highest heaven he stretches down the silver scepter; touch it by a simple faith. May he enable you to do it, and though as yet you fall at his feet as dead, you shall hear him say this morning, "Fear not, I am he that liveth, and was dead, and am alive for evermore, and am, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by me, seeing I ever live to make intercession for thee." God bless you, dear friends, by his Spirit. Amen.