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## SERMON DLVII.

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### THE BELIEVER'S PEACE.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.”—ISAIAH 26 : 3.

LIFE is in all cases a pilgrimage, and to the best of men it brings its seasons of sorrow, as well as of joy. From causes too numerous to mention, fear sometimes prevails over hope; and the soul, instead of enjoying those consolations which are neither few nor small, is cast down and disquieted. Such are the chequered scenes through which believers pass, that they often become discouraged because of the way.

These vicissitudes, though trying to the feelings, are nevertheless proof of real spirituality. A stone, every one knows, is the same in its properties and aspects all the year round; but not so the tree, at the foot of which it lies. Here we see perpetual changes, frequent revival and decay. If leafless branches and a naked top appear in the months of storm and frost, we expect to find buds, and blossoms, and fruit in the season of warmth and showers. The reason is: in the one case no principle of life exists, while in the other there is all along a real, abiding, energetic vitality. And this, let me say, marks the difference between a genuine, honest-hearted Christian, and the man that merely has a name to live, but is dead. Wherever the root of the matter is found, there will be a lamenting after the Lord, if there is no actual rejoicing in him.

These lights and shadows of the divine life add to the interest with which we contemplate a truly pious character. It is useful to follow such an one in days of darkness, as well as those of

## SERMON DLVIII.

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### THE REJECTED CALL OF WISDOM.

“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.”—Prov. 1: 24–28.

THIS is the language of Wisdom; that is, of Religion addressing men: Wisdom or Religion personified, appealing to mankind, reminding them of the variety of the calls and remonstrances which it makes, and of the manner in which those calls and remonstrances are commonly met; assuring them that, as a consequence of thus regarding the appeals of religion, a day of distress and anguish must come upon them, and that it then will be too late to avail themselves of the counsels and blessings of true religion. The form is that of direct address to those who have disregarded the appeals of religion, and that will be the best form for us to follow in illustrating the subject. Let us take up the points suggested in the text in their order, supposing that the voice of wisdom in the text is now addressing those who are in this house.

I. The manner in which it has called upon you—in which the appeals of wisdom and of religion have been made: “I have called,” “I have stretched out my hand.”

The appeal here may be regarded as made to all; for though its form has varied, there are none whom religion has not addressed; none whom she has not invited to her embrace. There are none whose attention has not been called to it; none who have not been entreated to become children of God. The invitations and the calls of heavenly wisdom were among the first that fell on the ear in childhood; they are among those which have been most frequently and urgently repeated; they are those which have come with the best claims to attention. In the manner, the variety, the intensity, the tenderness, the unwearied nature, and the sleepless watchfulness of appeal, nothing has occurred that can be compared with the calls which have been made to you to abandon a sinful course, and to give your heart to God. They were made to you in childhood; they were repeated in youth; they were continued in riper years; they have been

pressed upon you with all the more earnestness as old age has approached. The subject has been urged upon your attention when you have been well, and when you have been sick; when you have been alone, and when you have been with others; in the silence of the night-watches, and in the great congregation. Conscience has plead with you, and urged you to give up your sins, to pray, to turn to God, to secure the salvation of your souls; and through your conscience wisdom has always been speaking to you, and urging you to tread in the strait and narrow path. Reason has appealed to you, and wisdom has spoken to you through its appeals. It has had but one voice, urging the propriety of serving God, of keeping his commands, of securing the salvation of the soul; admonishing you of the danger of neglect and delay, and pressing upon you the supreme importance of religion; and in all the tumult of passion, and all the whirl of pleasure, and all the storms of ambition, it has been telling you that for man the path of wisdom is to lay a good foundation for the world to come. The providences of God have appealed to you, and called you to attend to the soul. Now, when you have been sick, and thought you felt the cold finger of death laid on your palpitating, struggling heart; now, when raised up from your bed, brought from the borders of the grave to live a little longer; now, when just escaped from the perils of shipwreck—snatched from a watery grave; now, when the pestilence breathing around you has made you feel that you were walking among the dying and the dead; now, when you have seen the young, the talented, and the gay, the bridegroom and the bride, suddenly cut off; now, when you have seen your own dear son or daughter, father, mother, wife, or husband die, and utter darkness and desolation came into your dwelling, religion appealed to you; showed you how vain was all earthly good; how sure death was to you; how much you needed the consolations of Christian hope; what a poor, miserable, comfortless man you are with no prospect of heaven, and no God to go to in your troubles. Self-interest has appealed to you in behalf of religion. Your great interests are in religion—your most momentous concerns beyond the grave. There you are to live for ever. There your condition is to be unchanging. There you are to be happy or miserable to all eternity, and happiness or misery there once begun is only to increase—never to diminish, never to terminate. Here all is soon to be at an end: joy or sorrow, poverty or wealth, honor or shame—all are soon to close. The vapor on the mountain side soon vanishes away; so will your life. The colors so gorgeously painted on the cloud that lies along the western sky soon disappear; so will all that is gay and gorgeous in life. Eternity alone is unchanging, and eternity is all. Your great interests are there; and wisdom stands amidst these vanishing vapors, and these evanescent beauties, and tells you that your great in-

terests lie all beyond the tomb, in the "spirit world," and urges you to make *that* safe and secure. Your friends have appealed to you, and religion has appealed to you through them. Your friends, your best friends, have most earnestly conjured you to give up the world and sin, and to yield the heart to God. Here a father, here a mother; there a wife, there a sister, there a child, there a bosom companion, has plead with you, and urged you with strong crying and tears, to become a Christian. You cannot recollect the scenes of childhood—not even the nursery—without remembering the appeals that broke on the infant ear in favor of religion. You cannot go back in memory to the days of your youth, without thinking of the path that led to the house of God, the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and the appeals which religion made to you then. You cannot think of heaven and the dwellers there, without thinking of some there, parent, or pastor, or bosom friend, who often plead with you to give the heart to God. You cannot go into the still and crowded cemetery, without fancying that the mother or the sister who sleeps there still speaks, and urges the son, the brother, to give up the world, and prepare to die. The ministers of religion have appealed to you, and wisdom has spoken to you in their appeals. The pastor whom you have seen reason only to respect and venerate, whose sincerity you have never doubted, and the force of whose appeals you have often felt, has plead with you. Strangers who were eloquent have come to confirm their appeals, and to urge the claims of religion by new arguments and illustrations. You do not doubt their sincerity; you cannot gainsay the reasonableness of their appeals; you have often, under those appeals, been "almost persuaded to be a Christian." And, finally, the Spirit of God, accompanying all these appeals, has often pressed the subject of religion upon you as a personal matter, and brought it home to the conscience and the heart. You have been serious. You have wept. You have prayed. You have been found among anxious inquirers after salvation. You have opened the Word of God, desirous of knowing what is truth, and have longed for some one to come and tell you how a sinner may be saved. A hundred, perhaps a thousand times you have been serious, thoughtful, pensive. The world has seemed to you then to have little that was worth living for, and somehow, you could scarcely tell how, it had lost all its charms; its gayest scenes had become cheerless; and the mind was drawn along to the grave, to the judgment-seat, to a vast eternity.

In the silent evening, when returning from your daily toil, you have been pensive and sad—perhaps its gathering shadows inevitably reminding you of the shades of that solemn evening which closes life, "when no man can work." On your bed, in the night-watches, you have found your eyes "held waking;" for somehow—whether by the stillness, the darkness, or the resemblance to

death, you could not tell—you thought how silent and dark is the grave, how solemn is eternity. In times of disappointment, when your plans have been frustrated and blasted, the Spirit of God has made you thoughtful, and led you to inquire whether there is not a world where disappointment will never come. In times of chagrin and mortification, when your claims to notice and distinction were not allowed as you supposed they should have been, you have been sad, and you could not help thinking of another world. In the storm, the tempest, when the lightnings have played and when the thunders have crashed—at midnight—in the grave-yard—you have been made serious, pensive, solemn. You have felt that you were to die; you have felt that you were a sinner; you have felt that it is a solemn thing to go into the world that is eternal, and to abodes that are now unseen. Then the Spirit of the living God addressed you; then religion spake to you; then “wisdom” warned you, called you, admonished you, entreated you to give up your sins, to give up the world, to give up your heart to God; then the heavenly voice called you to prepare to meet God.

II. The manner of the reception of this call. “Ye refused;” “no man regarded.” You have neglected those calls and warnings; you paid no attention to them, as if they did not pertain to you, or as if they had no claim to your regard. You have desired a state of mind that would be indifferent to them, and where you need not be made sad by them, or wearied and worried with them. You went, notwithstanding these calls, and engaged in other things, as if you had not been summoned to God and to heaven. One went to his farm, and another to his merchandise, and another to his amusements, and another to his life of sin. In your counting-room, or in your schemes of ambition, or in the world of gayety, you have led such a life that you expected and desired not to be troubled with serious impressions about God and the soul. You have neglected to pray when you ought to have prayed; you have refused to read the Bible when you ought to have sought counsel from God; you have been among the gay and the thoughtless, when you ought to have been among the praying and the devout. You have studiously concealed your feelings when you have been serious; you have hoped that time, and company, and business would make you cheerful again. You have endeavored to embrace some plausible form of doctrine that would be an opiate to the conscience, and allow you undisturbed and unannoyed to enjoy the world; you have sought some device by which you might lead a life of vanity without trouble from the dread of death. You have endeavored so to form your plans of life that you need not be distressed with the constant fear of dying, and so that you need not be chafed and galled by the appeals made to you to serve God. When these solemn truths of religion have been pressed closely on your attention;

when your conscience has been troubled; when you have felt that you were indeed a sinner before God, and that you *ought* to yield to him and serve him; then to these feelings and convictions you have offered a decided resistance. You have refused to yield when you knew you ought to yield; you have refused to pray when you knew you ought to pray; you have refused to become a Christian when you knew you ought to be a meek and humble follower of the Saviour. You have argued against the truth; you have cavilled against the truth; you have urged excuses that you might not obey the truth; you have sought plausible reasons for neglecting to do what you knew to be your duty; you have taken refuge under the imperfection of Christians, for not being yourself a Christian; you have embraced false, and absurd, and monstrous opinions, simply because you did not wish to give up the world and to become a Christian. You have done this long. In some cases it has been the work of a life; in all cases it has been a leading object of life thus far. Had you yielded when God first called you, you would long since have been a Christian. But with many of you it has become a settled *habit* to resist all the calls and appeals of religion, and you expect to be successful in doing it hereafter as you have been heretofore. You go to a funeral with that expectation; you go to church with that expectation; you listen to the closest arguments in favor of religion with that expectation; you sit under the most pungent appeals of the gospel with that expectation. You came here at the present time with no expectation of yielding to God and becoming a Christian; you expect now to leave this house unmoved and unconverted by all that I can say. You are often convinced by our arguments, but you will not yield to them; you are often urged powerfully by your own conscience to give yourself to God, but you refuse. While God calls you to a life of religion, you turn contemptuously to a life of vanity; while he calls you to admire his character and to love him, you become lost in admiration of dress; while he calls you to go to the cross as a poor penitent, to confess your sins and be saved, you go to the ball-room to dissipate serious reflections, to forget your Saviour, and to trifle away the precious moments of probation; while he points you to the "narrow way," and the "strait gate," you crowd along regardless with the multitudes to the "wide gate"—the "broad way" that "leadeth to destruction." If you ask, Who? I answer, You, ye gay, ye worldly, ye prayerless, ye vain, ye "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" ye who live as if this world were all, and are conscious that you turn a deaf ear to all the calls and invitations of the gospel of Christ. You know who are meant; for you have not lived thus long without knowing that it is the purpose of your own life *not* to be a Christian.

III. The effect of neglecting and disregarding these calls. "When your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desola-

tion, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you." Death will come; he will certainly come. He cannot be evaded; he cannot be put back; he cannot be made to take his steps any slower. Oh, he will come! All that lives on earth will die: every beast, bird, and creeping thing; the eagle, the humming-bird, the insect that flutters in the sun-beam; every tree, and shrub, and flower—the oak, the pine, the acacia, the moss that grows over the wall; every monarch, every peasant—every rich man, every poor man—every slave, every master of a slave—every man, every woman, every child—every old man that prides himself on his honors and his wealth, every young man that prides himself on his talents or his strength, every maiden that prides herself on her beauty. Oh, all will die! I am in a world of death; I am amidst the dying and the dead; I see not a living thing in all my rambles that will not die—no man, no woman, no child—no bird, no beast, no plant, no tree. The eagle that cuts the air cannot fly above it; the monster of the deep cannot dive below it; the tiny insect cannot make itself so insignificant that death will not notice it; leviathan cannot, with his great strength, struggle against it. The Christian will die; the sinner will die—yea, the sinner! Your wealth cannot save you; your accomplishments cannot save you. Death cares for none of these things. They are all trifles, gewgaws—beneath his notice. He no more loves "a shining" mark than an ignoble one; he has no more pride in cutting down the rich man than the poor man—the daughter of beauty and of fashion than the daughter of ugliness and of sin. He loves to level the thistle as well as the rose-bud, the bramble as the magnolia, the brier as the cedar of Lebanon. He cares as little for the robe of ermine as for the beggar's rags; as little for your richest vestments and gayest apparel as for the blanket of the savage. You will die, and the fear of death will come upon you. Death comes just as he is—pale, solemn, fixed, stern, determined on his work. He hears no cry for pity; he regards no shriek of terror. He comes steady, certain, unchanged and unchangeable in his purpose, to take you out of your bed of down; to hurry you away from your splendid dwelling; to call you out of the assembly-room—taking you away from the companions that will miss you but for a moment, and then resume their dance—that you may die. Death will come. He has been advancing towards you since you began to breathe. He has kept on his way, always advancing to meet you, while you have been asleep or awake; and if you have gone north, or south, or east, or west, he has always put himself in your path—how near or how remote you have never known. Death will come. He has always been coming—advancing, never receding, and soon his baleful shadow will fall upon your path. And that shadow will deepen and become

more chilly, like an advancing eclipse; and then his dark form will stand right before you, between you and the light of the living world, and you will be in the dark valley. Death will come—fearful enough under any circumstances, even if you are a Christian; awful, unspeakably awful, if you are not.

The fear of the judgment-day will come upon you, for that cannot always be avoided. It is to come to all human beings, and that is to be a solemn day when we shall give up our account for the deeds done in the body, and hear the sentence which is to determine our everlasting doom. You have endeavored, and to a melancholy extent have succeeded in your endeavors, to make your mind insensible to this subject; and perhaps for months, possibly even for years, it has never seriously occurred to you that you are to appear before your Maker on so solemn a business. Yet, in the cares of life, in the engrossment of business, in the whirl of pleasure, you have merely concealed this fact from your view—you have not affected its reality; you have only put a little further from you what *must*, sooner or later, be contemplated in all the solemnity of its import. Somewhere—either when in health, and before we are driven to it by the mere fear of death; or on the bed of lingering sickness, where we may calmly contemplate the future world; or in the terror and alarm of sudden death—we *must* look at the judgment bar; we must think of giving up our account; we must reflect on the solemnity of that moment when we shall stand before our final Judge. The fear of this will come upon the sinner. You cannot always be insensible to it; you cannot always be immersed in the cares of this world; you cannot always be busy with briefs or with merchandise; you cannot always move in the circles of festivity, amidst songs and dances: for you must die, and must go before your Judge. It is a solemn thing for a man to be arraigned before a human tribunal on a high charge of crime, and when the question whether he is to live or die is to depend on the opening of the lips of the foreman of a jury, and on the utterance of one little word—and neither by indifference nor by jesting can he make any thing else of it: and so it will be a much more solemn thing to stand before your final Judge, when the question of your everlasting joy or sorrow—of life or death eternal—shall depend on the opening of His lips. The apprehension of this will come upon you; and all that there is that is fearful in the apprehension will be experienced, and will be heightened by all the pains that you have taken to forget it, and by all your folly in refusing to hearken to the voice of wisdom.

Desolation and destruction will come upon the impenitent and ungodly, and upon you if you are found among the impenitent and the ungodly—upon all who have continued to refuse while God has called, who have not regarded when he has stretched



out his hands. God says: "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." He has solemnly said also, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell." He has solemnly declared also, that "the wicked is drawn away in his wickedness." He has, as if borne down himself with a sense of the folly, the wickedness, and the danger of man, with all the tender solicitude of a Father and a Friend, asked of the wicked, "Why will ye die—why will ye die?" He has plead; he has warned; he has invited: he still pleads, warns, invites, that this fearful doom may not come upon you. Yet come it will if you be found among those that refuse to hear him, and that turn away when he calls. And you are doing nothing to prevent it; you can do but one thing that will prevent it. Indifference to danger does not turn danger away; argument does not; cavil does not; ridicule does not; scorn does not; pride of rank or station, wealth, flattery, accomplishment does not. You may call it "cant" in me to preach about death—but death comes; you may call it gloom that I speak of the coffin and the grave—but there they are; you may ridicule the apprehension of the judgment—but there it is; you may curl the lip, and turn away with scorn at the mention of hell—but there its fires for ever burn. Ridicule, cavil, scorn, have never saved one human being from the grave, and never will; scorn, cavil, ridicule, will never save one sinner from destruction. Death is not turned away by contempt; nor are the fires of hell put out by a jibe. Man standing on the borders of the grave, and about to launch forth to worlds unknown, is in solemn circumstances, and he changes nothing; he diminishes no danger; he puts off no evil; he extinguishes no fires that kindle along his future path, because he can toss his head and laugh at these things, or because he can meet his Maker's communications with scoffs and scorn. "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep;" "for the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

IV. When these things come, it will be too late to cry for mercy. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer them: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

There must be a limit to the calls of religion and mercy, for life is very brief, and they all lie this side the grave; and soon the inviting voice of wisdom will cease to call you, for you will lie in the tomb. Then you will no more hear the voice of wisdom and mercy that you have here so often disregarded in this sanctuary, or when addressed to you by the friend, or by the Providence and Spirit of God. That voice will indeed continue to be addressed to the living; but you will not then be among

the living. And there *must* be a limit to these calls from the nature of the case. Can you suppose that God will *for ever* call hardened and incorrigible sinners? Can you suppose that he will always appeal to the skeptic and the caviller, and bear with his skepticism and cavils through a vast eternity? Can you suppose that anywhere and everywhere, in all the boundlessness of his future being, the sinner, as he chooses, may pause and claim the mercy of God? This cannot be; and *somewhere* there *MUST* be a limit to the offers of mercy to men—the termination of the day of grace to the guilty.

That *may* occur before you shall reach the death-bed, near as that is to you, and short as is the journey thither. Who has said that it may not? And why should it not? May not the mind become so worldly, and the heart so vain, and the conscience so "seared," and the life so wicked, and the will so obdurate, and the whole soul so utterly shattered and ruined by sin, that conversion shall be hopeless and ruin certain? You may be a sinner so hardened, so bold, so daring, so malignant, you may have been so often called, and yet have refused; to you God may have so long stretched out the hand, and you may have so disregarded it; the offers of the gospel may have been so often made to you, and you may have so often rejected them and in such forms; you may have been so often near the kingdom, and so often grieved the Spirit of God, that the great matter of your eternal destiny may be practically settled long before you die, and all that was designed in your probation may be closed for ever.

It may occur *on* a death-bed. Are there no dying sinners that *seem* to cry for mercy in vain; to whom no response is given; who have no peace in their last moments to show that their cry is heard? Are there none who then bitterly bewail the follies of a past life, and who look back with anguish on their violated Sabbaths and their abused mercies, and on the sins and follies of youth, and who have no peace as they look forward to a vast eternity? Do all sinners die peacefully, calmly, with the assurance that their last cry is heard, and that the sins of a long and guilty life are all blotted out as the effect of a momentary cry, though of bitterest anguish, on a bed of death? Has God any where intimated to guilty and hardened men that he *will* hear their cry then; and that they may mock him, blaspheme him, and curse him, and revile him—may cavil at his claims, and spurn his mercy, and trample on the blood of his Son, and grieve his Spirit—be atheists, and skeptics, and scoffers through a long life—and then utter a momentary shriek of anguish on a death-bed, with no more love for him than they had in their worst days, and no confidence in the atonement, and no pleading in the name of Jesus, and suppose that the great account of sin will be cancelled by this? Why should men believe that? Oh,

there are death-beds where there is bitter anguish, and strong crying and tears, and where there is no hope; where, though the soul *be* overwhelmed with remorse, and utter a shriek of anguish, there is no return of peace as if the cry were heard, and the sinner leaves the world in despair.

And there is a world where the cry of mercy is never heard. If there is not, what is the meaning of our Saviour in the representation that Lazarus was not permitted to go to the rich man in hell with a drop of water to cool his parched tongue? What is the meaning of the lamentation which sinners are represented as making—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"? What is the meaning when it is said, "The time is at hand; he which is holy let him be holy still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still"? What is the meaning of this fact, that in all the revelations which God has made to men respecting the future world, there is no hint that another Saviour will be provided there; that the offers of mercy will be repeated there; that one sinner ever has escaped from those dark regions to the world of light? That which sinners fear, when most filled with alarm, *will* come upon them, and the world where the cry for mercy is never heard will be all that it was ever supposed to be by the sinner in his darkest days of gloom and trembling.

I have gone through with the principal topics in my text, and here I close. I am not anxious to vindicate the sentiments which I have expressed in this discourse, for they are not my own: I have merely given an exposition of a portion of the Word of God; and it is not my warning, but His. I have led you step by step in simply *expanding* the language of the text, and I am sure that no one can say I have perverted or disguised its meaning. Yet, these are solemn truths! I meant that they should appear to be; I have felt it to be so as I have prepared them. They are truths that are not palatable to the unrenewed heart, to those who love the world, to those who live for gayety, frivolity, and sin: perhaps they will not be to you. I did not suppose that they would be palatable, and I could not make them so. They lie across the path of your plans, your wishes, your pleasures. I intended they should; I could not so present the truth of God that it would not. They may make you angry. They have made sinners angry a thousand times; they have made us who preach them angry when *we* lived like you for pleasure and ambition, and we have never learned how to exhibit the truth so that it will *not* make sinners angry. They may make you angry against God for having revealed such truths. I could not help that, much as I would desire to do it. They may make you feel that this is a dark world; that the life of a sinner is dark; that the future is dark and gloomy. I have no way by which I could help that, for I believe that it *is* so to a sinner, and while he remains such I do not see how it can be otherwise. They

may make you hate the preacher ; they may make you turn away from the sanctuary determined never to enter it again ; they may make you resolved to bestow no further thought on these things, and to give yourself up to sin, and worldliness, and vanity. I could not help that. But how will that relieve the matter ? Does that change the fact that you are to die ; that there is a judgment ; that there is a vast eternity ; that the wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness ? Is not the grave just before you, though you laugh ? Is not the judgment bar, though you treat it with scorn ? Is not God in the heavens, though you lift your arm against him ?

I beseech you to treat these things as rational beings dealing with realities. You do not mock a father's agony when he dies, or a sister's suffering when she pines away with consumption. You do not laugh when the pestilence walks our streets, turning the faces of men pale, and numbering the gay and the strong with the dead. Treat realities as realities, serious things as serious things, death as death, God as God, eternity as eternity. Are there none here who are willing to do so ? Perhaps there are. "All this," some one among you may be saying to himself, "all this is true. It is true of me. It is a description of *my* life. Thus I have been called in a thousand ways and times to be a child of God. Thus I have refused ; thus I have disregarded those calls. Thus I have slighted the offers of mercy ; thus I have grieved the Spirit ; thus I have given myself to the world, regardless of the life to come." Is it so ? Is there one who feels thus, and who speaks thus ? Blessed be God if there is. Is there in this house an eye that weeps, a heart that is penitent, a sinner who feels that he is guilty before God ? Turn, sinner, turn. It is not too late for the penitent ; for the relenting heart there still is mercy. God once more calls ; once more he stretches out the hand. Though it may be the last call—for from this house you may go home to lie down and die—yet it is enough. It is all *you* want, even should you never hear the sound of the gospel again. Embrace the call, whether to you it be the last or not, and *your* eternal welfare will be secure. And whether you be weeping or hardened, penitent or impenitent, it *may* be the last. From this sanctuary, my hearer, you *may* go forth to hear the gospel no more. Death, already having travelled far, may meet you ; may give you the fatal stroke ; may come to execute his great commission to call you before God. Oh, it is a solemn thing to hear the gospel for the last time ; to go way where the offer of salvation will never be borne to the ear again !

## THE MASTER KEY OF THE UNIVERSE.

HOLINESS is the *master key of the universe*. Born to die, you are fated to travel hence. You are but a sojourner here, as all your fathers before you were. Earth is not your home. The summons of death comes, and you must go forth. But whither? Become God's charge and child, be a renewed man by God's grace, and you are gifted virtually with the freedom of the universe.

In traversing our little, narrow earth, there is much gained for the convenience and ease of the pilgrim when he has a circulating letter of credit that will secure him funds at any great town which he visits; and by his knowledge of the language, he can converse with the natives of all the lands that he may enter. He has thus a sort of universal pass-key, alike to resources and intercourse. He is every where at home. But did you ever reflect, that while the knowledge of the schools may be comparatively useless after death, the knowledge, love and likeness of your God furnish a portable wealth which death only makes more valuable? Did you never remember that sympathy with Jehovah is the language of the spirit—a celestial dialect intelligible to all holy intelligences in all worlds? Go where you may—be your journey far into the azure depths of space, till our poor planet becomes but a dim spangle in the outermost hem of the robe of night—you are, if truly godly, nowhere a stranger, for every where your Father's sceptre is over you, and your Father's grateful and loving subjects encounter you.

Schemers have toiled to invent a universal character that all people of the earth might use in common. Let there be graven on your souls, regenerate and sanctified, the characters of true holiness and of divine sonship, and they are recognized by all the hierarchies of heaven, and angels welcome and cherish in you fellow-heirs and younger brothers of their Sovereign and your Redeemer. Soon the hand of the destroyer will have torn you from earthly home, kindred and friends. But if you are godly, it is the exchange of a perishable for an imperishable abode; of a family small and erring, and soon to be scattered, for the general assembly and church of the first-born, a countless host, and all immortal, impeccable and indivisible. In that great gathering, think you the swarthy Karen whom Christ's gospel found in the jungle will be at any loss, because of the differences of their earthly dialects, to greet and hold fraternal intercourse with the American backwoodsman, who, knowing but our language, and that uncouthly, sent by the missionary his sympathies and alms to this the missionary convert? Think you the Sandwich Islander, renewed, sanctified and glorified, will be

at a loss to address him who was once his unknown patron and brother on these western shores? No; their prayers, long since offered—this in Karen, and this in Hawaiian, and that in English—blended in the ear of their common Lord, and returned to earth in mutual and intermingling blessings. Shall not, think you, their love and likeness to that same Lord—a Lord now near and visible—make them capable of full sympathy and freest intercourse?—*Dr. W. R. Williams.*

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### THE SHORTNESS OF TIME.

IF time be so short; if the space allotted to each one of us be so narrow; if already but a small remnant of our lives be left to us, and if much evil and suffering be apportioned to us all, surely we may with truth observe, **THAT TIME IS NOT WORTH LIVING FOR.** What can there be in this perishing world that is worthy the pursuit of the soul? True, there are many things very attractive to the sense—very fascinating to the imagination. Many delightful objects around us solicit our attention; many that are fitted to charm every faculty of our mind, and gratify every passion of our nature—riches, and gayety, and dissipation, and honor—all the innocent and all the guilty gratifications of life; and these things have a natural and almost irresistible hold on our affections. But look at them through the medium of eternity, and what are they? Day-dreams; short, uncertain, fleeting vanities; fashions of this world that are passing away. They will not bear minute investigation; they have in them all the seeds of corruption and decay; they elude the eager grasp, and disappoint the most anxious devotee to their charms; they are like those fog-banks which often deceive the oldest and most experienced mariners, and delude them with the hope of land, but when their imagination is wrought up to the highest pitch of expectation, and they already fancy that they discover the well-known headlands and the desired haven, the sun breaks through, the wind arises, and the deceitful phantom vanishes in air! So are all those things of time and sense which men idolize and adore in the place of God and eternity. The Scripture reveals their nature and their doom; they are transitory; they “perish with the using.” And can they, then, satisfy? The soul of man is formed to embrace the noblest ideas of the highest enjoyments, even those of infinite duration; it is formed for God and heaven, and with these alone can it be fully satisfied. Therefore it is that men devoted to this world and to the things of time are never contented; they discover, after all their eager pursuit of business and pleasure, that, as the Scripture expresses it, they are but ‘feeding on ashes!’—*Rev. Francis Close.*