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ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE

REVEREND ROBERT BIRCH,

BY JOHN M. KREBS,

PASTOR OF THE RUTGERS-STREET CHURCH, NEW-YORK.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE ELDERS AND TRUSTEES.

New-Brunswick, N. J.

J. TERHUNE'S PRESS.

1842.

A

F U N E R A L D I S C O U R S E ;

**DELIVERED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN NEW-BRUNSWICK, NEW-JERSEY,
ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 1842.**

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE

**R E V E R E N D R O B E R T B I R C H ,
THE PASTOR OF THAT CONGREGATION.**

**BY JOHN M. KREBS,
PASTOR OF THE RUTGERS-STREET CHURCH, NEW-YORK.**

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1842.**

DISCOURSE.

Were the inhabitant of some other world, entirely unacquainted with the history of our planet and the peculiarity of its relations to the government of Jehovah, to alight suddenly upon it, he would be struck with amazement, and perhaps be utterly confounded by the spectacle it would present to his vision. A thousand unfathomable mysteries,—sights and sounds such as he never saw or heard before,—such as he had never suspected,—of which the life and blessedness of his native regions furnished no parallel,—these would fall upon his affrighted ear and appal his sight, whithersoever he wandered in the earth. And he might even be tempted to impeach the equity and wisdom of the divine administration,—or to doubt whether the world in which we live were not without a governor and given up to anarchy and wild misrule.

He would behold “the habitable parts of the earth,”—notwithstanding the baleful effects of the primeval curse which has marred the excellency of God’s creation,—still arrayed with a beauty and grandeur worthy of the wisdom, goodness and power of Him who made it, and well adapted to be the residence of man. He would contemplate man himself, bearing still the impress of that hand which formed him originally in the image of God. Every thing, in the curious construction and organization of his body, in the sublime capacities of his mind, and in the powerful affections of his sensitive heart, betokening that he is a creature formed for no common destiny ; fitted to dwell and move, and rule in the place thus prepared for his abode ; adapted to impart

and to receive happiness by generous reciprocation and in mutual intercourse ; and in the possession of opportunities for glorifying and honoring the majesty and benignity of Him "whose arm is stretched abroad upon the universe, and presides in high authority over the destinies of all worlds." And yet, in fearful contradiction of all these high endowments, there is manifest the baleful presence of some disastrous influence which is warring with destructive hostility against the happiness and life of man. Wherever he is found, he is but a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth ; trouble springs up amid the scenes of his fairest delights ; disappointment baffles his wisest plans ; his very usefulness is interrupted ; his laborious preparations are wasted ere they are employed ; and his very life which seems strung—if not for immortality, yet at least capable and necessary to be prolonged for centuries, is limited to a brief duration at the best,—and even that brief limit is itself, in the great majority of cases, abridged and contracted so as to narrow our existence to a briefer span,—a yet more fearfully diminutive point. Tears, and groans, and desolations, and graves,—these are the things which meet us daily, and menace and devour us wherever we tread.

And is not *this* the turn which our own feelings are constantly taking ? Unconsciously, unwillingly, irresistibly,—in our selfishness and ignorance,—in our forgetfulness and inconsideration,—in our grief and stupefaction,—we look up unto the heavens, and unto the judge of all the earth we utter the language of despondency and despair, and inquire of Him, as if in derogation of His work, "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain ?

What are the feelings of our hearts to day ? These solemn draperies, the gloomy array of the house of God, are the memento of death, the silent but expressive tokens that the conquering arm of death has inflicted a blow in the midst of you, and, with no common aim, invaded the sanctuary and struck down from his post even the minister of God. Nor

was the shaft prepared for one who was full of years and worn out with protracted labors,—burdened with the weight of his harness and looking in the evening for the cessation of toil and the calm repose of his final resting place: it was prepared and aimed,—as if with hesitation indeed,—and often poised and seemingly again withdrawn,—and yet at last, with a directness too unerring and a purpose that was never turned aside—it sped to the heart of a youthful and intrepid soldier of the cross,—who had but girded on his armour, and with the buoyancy of early manhood went down into the ardour and thickness of the fight—and went down into it,—only to die. And in the day when this church, gathering its affections and its hopes around the servant of God, looked with eager expectation upon his course and the promise of his increasing usefulness—and when the whole church of God is moved with earnest longings for the multiplication of her ministers and urges them into the field—how are these expectations blasted and these longings chilled by the note of death—and they are in consternation and grief because a standard bearer has fainted.

Many are the hearts which yearn over this bereavement. A personal friend, endeared by many graces and excellencies, which added force to the important and effective bonds of ministerial and official relations has been taken away from you; the young among you mourn that a counsellor, who possessed unusual power to win their confidence and attract their affection, shall no more admonish nor instruct; and the children of sorrow, with whom his sympathies readily flowed, lament that the lip which offered prayer and administered consolation through grace amid the tribulation of their lot, is now silent in the grave: and theirs and yours is the sorrow most of all that you shall see his face no more. There is yet another scene where this bereavement has planted the barb of anguish. Look into yonder dwelling, where the widowed mother weeps for her manly and noble-hearted son, whom she gave up to God in infancy and trained for the

service of the Master, with hope, at least, that while employed in his work and serving his generation, by the will of God, *his* lip should speak beside her dying couch of the promises of God, and *his* footstep should follow her to her last resting place, and *his* hand should place the last green turf that sealed up her grave in hope of the resurrection and the life.

And ah! There is yet another scene on which I dare not dwell;—another hearth that is made desolate, and another heart that is in bitterness,—one that sitteth and mourneth alone for that “*Lover and friend is put away and her acquaintance into darkness.*”

Does not this death and the effect which it has produced so extensively seem to us to have occurred too suddenly and in a most-untimely hour? And whither shall we turn to find a place where the gush of feeling may relieve itself in hope, or to seek a vindication of the providence of God?

Shall we ask of men, like ourselves? Alas! they are of yesterday and know nothing. They cannot disclose the secrets of eternity; they are not the expounders of the mysteries of life; and they, who are to die themselves, how shall they furnish abiding consolations for the hour of trial that shall come upon all the earth! The wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent are of no avail when they pretend to explain the desolations which God hath wrought in the world. And the assertion of the “commonness of death,” that it is “the inevitable lot of all,” and that “this is a vale of tears,”—Alas! these topics so often and so vainly urged,—they are but the distressing and confounding facts—these do not furnish the explanation we so painfully desire, nor the comfort which our wretchedness demands. Let us go to the tomb where on Tuesday we laid the lifeless form of our friend and brother. Can we summon forth a voice from that dark mansion to tell us why he fell, and where he abides, and what we shall do because there we also shall be laid? We may call upon the grave in vain. There is no voice thence forever, neither any that answereth. And yet,

we are not left without a witness. God hath been pleased to shew us why He contendeth with us; and while He rebukes man for his iniquity, and lays his beauty in the dust, He unfolds to us *the connections between the life that now is and the life that is to come*,—and He hath set the one over against the other.

The word of God explains every thing that we ought to know, and affords us the only satisfactory instruction and consolation that is adapted to our circumstances here. And that word speaks plainly and fully to the case before us. It tells us that death is the wages of sin: but this is only the half of its message;—it comes with another revelation also,—even of Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel. Here then, the mystery is explained: here is a *statement of the cause of our decay*,—*an exhibition of the means of our restoration*,—and a *disclosure of the prospect before us*. And when we contemplate the full import and application of the divine testimonies—and are taught to see and feel that

"Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die,"

we look forward into eternity—and in the light of it, and in the assurance of our own inheritance of immortality, we are satisfied that the Judge of all the earth hath done right, and the government of the earth and the world are safely lodged in his hands.

It is surely a satisfaction to us to know that such a consummation as man hopes for amid the confusion of the present life is indeed divinely established. And when the word of God speaks of our immortality, its testimony meets with a responsive and sympathetic throb of assent in the very longings and aspirations,—in the anxieties and throes of our inmost spirit. When we see the infant of a few days,—the embryo shoot which would grow up to be a man like ourselves,—suddenly arrested by death and laid in the grave—a mere momentary existence its whole earthly allot-

ment,—reason,—the strongest instincts of our nature, forbid the thought that it was born only to die and be annihilated. Yea, when the man of hoary hairs and tottering footstep, whose life has been enriched with wisdom and experience, but worn out at last with protracted toils and the infirmity of decaying years, comes at length to the grave like a shock of corn fully ripe, the thought is suggested irresistibly and it fastens itself among the deep convictions of our mind—that instead of ending his existence at death, he has but in reality begun it—and that beyond the tomb there is, there must be, the true and living life for which we have been but preparing, and into which we are but introduced by our brief progress through this dim dawn and vestibule,—this embryo of existence here. The body is indeed *dead* because of sin: but that very death proves our immortality. Death is no punishment if there be no hereafter; and life is a mystery which can never be explained; yea the world is without a governor and it is left to the sad and helpless condition of everlasting and hopeless orphanage.

When we contemplate the actual state of human affairs, we are inclined to think that man ought not to die at all;—or if his life be worth creating by Him who does nothing in vain, it ought to be so extended as to bear some proportion to its own admirable construction, the last and chiefest of the works of God, and to the ends for which it seems so admirably adapted and needful. Or if it reach not to the centuries of Methuselah, why should it not at least be extended invariably and without exception to some four or five score years in every case, instead of some few and far-between cases of longevity?—and then too without the interruptions and prostrations of sickness and other causes which take away our strength and paralyze our energies,—so that man may carry out his plans and fulfil his proper course, and make some certain calculation in his arrangements for the future,—providing, both for time and eternity, with the sure prospect of long life? No earlier period than this should be fixed, we

should say. The teacher ought not to be taken away from the scholar ; nor the parent from his helpless children ; nor the son from the aged and infirm parents ; nor the husband from the companion of his bosom, who so much needs him as the guide of her youth ; nor the youthful christian from the church and from life, instead of being permitted to mature his graces, and enlarge his knowledge, and increase his usefulness, and aid in the cause of Christ ; nor the pastor from his flock,—especially when he has but entered upon his work and has but begun to try those weapons which he has spent so large a portion of his years in acquiring and learning how to employ, and when the harvest is great and the laborers are few. How unseemly does this brevity of life appear, and how much to be deplored the stroke which has rudely and untimely severed these relations and made a sacrifice and an end of those who ought to have been spared, both for their own advantage and for the sake of the manifold interests of others which are involved in their continuance with their families, with society and with the church of God. There is indeed something melancholy in such a constitution as that which causeth the righteous even to perish and the merciful man to be taken away. It affects ourselves ; it affects them that are around about us, with pain and gloom. The feelings of many men,—even of good men are expressed in the language of Hezekiah when it was announced to him that he should die and not live. “I said in the cutting off of my years, I shall go to the gates of the grave. I am deprived of the residue of my years.” Such are the feelings with which your hearts have been conversant when you reflected on the chances of your own early death,—and especially if ever you have been brought nigh to the gates of the grave. Such were your thoughts of despondency, and it may be of repining, when you feared so often before the event occurred, the departure of your youthful pastor. Aye such were the thoughts—but without despondency or repining, which passed through his mind, when he saw how near

and how probable his early death appeared. In the only interview I was permitted to have with him, he spoke of his decease as likely to be accomplished soon. "It seems strange" said he "that my days should be so soon ended and my ministry closed, when I consider my relations to my family and to the church. But it is all ordered in infinite wisdom,—and it shall all work together for good. And as for myself, I have a peaceful and sustaining hope in that precious Redeemer whom I delighted to hold up before men as their Saviour from death."

Ah if in this life only we had hope in Christ ; if we knew not that godliness is profitable for the life to come ; if we did not know that the christian is the heir of all things, of the world, and life and death, and things present and things to come,—all ministering to his true advantage, and all working together for good to all them that love God,—that Christ is head over all things to his church, and that when they that have spoken to us the word of the Lord have ceased from their labour, we may still remember the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ who is the same, yesterday, to day, and forever ;—if all these things were not true and abiding and sustaining, we might well lament and refuse to be comforted and mourn for our departing friends as those who have no hope, and even tremble for the ark of God, because the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof are caught away from our eyes.

My mind has been led along in this rapid, and I am inclined to fear too desultory train of reflection,—with remarks, it may be, too little adapted to your expectations and wishes, and perhaps without any appropriate relation to the occasion itself. Yet standing here to day by your invitation,—in a position I could not refuse, whether I considered your claims as a bereaved people or the feelings of my own heart, deprived of the dearest and most intimate friend I had on earth, —amid all the embarrassments which arise from apparently conflicting thoughts and expectations here, and from the

conflict between natural grief and patient hope and submission to God, where,—I know not how it might be to others,—but it is so difficult to me, to select among the topics which befit this melancholy service, I have supposed that some such reflections as those I have alluded to might have been suggested of late to your minds, and that in our mutual sympathies with the death of our common friend and brother, I might throw myself upon your hearts to-day, and speak as freely and without reference to the cold rules of ordinary methods as I felt myself urged by the emotions and impulses of this great calamity. The course I have chosen to pursue is connected with some reflections which may be appropriate to the present circumstances of this congregation.

Before proceeding to state these views, however, it will probably be expected that I should give some sketch of the life and character of him who has been taken away. The utmost that I dare attempt is to stir up your minds by way of remembrance. For to dwell at length upon such a point is neither needful for you—nor perhaps suitable for me. You remember his life and conversation and ministry;—and as for me, the relations of intimate friendship which subsisted between your deceased pastor and myself, for full one half of his life and near the half of mine, suggest to me rather to condole with you in this bereavement than to speak at large of excellencies which might be set down to the account of personal partiality. We come to bury, not to praise him : yet may we not omit altogether some notice of the grace of God which was with him.

Descended from pious parents, though early deprived by death of his father, a physician of distinguished respectability and influence in the city of New-York, he was trained from his infancy in the fear of God. About the age of twelve, he was hopefully converted to Christ under the ministry of the late excellent servant of God, Dr. John B. Romeyn. His thoughts were at that time directed to the ministry; and by

the advice of his pastor, and very much by the appeals of the late Dr. John Breckinridge, who early noticed his talents and piety, he was induced immediately to enter upon a course of preparation. This was prosecuted successfully, with an ardour of perseverance and a firmness of purpose, which was never shaken by the difficulties with which he was called to encounter. Thrown almost entirely upon his own resources, he preferred an honorable reliance on his own efforts and industry; and throughout the whole of this course preparatory to his entrance upon the ministry, he ever exhibited the manly independence which became a devoted and fearless minister of the gospel. He possessed indeed a high sense of honor,—and he instinctively shrunk from every thing that was base, or mean, or selfish. I have never known a man more ready to sacrifice his own personal comfort for the sake of doing services of disinterested friendship. I feel that I may speak here with perfect confidence, because I speak of that which I have seen and testify of that which I know. In the language of David over Jonathan, I may say, “I am distressed for thee my brother, very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women,” Another trait of character which he developed was his strong and prevailing sense of the obligations of *duty*. In his counsel to others, and in his decisions for himself, the great point of his inquiry seemed to be, what do conscience and the will of God require?—what will best glorify God? That point ascertained, it is to be done at all sacrifices and hazards,—whether men shall praise or blame,—whether they shall appreciate or misunderstand and misrepresent,—whether it secure the popular favor or alienate it. In this connection, I may quote from a communication which I have received from one who knew him well. Says my correspondent, “It was this,—the convictions and obligations of duty,—which sustained him amid a thousand discouragements. It is this with which he endeavoured to impress me whenever I asked his counsel. Our close

intimacy led me often to consult him in some of the most important and delicate events of my life, and when I hesitated or was in doubt, by bringing the case to the sure test of duty, he has brought me through every trial with a satisfaction to my own conscience which could hardly be surpassed. I believe that if you could ask others—any of his people,—any of those who would be likely to consult him confidentially, you would find this to be the testimony of all. I never knew his superior in times of affliction. His own affectionate heart sympathised so deeply in the trials of others—and his large experience of the love of his Saviour supplied him with such abundant sources of consolation that he knew how to apply the balm. With me, he habitually referred the solution of every doubt and difficulty to another and a better world;—He enlightened my faith, encouraged my hope, and excited my love, by constant reference to the teachings and examples of Christ.” His graceful manners, refined sensibilities, and habitual courtesy, rendered him highly popular in his intercourse with society, and sure I am that no man who knew him or spoke with him could fail to be impressed with that blended dignity and amenity, true kindness and gentleness, and condescension to men even of low estate, which invariably marked him in his domestic circle and in social life as a christian gentleman. The spring and fountain of all his acquired excellencies was his deep and fervent attachment to the cause of Christ. Not manifested by fits and starts;—not to be inferred from a ready adoption of measures and pursuits which minister excitement and produce a spurious piety;—not in the vain affectations of a zeal which is not according to knowledge; but seen in the constant and inflexible adherence of his faith to the truth which is in Jesus, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. He spake the word of the Lord—he could not go beyond it,—he would not fall short of it. Well do those who hear me know how faithfully and fully he preached the gospel of Christ,—how he never shunned to

declare the whole counsel of God, presenting in turn the great necessities of immortal man, the infinite resources of the grace of God, the love of a Saviour crucified for sin, the claim for repentance and faith, the exhibition of the way of life and of human duty, the rebuke of transgressors without deference of persons, the terrors of the Lord and the sweet persuasions and overtures of peace and salvation. He loved the church of God, prayed and laboured for its extension, and devoted himself among you to awaken and cherish a spirit for the diffusion of the word of life to the perishing nations.

In the last sickness which has now so painfully terminated, though by the pressure of disease oft deprived of the full power of his vigorous mind, when he was himself, he uttered no murmur, and in the consciousness of danger and of approaching death, his solicitude to live was that he might serve the church of God; and his anxieties were oft expressed on behalf of this church; while his mind and heart calmly and serenely trusted both you and himself to the faithful care and mighty guardianship of Jesus Christ who is head over all things to His church and the Saviour of them that believe in Him. And when his mind wandered—one effect of the disorder which destroyed him,—I am happy to know, and you will be affected to learn, from the testimony of that devoted and untiring friend,* who was his physician, and, both by night and day, attended him with a parent's care, that even then his heart was upon his work, and often as with an unconscious tongue he poured forth the burden of his spirit in prayer for himself and for you, and in the exhortations and appeals which were appropriate to the sanctuary. Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

But it is time to return to the thought which I suggested in the former part of this discourse, and to make that appli-

* Dr. F. R. Smith, of New-Brunswick.

cation of it to our circumstances which may teach us how to improve the present bereavement. It is the fact, that the life which now is, is but a portion of an existence,—and the world in which sorrow and death occur, is but a part of a vast theatre,—where in future, the divinely ordained issues and results of present scenes will be fully accomplished and manifested.

This fact may serve to vindicate the otherwise inexplicable mysteries which surround us, and reconcile us especially to the death of men in early life.

Length of days in this world is not the essential and necessary element of our best happiness. However it might be viewed, under the obscurer dispensation which was much conversant with earthly enjoyments and earthly sufferings, as the consequents of piety on the one hand, or of disobedience to God on the other, it is never to be forgotten, that a christian's training and a christian's hope has respect to immortality, in the life to come. It was this to which the Old-Testament saints were in the habit of looking. The men of illustrious faith whom Paul celebrates, were men who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and desired a better country, that is an heavenly. They had continual respect,—in their necessary subjection to trials, to the recompense of reward. They dwelt here, performed labors, endured sufferings, served their generation by the will of God, but the great element of their existence was the hope of everlasting life. So far from desiring to live here for the sake of the world,—they rather felt that they were in exile from their home,—that they were continued for a season of probation, discipline and usefulness,—and that their highest happiness was yet in reserve. If their lives fell to them in pleasant places and they had a goodly heritage,—their heart was glad especially and their glory rejoiced, that their flesh should rest in hope, and God would shew unto them the path of life, and bless them with that presence of himself where is fulness of joy, and place them at his right

hand where there are pleasures for ever more. If their portion was suffering and distress, they cherished submission, and instead of fastening their affection on the world and looking for their relief in it, they resolved with holy Job, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Thus felt Paul, "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. I am in a strait betwixt two,"—willing to live if he might serve God by living, yet—"having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." It was theirs to feel, as was well expressed by our lamented brother, by a happy transposition of a despairing suggestion in one of the old English poets, so as to make it appropriate to a christian looking forward to the time of his departure.

" Rest after toil,—port after stormy seas,
Ease after war,—life after death doth greatly please."

All the scenes and changes, the joys and the sorrows of human life, are designed by our Father in heaven as schools, in which we are to be trained up for an other sphere. We are here under discipline—instructed and proved. And when our education is finished and our task is done, we shall be removed from these lower forms and studies and toils, to our place of loftier inquiry and sublimer service, in the light and knowledge, the employment, and the blessedness of our Father's house on high. Some men require more, some less of this preparatory schooling;—as children and youth require a longer or a shorter time in their preliminary education,—and that accomplished, they are advanced to the higher and maturer business of life. The young therefore who have died, have fulfilled their course. They have finished their work which was given them to do. Their character has been completed. They have fought their appointed fight. They have run the race which was set before them. And Jesus the author and finisher of their faith has given them their crown. They have been taken from evil to come; they have early entered into rest; they have escaped from this world; and their fears, and

sins, their sorrows, and death and judgment are all passed forever.

May this not reconcile us then to the departure of our friends? The great thing to be considered in regard to them is this, Were they christians? Were they faithful to God? And this question is to be resolved, not by asking, How did they die? What were their last conscious exercises?—painful as it is to behold the light of the mind sometimes so obscured that it can give no intimations of its peaceful hope,—and pleasant as it is to behold the end of the upright and to mark his triumphs in the departing hour,—but, What was the testimony of their lives? Who was their reliance? What was their aim? To whom did they devote themselves for life and death?—If they were Christ's shall we make ado and weep and refuse to be comforted? No, no. They have only died in order that they might live indeed. As we stand by the grave of departed piety, a voice from heaven speaks to us and rebukes our grief. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

And if we are Christ's, they shall not be made perfect without us. The social feeling, so indestructible, so important, so comprehensive of pain for separation and of joy in intercourse, is sanctified and compensated by the gospel of Christ. They shall not return to us, but we shall go to them. The parting is to be compensated by a meeting for ever. That, friend shall meet with friend—the husband with the desire of his eyes—the parent with his child—is it not clear from that word of the apostle which directly asserts the joyful meeting of the pastor with his flock before the throne of God? "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming.

We are taught again therefore, how comparatively unimportant—yea how really vain, is the pursuit and anxious care

of the things of this world. The sorrows are too momentary, to depress us with despair—the joys and possessions too evanescent, to transport us with delight and to ravish our hearts. The things of this world and the pride of this life cannot ward off death,—they cannot be removed with us. Naked came we into the world and naked shall we return to the dust. And that return is soon. Then whose shall all these things be? Yea, in the world, there is nothing that is so sure or abiding, nor are their own lives so stable, that men should build and plant as if they should forever, or even long, enjoy,—while they dismiss the thought and preparation for the city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. As the beloved circle where our heart reposed, as in the sanctuary and citadel of its joys, is broken and scattered by the arm of death; as riches take themselves wings and fly away; as we walk amid graves that threaten to devour us at every step,—shall we not seek for a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, for an inheritance that never fades away, for a life which is worthy the name, even in the sure promise of glory and honor and immortality, which Christ has purchased and conveys to them that follow him? Love not the world neither the things which are in the world. In respect to all earthly good, for which its votaries waste the energy of their lives and sacrifice their precious years,

“ How vain is man’s pursuit, with passion blind,
 To follow that which leaves us still behind !
 Go clasp the *shadow*—make it all thy own ;
 Place on the flying breeze, thy airy throne ;
 Weave the thin sun-beams of the morning sky ;
 Catch the light April clouds before they fly ;
 Chase the bright sun unto the fading west,
 And wake him early from his golden rest ;
 Seeking the *impossible*, let life be past,
 But never dream of pleasure *that shall last.*”

Oh come hither and learn, from the “*coffin and the shroud, the mourners and the voice of God.*”

It is a solemn thing to die—but it is a very solemn thing to live. Life takes hold on eternity; it is the brief season of preparation; as our days are passed here, so shall our doom be there; and the period of probation is rapidly urging to its close. Let this be your prayer my hearers, “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” With such a fearful and tremendous relation as our life bears to judgment and the eternal world, shall you be insensible of the importance of time, and waste it in sin and in the neglect of the soul? Its utmost limit is not too long for the work for which it is given. But who shall reach that limit? The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,—yea even the righteous perish, and shall no man lay it to heart? Come take your stand by the grave of your youthful pastor, who being dead yet speaketh, and from his early tomb admonishes you how early you may die. Wake from vain dreams and ungrateful indolence, and work while it is called to day: for the night cometh in which no man can work. I appeal to the young and strong. Behold the prostrated form of early manhood and of strength, and remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Then shall you live wisely and die in hope: for living or dying you shall be the Lord’s. Then, in the contemplation of your latter end, you shall not be stricken with terror, nor howl upon your bed with anguished despair. The bitterness of death shall pass away, and when, or in whatever form he comes,

“Why should not he, whose touch dissolves our chain,
Put on his robes of beauty, when he comes
As a deliverer? He hath many forms,
They should not all be fearful. When his call
Is but our gathering to that distant land,
For whose sweet waters we have pined with thirst.
Why should not its prophetic sense be borne
Into the heart’s deep stillness, with a breath
Of summer winds, a voice of winds,
Solemn yet lovely.”

Be ye also ready. Could he whose voice has often been

heard by you from the place where I now stand, again utter forth in your ears the words which he spake while he was yet with you, with what solemnity would you listen, and how completely would you appreciate the one great purpose for which he was sent to you. I have already intimated that he neither lived nor died in vain. That life was long which answered life's great end. He has fulfilled the work which God gave him to do here. No purpose of God is defeated by this early death. The preparations and the trials which brought him but to the threshold of his ministry, and that dispensation of the gospel which was committed to his trust, were not thrown away. He was raised up for that labor which he performed among you ; and who shall measure the results that are yet to flow from it ? He was made the instrument of comforting sorrowful hearts ; of helping those who have believed through grace ; of warning and admonishing and teaching you, that he might present you perfect unto Christ ; of urging upon you the claims of God and of your own souls ; of setting before you life and death, and of pressing you to choose between these solemn alternatives. In that ministry, he was unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. His work in these respects performed, and the service and sacrifice of his faith for you accomplished,—he has ceased from the earth and gone to give an account of his ministry and enter upon his reward. Though spared to the church for but a few years, *God* is not unmerciful of his labor of love ; and to all that have employed their talents for Him, He saith, " Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It needed not length of years to fulfil this ministry which he received from the Lord Jesus and to finish his course with joy. This christian church may not fear and be amazed, though the under shepherd be smitten, for they are still under the guardianship of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Nor are they who have not yet obeyed the voice of the gospel which he proclaimed, without suffi-

cient testimonies and labours from this short ministry to help them unto salvation, or to leave them without excuse if they neglect that voice which spake to them from heaven. And were he here to-day, what more could he say than he has often said before? and that which he said before, is enforced by the consideration, that the very last appeals and warnings, ever appointed by God to be given to you by his mouth, have been addressed to you. His life and his ministry are ended. You have lost hitherto that life and ministry. Will you also lose the influence of his death? Although his ministrations on earth and among you are done, yet reflect I pray you that you have not yet done with that ministry. His part of it has been brought to its appointed end,—but yours remains yet to be performed. His was the work of speaking to you the word of the Lord, of calling you to repentance and of building you up in the faith. Yours is the work of obeying that word, of repenting, and believing, that you may live. Not his is the responsibility of success—not his any portion of your responsibility for the results of his ministry. It is yours to improve the means of grace which God granted through him. And now his death should waken reflection. You are to meet him in the last day; and when he stands beside you then, to witness how he besought you in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God,—shall his account be of joy because of your obedience of faith, or of grief because you refused the voice that instructed you? In that hour, you shall also account, for every sermon,—for every invitation, —for every warning which God permitted his lips to utter. Shall he witness for you, or bear witness against you? Ought not this truth to impress itself upon your mind, awaken all the solemn emotions of your hearts, and excite you, after so long a time, to call to remembrance the word of the gospel, and, even to-day, *to lead you to repentance*? May I not retire from this desk, and summon him again from the grave, that *he* may again stand here to-day, and speak once more to you in admonitory remembrance of the past? Were

it his voice that speaks to you to-day,—to make one last appeal that should remind you of all that he hath said among you, and carry your thoughts forward to the day when the final results of that ministry shall appear,—in some, the savor of life unto life—in others the savor of death unto death—what would he say that might serve you, as in the moment of his departure forever? It is, as if he came up and stood before you to-day, in the habiliments of the grave, and bade you listen to the solemn words which he utters from the threshold of the eternal world. Hear him, that your souls may live.

“Ye know from the first day that I came unto you, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of them that watched for my halting. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly and from house to house, testifying unto you all, repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now behold I know, that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. I go to appear at the bar of God on my own behalf and to bear testimony concerning you. My life have I not counted dear unto myself, but that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Therefore watch and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears!”

And now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Amen.