

*THE AMERICAN PULPIT OF THE DAY.*

---

FORTY-TWO  
SERMONS

BY THE

MOST DISTINGUISHED LIVING AMERICAN PREACHERS.

---

FIRST SERIES

---



London :

R. D. DICKINSON, 27, FARRINGDON STREET.

---

1875.

**LONDON:**  
**PIPER AND CARTER, PRINTERS, GOUGH SQUARE, FLEET STREET.**

## THE PRESENT LIFE AS RELATED TO THE FUTURE.

BY REV. WILLIAM G. T. SHEDD, D.D.

*"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."*—LUKE xvi. 25.

THE reader of Dante's *Inferno* is always struck with the sincerity and realism of that poem. Under the delineation of that luminous, and that intense understanding, hell has a topographic reality. We wind along down those nine circles as down a volcanic crater, black, jagged, precipitous, and impinging upon the senses at every step. The sighs and shrieks jar our own tympanum; and the convulsions of the lost excite tremors in our own nerves. No wonder that the children in the streets of Florence, as they saw the sad and earnest man pass along, his face lined with passion and his brow scarred with thought, pointed at him, and said, "There goes the man who has been in hell." But how infinitely more solemn is the impression that is made by these thirteen short verses of the sixteenth chapter of Luke's gospel from the lips of such a being as Jesus Christ! We have here the terse and pregnant teachings of one who, in the phrase of the early Creed, not only "descended into hell," but who "hath the keys of death and hell." We have here not the utterances of the most truthful and the most earnest of all human poets—a man, who, we may

believe, felt deeply the power of the Hebrew Bible, though living in a dark age, and a superstitious Church—we have here the utterances of the Son of God, very God of very God, and we may be certain that he intended to convey no impression that will not be made good in the world to come. And when every eye shall see him, and all the sinful kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, there will not be any eye that can look into his, and say, “Thy description, O Son of God! was overdrawn; the impression was greater than the reality.” On the contrary, every human soul will say in the day of judgment, We were forewarned; the statements were exact; “even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath” (Psa. xc. 11).

But what is the lesson which we are to read by this clear and solemn light? What would our merciful Redeemer have us learn from this passage which he has caused to be recorded for our instruction? Let us listen with a candid and a feeling heart, because it comes to us not from an enemy of the human soul, not from a being who delights to cast it into hell, but from a friend of the soul; because it comes to us from one who, in his own person and in his own flesh, suffered an anguish superior in dignity and equal in cancelling power to the pains of all the hells, in order that we, through repentance and faith, might be spared their infliction.

The lesson is this: The man who seeks enjoyment in this life, as his chief end, must suffer in the next life; and he who endures suffering in this life, for righteousness' sake, shall be happy in the next. “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

It is a fixed principle in the Divine administration, that the scales of justice shall in the end be made equal. If, therefore, sin enjoys in this world, it must sorrow in the next; and if righteousness sorrows in this world, it must enjoy in the next. The experience shall be reversed, in order to bring everything to a right position and adjustment. This is everywhere taught in the Bible. “Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received

your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Luke vi. 21, 24, 25). These are the explicit declarations of the founder of Christianity, and they ought not to surprise us, coming as they do from him who expressly declares that his kingdom is not of this world; that in this world his disciples must have tribulation, as he had; that through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God; that whosoever doth not take up the cross daily, and follow him, cannot be his disciple.

Let us notice some particulars in which we see the operation of this principle. What are the "good things," which Divine receives here, for which he must be "tormented" hereafter? and what are the "evil things," which Lazarus receives in this world, for which he will be "comforted" in the world to come?

1. In the first place, the worldly man derives a more intense physical enjoyment from this world's goods than does the child of God. He possesses more of them, and gives himself up to them without self-restraint. The majority of those who have been most prospered by Divine Providence in the accumulation of wealth have been outside of the kingdom and the ark of God. Not many rich and not many noble are called. In the past history of mankind the great possessions and the great incomes, as a general rule, have not been in the hands of humble and penitent men. In the great centres of trade and commerce—in Venice, Amsterdam, Paris, London—it is the world, and not the people of God, who have had the purse, and have borne what is put therein. Satan is described in Scripture as the "prince of this world" (John xiv. 30); and his words addressed to the Son of God are true: "All this power and glory is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it." In the parable from which we are discoursing, the sinful man was the rich man, and the child of God was the beggar. And how often

do we see, in every-day life, a faithful, prayerful, upright, and pure-minded man toiling in poverty, and, so far as earthly comforts are concerned, enjoying little or nothing; while a selfish, pleasure-seeking, and profligate man is immersed in physical comforts and luxuries! The former is receiving evil things, and the latter is receiving good things, in this life.

Again, how often it happens that a fine physical constitution, health, strength, and vigour, are given to the worldling, and are denied to the child of God. The possession of worldly good is greatly enhanced in value by a fine capability of enjoying it. When, therefore, we see wealth joined with health, and luxury in all the surroundings and appointments combined with taste to appreciate them, and a full flow of blood to enjoy them, or access to wide and influential circles, in politics and fashion, given to one who is well fitted by personal qualities to move in them—when we see a happy adaptation existing between the man and his good fortune, as we call it—we see not only the “good things,” but the “good things” in their gayest and most attractive forms and colours. And how often is all this observed in the instance of the natural man, and how often is there little or none of this in the instance of the spiritual man! We by no means imply that it is impossible for the possessor of this world’s goods to love mercy, to do justly, and to walk humbly; and we are well aware that under the garb of poverty and toil there may beat a murmuring and rebellious heart. But we think that from generation to generation, in this imperfect and probationary world, it will be found to be a fact, that when merely earthly and physical good is allotted in large amounts by the providence of God—that when great incomes and ample means of luxury are given—in the majority of instances they are given to the enemies of God, and not to his dear children. So the Psalmist seems to have thought: “I was envious,” he says, “when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride

compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the *ungodly*, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily *I* have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have *I* been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Psalm lxxiii.) And it should be carefully noticed that the Psalmist, even after further reflection, does not alter his statement respecting the relative positions of the godly and the ungodly in this world. He sees no reason to correct his estimate upon this point. He lets it stand. So far as this merely physical existence is concerned, the wicked man has the advantage. It is only when the Psalmist looks beyond this life that he sees the compensation, and the balancing again of the scales of eternal right and justice. "When I thought to know this"—when I reflected upon this inequality and apparent injustice in the treatment of the friends and the enemies of God—"it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God"—until I took my stand in the eternal world, and formed my estimate there—"then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." Dives passes from his fine linen and sumptuous fare, from his excessive physical enjoyment, to everlasting perdition.

2. In the second place, the worldly man derives more enjoyment from sin, and suffers less from it, in this life, than does the child of God. The really renewed man cannot enjoy sin. It is true that he does sin, owing to the strength of old habits, and the remainders of his corruption. But he does not really delight in it; and he says with St. Paul, "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." His sin is a sorrow, a constant sorrow, to him. He feels its pressure and burden all his days, and cries, "O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If he falls into it, he cannot live in it; as a man may fall into water, but it is not his natural element.

Again, the good man not only takes no real delight in sin, but his reflections after transgression are very painful. He has a tender conscience. His senses have been trained and disciplined to discern good and evil. Hence, the sins that are committed by a child of God are mourned over with a very deep sorrow. The longer he lives, the more odious does sin become to him, and the more keen and bitter is his lamentation over it. Now this, in itself, is an "evil thing." Man was not made for sorrow, and sorrow is not his natural condition. This wearisome struggle with indwelling corruption, these reproaches of an impartial conscience, this sense of imperfection and of constant failure in the service of God,—all this renders the believer's life on earth a season of trial and tribulation. The thought of its lasting for ever would be painful to him; and if he should be told that it is the will of God that he should continue to be vexed and foiled through all eternity with the motions of sin in his members, and that his love and obedience would be for ever imperfect, though he would be thankful that even this was granted him, and that he was not utterly cast off, yet he would wear a shaded brow at the prospect of an imperfect, though a sincere and a struggling, eternity.

But the ungodly are not so. The worldly man loves sin—loves pleasure, loves self—and the love is so strong, and accompanied with so much enjoyment and zest, that it is lust, and is so denominated in the Bible. And if you would only defend him from the wrath of God; if you would warrant him immunity in doing as he likes; if you could shelter him as in an inaccessible castle from the retributions of eternity; with what a delirium of pleasure would he plunge into the sin that he loves! Tell the avaricious man that his avarice shall never have any evil consequences here or hereafter, and with what an energy would he apply himself to the acquisition of wealth! Tell the luxurious man, full of passion and full of blood, that his pleasures shall never bring down any evil upon him, that there is no power in the universe that can hurt him, and with what an abandonment would he surrender himself to his carnal



elysium ! Tell the ambitious man, fired with visions of fame and glory, that he may banish all fears of a final account, that he may make himself his own Deity, and breathe in the incense of worshippers, without any rebuke from him who says, "I am God, and my glory I will not give to another,"—assure the proud and ambitious man that his sin will never find him out, and with what a momentum will he follow out his inclination ! For in each of these instances there is a hankering and a lust. The sin is loved and revelled in for its own deliciousness. The heart is worldly, and therefore finds its pleasure in its forbidden objects and aims. The instant you propose to check or thwart this inclination ; the instant you try to detach this natural heart from its wealth, or its pleasure, or its earthly fame ; you discover how closely it clings, and how strongly it loves, and how intensely it enjoys the forbidden object. Like the greedy insect in our gardens, it has fed until every fibre and tissue are coloured with its food ; and to remove it from the leaf is to tear and lacerate it.

Now it is for this reason that the natural man receives "good things," or experiences pleasure, in this life at a point where the spiritual man receives "evil things," or experiences pain. The child of God does not relish and enjoy sin in this style. Sin in the good man is a burden ; but in the bad man it is a pleasure. It is all the pleasure he has. And when you propose to take it away from him, or when you ask him to give it up of his own accord, he looks at you and asks, "Will you take away the only solace I have ? I have no joy in God. I take no enjoyment in divine things. Do you ask me to make myself wholly miserable ?"

And not only does the natural man enjoy sin, but, in this life, he is much less troubled than is the spiritual man with reflections and self-reproaches on account of sin. This is another of the "good things" which Dives receives, for which he must be "tormented ;" and this is another of the "evil things" which Lazarus receives, for which he must be "comforted." It cannot be denied that in this world the child of God suffers more

mental sorrow for sin, in a given period of time, than does the insensible man of the world. If we could look into the soul of a faithful disciple of Christ, we should discover that not a day passes in which his conscience does not reproach him for sins of thought, word, or deed; in which he does not struggle with some bosom sin, until he is so weary that he cries out, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, so that I might fly away, and be at rest." Some of the most exemplary members of the Church go mourning from day to day because their hearts are still so far from their God and Saviour, and their lives fall so far short of what they desire them to be. Their experience is not a positively wretched one, like that of an unforgiven sinner when he is feeling the stings of conscience. They are forgiven. The expiating blood has soothed the ulcerated conscience, so that it no longer stings and burns. They have hope in God's mercy. Still they are in grief and sorrow for sin; and their experience, in so far, is not a perfectly happy one, such as will ultimately be their portion in a better world. "If in this life only," says St. Paul, "we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19).

But the stupid and impenitent man, a luxurious Dives, knows nothing of all this. His days glide by with no twinges of conscience. What does he know of the burden of sin? His conscience is dead asleep; perchance seared as with a hot iron. He does wrong without any remorse; he disobeys the express commands of God, without any misgivings or self-reproach. He is "alive, without the law,"—as St. Paul expresses it. His eyes stand out with fatness; and his heart, in the Psalmist's phrase, "is as fat as grease" (Psa. cxix. 70). There is no religious sensibility in him. His sin is a pleasure to him without any mixture of sorrow, because unattended by any remorse of conscience. He is receiving his "good things" in this life. His days pass by without any moral anxiety, and perchance, as he looks upon some meek and earnest disciple of Christ who is battling with indwelling sin, and who, therefore, sometimes wears a grave countenance, he wonders that any one

should walk so soberly, so gloomily, in such a cheery, such a happy, such a jolly world as this.

It is a startling fact that those men in this world who have most reason to be distressed by sin are the least troubled by it; and those who have the least reason to be distressed by sin are the most troubled by it. The child of God is the one who sorrows most, and the child of Satan is the one who sorrows least. Remember that we are speaking only of this life. The text reads, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things." And it is unquestionably so. The meek and lowly disciple of Christ—the one who is most entitled by his character and conduct to be untroubled by religious anxiety—is the very one who bows his head as a bulrush, and, perhaps, goes mourning all his days, fearing that he is not accepted, and that he shall be a cast-away; while the selfish and thoroughly irreligious man, who ought to be stung through and through by his own conscience, and feel the full energy of the law which he is continually breaking—this man, who of all men ought to be anxious and distressed for sin, goes through a whole lifetime, perchance, without any convictions or any fears.

And now we ask if this state of things ought to last for ever? Is it right, is it just, that sin should enjoy in this style for ever and for ever, and that holiness should grieve and sorrow in this style for evermore? Would you have the Almighty pay a bounty upon unrighteousness, and place goodness under eternal pains and penalties? Ought not this state of things to be reversed? When Dives comes to the end of this lifetime; when he has run his round of earthly pleasure, faring sumptuously every day, clothed in purple and fine linen, without a thought of his duties and obligations, and without any anxiety and penitence for his sins—when this worldly man has received all his "good things," and is satiated and hardened by them, ought he not then to be "tormented?" Ought this guilty, carnal enjoyment to be perpetuated through all eternity, under the government of a righteous and just God? And, on

the other hand, ought not the faithful disciple, who, perhaps, has possessed little or nothing of this world's goods—who has toiled hard in poverty, in affliction, in temptation, in tribulation, and sometimes, like Abraham, in the horror of a great darkness, to keep his robes white and his soul unspotted from the world—when the poor and weary Lazarus comes to the end of his lifetime, ought not his trials and sorrows to cease? Ought he not then to be “comforted” in the bosom of Abraham, in the paradise of God? There is that within us all which answers, Yea, and Amen. Such a balancing of the scales is assented to, and demanded by the moral convictions. Hence, in the parable, Dives himself is represented as acquiescing in the eternal judgment. He does not complain of injustice. It is true that at first he asks for a drop of water—for some slight mitigation of his punishment. This is the instinctive request of any sufferer. But when his attention is directed to the right and the wrong of the case, when Abraham reminds him of the principles of justice by which his destiny has been decided, when he tells him that having taken his choice of pleasure in the world which he has left he cannot now have pleasure in the world to which he has come, the wretched man makes no reply. There is nothing to be said. He feels that the procedure is just. He is then silent upon the subject of his own tortures, and only begs that his five brethren, whose lifetime is not yet run out, to whom there is still a space left for repentance, may be warned from his own lips not to do as he has done—not to choose pleasure on earth as their chief good, not to take their “good things” in this life. Dives, the man in hell, is a witness to the justice of eternal punishment.

1. In view of this subject, as thus discussed, we remark, in the first place, that no man can have his “good things”—in other words, his chief pleasure—in *both* worlds. God and this world are in antagonism. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John i. 15, 16). It is the

height of folly, therefore, to suppose that a man can make earthly enjoyment his chief end while he is upon earth, and then pass to heaven when he dies. Just so far as he holds on upon the "good things" of this life, he relaxes his grasp upon the "good things" of the next. No man is capacious enough to hold both worlds in his embrace. He cannot serve God and Mammon. Look at this as a *matter of fact*. Do not take it as a theory of the preacher. It is as plain and certain that you cannot lay up your treasure in heaven while you are laying it up upon earth, as it is that your material bodies cannot occupy two portions of space at one and the same time. Dismiss, therefore, all expectations of being able to accomplish an impossibility. Put not your mind to sleep with the opiate that in some inexplicable manner you will be able to live the life of a worldly man upon earth, and then the life of a spiritual man in heaven. There is no alchemy that can amalgamate substances that refuse to mix. No man has ever yet succeeded, no man ever will succeed, in securing both the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of holiness—in living the life of Dives, and then going to the bosom of Abraham.

2. And this leads to the second remark, that every man must *make his choice* whether he will have his "good things" now, or hereafter. Every man is making his choice. Every man has already made it. The heart is now set either upon God, or upon the world. Search through the globe, and you cannot find a creature with double affections; a creature with two chief ends of living; a creature whose treasure is both upon earth and in heaven. All mankind are single-minded. They either mind earthly things, or heavenly things. They are inspired with one predominant purpose, which rules them, determines their character, and decides their destiny. And in all who have not been renewed by Divine grace, the purpose is a wrong one, a false and a fatal one. It is the choice and the purpose of Dives, and not the choice and purpose of Lazarus.

3. Hence we remark, in the third place, that it is the duty and the wisdom of every man to let this world go, and seek his "good things" hereafter. Our Lord commands every man to

sit down, like the steward in the parable, and make an estimate. He enjoins it upon every man to reckon up the advantages upon each side, and see for himself which is superior. He asks every man what it will profit him "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what he shall give in exchange for his soul." We urge you to make this estimate, to compare the "good things" which Dives enjoyed, with the "torments" that followed them; and the "evil things" which Lazarus suffered, with the "comfort" that succeeded them. There can be no doubt upon which side the balance will fall. And we urge you to take the "evil things" now, and the "good things" hereafter. We entreat you to copy the example of Moses at the court of the Pharaohs, and in the midst of all regal luxury, who "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." Take the narrow way. What though it be strait and narrow?—you are not to walk in it for ever. A few short years of fidelity will end the toilsome pilgrimage, and then you will come out into a "wealthy place." We might tell you of the joys of the Christian life that are mingled with its trials and sorrows even here upon earth; for this race to which we invite you, and this fight to which we call you, have their own peculiar, solemn, substantial joy. And even their sorrow is tinged with glory. In a higher, truer sense than Protesilaus in the poem says it of the pagan elysium, we may say even of the Christian race and the Christian fight,

*"Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains."*

But we do not care, at this point, to influence you by a consideration of the amount of enjoyment in this life which you will derive from a close and humble walk with God. We prefer to put the case in its baldest form—in the aspect in which we find it in our text. We will say nothing at all about the happiness of a Christian life here in time. We will talk only of its tribulations. We will only say, as in the parable,

that there are "evil things" to be endured here upon earth, in return for which we shall have "good things" in another life. There is to be a moderate and sober use of this world's goods; there is to be a searching sense of sin, and an humble confession of it before God; there is to be a cross-bearing every day, and a struggle with indwelling corruption. These will cost effort, watchfulness, and earnest prayer for Divine assistance. We do not invite you into the kingdom of God without telling you frankly and plainly beforehand what must be done and what must be suffered. But having told you this, we then tell you, with the utmost confidence and assurance, that you will be infinitely repaid for your choice if you take your "evil things" in this life, and choose your "good things" in a future. We know and are certain that this light affliction which endures but for a moment, in comparison with the infinite duration beyond the tomb, will work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. We entreat you to look no longer at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Learn a parable from a wounded soldier. His limb must be amputated, for mortification and gangrene have begun their work. He is told that the surgical operation, which will last a half-hour, will yield him twenty or forty years of healthy and active life. The endurance of an "evil thing" for a few moments will result in the possession of a "good thing" for many long days and years. He holds out the limb and submits to the knife. He accepts the inevitable conditions under which he finds himself. He is resolute and stern, in order to secure a great good in the future.

It is the practice of this same principle, though not in the use of the same kind of power, that we would urge upon you. Look up to God for grace and help, and deliberately forego a present advantage, for the sake of something infinitely more valuable hereafter. Do not, for the sake of the temporary enjoyment of Dives, lose the eternal happiness of Lazarus.

Rather take the place and accept the "evil things" of the beggar. Look up to God for grace and strength to do it, and then live a life of contrition for sin, and faith in Christ's blood. Deny yourself, and take up the cross daily. Expect your happiness hereafter. Lay up your treasure above. Then, in the deciding day, it will be said of you, as it will be of all the true children of God, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."