

Are we doing things in life that it will give us pleasure to remember in death?

## VII

The miraculous is as easy with God as the commonplace.

## The Lesson Heart Talk

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"It must be so—Plato, thou reasonest well!—Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,

This longing after immortality?  
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror,  
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?  
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;  
'Tis heaven itself, that points out an hereafter,  
And intimates eternity to man."

Chronology counts nothing when we enter Hezekiah's chamber where it seemed he must "meet his fate." The scene, the mind conditions, the impressions, are like what we saw yesterday. What we see to-day, and will see to-morrow.

No one of healthy mind wishes to die. We may say we do, but when illness looks serious we are ready to send for the physician. The love of life is implanted by the Giver of life. We ought to love it, and provide for its continuance under the most favorable conditions possible. It is no sign of high spiritual attainment to put a discount upon vigorous physical existence in this world in which by God's providence we were born. It is good to be in the arena of the affairs of life, to have its responsibilities and its honors if they come to us in God's order.

It must have been hard for Isaiah to say to his friend, "Thou must die," when the kingdom needed his leadership and before his powers had begun to wane with advancing years. It was hard for Hezekiah to hear the message. When he was in straits through Sennacherib's message he spread the letter before the Lord; and now he turned to the same source of help, and again proved that God heard and answered prayer. A remedy was found that cured his illness. God works his will by human means or without, as pleases him.

I heard Isaiah's message, "Set thine house in order," in the sick room of one beloved of the Lord. I also heard this prayer: "O Lord, we beseech thee, if there is anything in all the realm of medical healing which has not yet been suggested to the minds of the physicians for our brother, reveal it to them, we pray!" A few hours later a new remedy was thought of, and the result was the beginning of recovery which added twenty years to an honored and recognized as God's healing through human means in answer to prayer.

Many a prayerless man will pray when he finds himself face to face with death. But life is the time for prayer.

Real prayer is as much God's call as it is God's answer.

The incident of our lesson confirms our belief that life and death are absolutely in the hands of God. The coming of a soul into life here and its passing hence to eternity are events of too solemn portent to be left to the chance of circumstance. "I kill and make alive; I wound, and I heal." "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hades and of death."

If our Lord has the keys, we may infer that the door opens only when he chooses. I would not affirm what I do not know, but with the reverence becoming us when we speak of God's mysteries I may say I believe we neither shorten nor prolong life except as the Life-giver chooses. We may ruin health by breaking his laws, but we do not die until the time chosen by his providence comes.

The thousands slain by accident, pestilence, and war are not hurried out of the world unseen and uncared for by the Father of spirits. Immortal beings are precious to him. The eternal destiny of each soul is too momentous to be left to the accident of a bullet or the triumph of a microbe over the physician's skill.

But life's secrets belong to our God. There are blessed things which are revealed which we may speak of without question. Life and immortality are brought to light in Jesus. Hezekiah seemed to see only the grave; Paul saw no grave, but only life forever with the Lord. Hezekiah said: "In the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years." Paul says: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

"Why be afraid of death as though your life were breath?  
Death but anoints your eyes with clay, O glad surprise!  
This is the death of Death, to breathe away a breath  
And know the end of strife, and taste the deathless life,  
And joy without a fear and smile without a tear,  
And work, nor care to rest, and find the last is best."