

WHICH IS THE LIKELIEST?

"GRANDPAPA," said my little grandson to me one day lately, "how long do you think I shall live? Shall I ever be as old as you?"

"I cannot tell you," I replied. "No one knows but God. You may die whilst you are only a little boy, or you may live to be an old man. People die, you know, at all ages. But you may live—and I hope you will—to be as old as I am, and a great deal older."

"Do you think, grandpapa," he asked, "that I might live a hundred years longer?"

"A hundred years!" I said. "That is a very long time. How old would you be if you were to live till then?"

"I am six now, grandpapa," he said; "that would make a hundred and six."

"I have heard of people," I replied, "who lived to be as old as that; but I do not think that either you or I shall live so long."

"But we shall be living somewhere, grandpapa," he asked, "shan't we?"

"Yes, George," I answered. "You know it is only the body that dies. Our spirits will still live. We shall be either with the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, or else we shall be with fallen angels and bad people in that place where there is no hope."

"I know all that, grandpapa," he said, thoughtfully and slowly; "but which is the likeliest?" And he repeated the question, "Which is the likeliest?"

It was a child's question; but who does not know that children, in their imperfect way, often ponder questions of the most solemn moment? Of all questions we could ask, there is none which concerns every one of us more deeply than that, for it involves our everlasting destiny.

Has it ever struck you to ask, reader, "Where shall I be a hundred years hence?" The next hundred years will roll away, bearing with them changes in the fortunes of the world of which no man has the faintest idea; but this is certain—that you will not be here to witness them. Long before then you will be smitten with your last sickness, or else, worn out with age, the powers of life will die out, and that frame which is now so vigorous will be borne to "the house appointed for all living."

But you will be still living. Your spirit, which is the nobler part of your being, will never die. Whatever your character, good or bad, whether you are a servant of God or a servant of the devil, your spirit is immortal. This is not so much affirmed in Scripture as assumed—assumed in every promise of everlasting life, and assumed in every threat of everlasting death.

Where, then, will you be a hundred years hence?

We can tell you where you may be. When good men die—and by good men we mean true followers of

the Lord Jesus Christ—their spirits enter at once into the presence of the Saviour in heaven. They bid farewell for ever to sorrow and care; but unspeakably better even than that, delightful as it is, they are freed evermore from sin, which is the one great source of all misery; every holy affection is quickened, and they render to the Lord a perfect service, which knows no weariness, and which will never end. When the first Christian martyr, Stephen, was dying, it was his assured hope that he should be received at once into the presence of Jesus. So, too, the Apostle Paul believed that to die was "gain," and that, departing, he would go "to be with Christ," which was "far better." A hundred years hence, then, you may be before the throne of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, gladdened by His smile, the companion of angels and



of spirits ransomed, like yourself, from everlasting death, your present dim and imperfect views of Divine truth exchanged for a perfect knowledge, and you may be uniting with the countless multitudes of the saved in celebrating the praises of redeeming love.

That is where you may be. But then you may not be there; for all who die do not go to be "with Christ." If not "with Christ," then where?

There is one of our Lord's parables, the most solemn and impressive of all the parables, which may help us to find an answer to this question—it is that of the rich man and Lazarus. It describes the rich man, whilst his brothers were still living on earth, as in hell, lifting up his eyes, being in torments. If the parable teaches anything, it surely teaches this: that just as the saved enter at once into perfect