

not venture upon the task; for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath in store for them that love Him."

III. But let us consider the third important idea contained in the words of the text, and that is the firm persuasion which the Apostle had of being admitted into this glorious dwelling place, as soon as the earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved.

Observe, here, the Apostle states his expectation of entering the heavenly habitation in very confident and emphatic language. He does not say, We think it, we hope it, but, we know it; as much as to say, We are firmly persuaded of the fact. How different it is with others! As regards many, they cannot really say whether they know it or not, because the subject, unspeakably momentous as it is, seldom occupies their attention. They are earthly-minded, and hence their minds and affections are wholly absorbed in the things of time and sense. Their consciences are at ease; they eat, drink, and are merry. They live from day to day in carnal security; nothing disturbs them. They say—"Peace, peace, when there is no peace," but a false peace. They pass over the journey of life, it may be smoothly and prosperously. Their sun continues for a time shining so steadily, that they forget its setting, and the shades of that awful, eternal night, which are rapidly gathering in the distance. The glow of health is on their countenances, their bodies are vigorous, and hence they seldom dream of the day of their dissolution, till at length God, whom they practically regarded as being distant from the affairs of mortals, and maintaining a cold reserve, directly interferes, and breaks up their dream by the infliction of some terrible blow. Then they are made to feel, though reluctantly, that they are subject to decay, and that their immortal spirits must return to God who gave them. It is often on this awful occasion, I say, amidst the agonies of dissolving nature, when their hearts and flesh literally fail them, that they are for the first time brought to any sober or serious reflection about the unseen world. Conscience, that impartial judge of moral conduct, whose still small voice they had often drowned, will now raise its warning voice as for the last time in the land of the living. Ah! this is to them a most trying occasion. They have no rational ground for hope, because in Him who is the hope of Israel, they have no faith. They may have riches, but those riches now make to themselves wings, and flee away. The world, with all its vanities and fascination, grows dim and meaningless before their sinking eyes. They look into the future, but it is with horror. They cannot say with the Apostle, "we know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God." Nay, they not only cannot a *lopt* the Apostle's language of confident positiveness,

and say, we "*know it*," but they dare not even affirm, we hope it. Nature at length gives way; their earthly house is dissolved; their cry of despair ends, and their souls are nakedly turned adrift upon the cheerless waste of a desolate eternity, without a Saviour to befriend, without a God to protect, and without a heaven to receive them. Thus, then, there are some, nay millions, who do not and cannot know that when their earthly tabernacles are dissolved, they have a building of God: their own hearts condemn them, and they feel that "God is greater than their hearts, and knoweth all things."

But there are others who seem to live far beyond the dusky atmosphere of despair, who seem ready to join with the Apostle in the joyful exclamation—"We know we have a building of God," when in fact, they are all the time but victims of blind delusion. They appear to be at rest, but it is a false rest. They have hope, but it is not rational; it is not sure nor steadfast, and cannot enter within the veil, because it is not laid upon Zion's chief corner stone, who is the basis of all true hope, and all true happiness. They hope to enter heaven, it may be, from their own self-righteousness,—from their fair outward deportment,—from their being members of a particular Christian sect,—from their punctilious observance of certain rites and ordinances,—from their having certain favorite *shibboleths*; in short, like the foolish virgins, they have lamps, but not oil in them, and from the outward splendor of these lamps, from the outward decency of their professions, they hope that they are fitted for being guests of the Bridegroom when He cometh. Ah! yes, my friends, they may delude themselves with this hope, till the midnight cry is rung in their ears: "Go ye out to meet Him." There is danger, my friends, in being deceived in regard to the hope we cherish of entering heaven. But you may have a rational hope, a confident expectation in regard to this solemn matter. Those who are sincere believers; those who in a tone of assured confidence can triumphantly exclaim: "We know we have a building of God," are known to themselves and to the world around them. And how are they known? Is there an angel from the heavenly glory to proclaim audibly in my hearing who they are? Is there another audible and glorious voice to melt forth musically from yonder skies: "These are my beloved sons; these are my beloved daughters; these are they who, upon the dissolution of their earthly tabernacles, have a sure title to the mansions of bliss." No, my friends, no such voice is to be expected, nor is there any such needed. The shadowy times of angelic announcements are long since past. We have no reason to think they will any more return. Then how may believers be known? From their fruits. These are the sure indications of spiritual health; these are the indices which point