

SERMON.

2 TIMOTHY IV. 6--8.

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

SUCH was the language of the Apostle, in view of the martyr death which was to arrest him in the midst of his labors. He had finished his course and had kept the faith, and so was not greatly moved in the day of trouble. He looked backward upon the course which he had run, and forward to the glory to be revealed—backward upon the work of a life-time, and forward to the shining crown,—feeling that the labors, and the life, and the conquest, and the crown, were all of God. He stood upon the brink of the river, calm and unmoved—like the conqueror in the capitol, waiting for his crown. He felt, as all must feel, the bitterness of death; but he felt, as the Christian only can feel, that the Saviour's arms were round him and beneath him; that his times were in God's hands; and that the light affliction—the glittering axe of the executioner, that was to strike off his head in a moment—would work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

In discoursing upon this subject, I would call your attention to the truth, that every man has his appointed course to run; and, secondly, the peculiar feeling with which the Christian contemplates the close of his course.

I.—Every man has his appointed course laid out for him—his work assigned him—his path fixed, with all its details—its bright days and dark days—as surely as rising and setting suns. The Apostle felt this when he gave utterance to the language of the text. He knew that his steps were ordered; his days numbered; that the whole race which he had to run was the appointment of heaven. And the same may be the feeling of every Christian, as he hastens on to the close, for every Christian is called to a noble life—*every living soul*, I may say, is called to a noble life—to glory, honor and immortality. He may refuse to move in that path set before him in the gospel—to take one step in that narrow way which leads to God's right hand. He may drop to a lower level, and move on in a path of his own choosing; but he cannot drop from the all-encompassing Providence of Him in whose hands are all his ways, and who knows how to use a man in the lower level to which he has descended, no less than in the higher orbit in which He would have him to move. I have seen children playing with melted lead, dropping it on the sand, and dropping it with the view of getting it to run in certain grooves previously prepared. I have seen the perverse liquid so dropped in the sand, refusing to run in those prepared paths, and forming a path for itself; but the child, anticipating its progress, and adapting himself