

me in paradise." How we long to know still more! Oh, for a more penetrating view of that dark shore beyond the grave! The Lord knew that this is sufficient for us; and to all our questioning, all our divining, we have this answer, "In paradise." Then he is to be where thorns or thistles never grow, and where there shall be no more sin, neither sorrow, nor death. Neither is he to be there alone, but "with me," with the Lord and in the Lord. "And so shall we ever be," says Paul, "with the Lord." Oh, beloved, do we not know much, very much, in these two facts; the place to which those go who die in the Lord, a paradise—and the paradise they are in the place where Jesus is? And when do they reach there? This very day, says the Lord, this very day of your death, freed from all guilt, accused by no foe, thou shalt be with me in paradise. Who can listen to news like this without being prompted to pray, "Lord, take us with you to paradise?"

Not that the thief's release came instantly upon this promise. He still had long hours of suffering to pass through. But they were illuminated by that bright word, Blessed, hovering above him. What will it matter whether your last way be short or long, easy or painful, bright or in shadow, a gentle passing away in a dream, or with a terrific, agonizing struggle at the last, so it is only blessed! His own are not preserved from the walk through the valley of the shadow of death. But it is a walk with Him, a walk to Him, in paradise!

Let us again return to our text: what, therefore, is required in order to die blessed? What our Church teaches, Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! We believe, then, that man is not justified by the works of the law—where were those of the thief? but solely, "By grace are ye saved through faith." By faith alone—but faith is not a dead thing, not a mere "Lord, remember me," of the lips, but a change in man's inmost heart by means of which the old man is put to death and

a new man born in Jesus Christ. That a new man was born within the thief is manifest in the love which leads him still to attempt to rescue the soul of his reviling companion, in the patient endurance of his agony without a murmur, in his brave profession of faith before the mockery of a world. Christian friends, one thing alone is sufficient unto a blessed death: the heart directed to the Crucified One—that already and inseparably includes the counterpart: the Crucified within the heart.

Once again: "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." When may a sinner yet die a blessed death? Even in the eleventh hour he still may seize hold of the rescuing hand. God continues to extend it to him up to that hour. You who pronounce judgment upon this or that deceased one, or you broken-hearted over your dead, in whose life-time all your faithfulness and all your effort to lead him to his Savior were in vain—perhaps not, it may not have been so unavailing as it seemed! Perhaps those whom in their life-time you directed to Him without effect, found Him, after all, in their death! Oh, what thoughts may animate a human soul during that instant when the entire course of its life, illuminated by the light of eternity, lies spread before the dying gaze! What memories of former calls of mercy may flash upon consciousness, mercy slighted, oh so long! What dialogues, unheard to those standing by, may be carried on between the soul and its Lord, and were they to consist of nothing more than the sigh from the depths, "Lord, remember me!" and the answer from the heights, "Verily I say unto thee"? Is there one in this audience whose sins to-day, or at any time past, rise before him mountain high, until in doubt and despair he cries, "Alas for me! for me it's too late!" No, human soul! lay hold of thy Savior, and though your hands were trembling in death and your life pallid with your last agony, verily I say unto you He will still be ready to hear: *Jesus receiveth sinners; it is not*