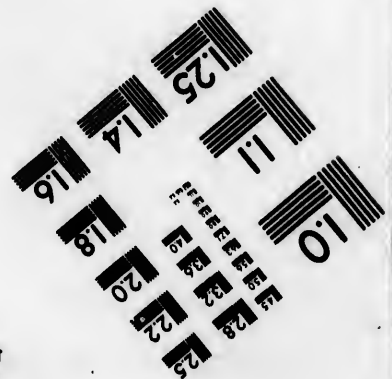
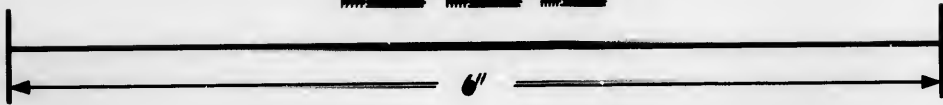
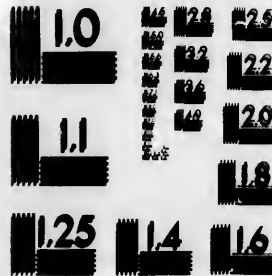


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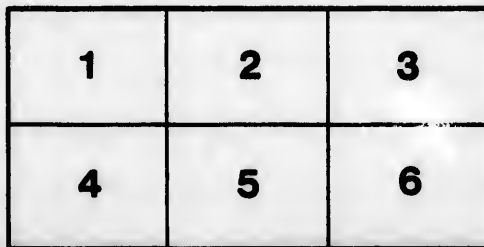
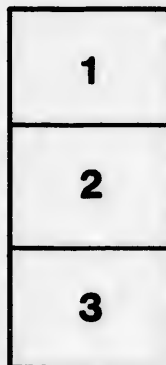
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THE

CERTAINTY OF DEATH,

AND

THE PREPARATION NECESSARY FOR MEETING IT :

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE SAINT JOHN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON THE LAST SABBATH OF 1847.

BY THE REV. ROBERT IRVINE.

"Be ye also ready."—MATTHEW XXIV. 44.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

PRINTED BY HENRY CHUBB & CO., PRINCE WILLIAM-STREET,

1848.

1847
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PREFACE.

This Sermon was preached by the Rev. R. IAVINS to his Congregation on the last Sabbath of 1847, with a view to improve the solemn events of the season, in accordance with a custom which he has uniformly observed since his settlement in this place. He has been requested by the teachers of the Sabbath School connected with his congregation to publish the Sermon for the benefit of the School. It is with some reluctance that he ventures before the public, but if it shall please God to bless the preaching or perusal of the discourse to the awakening of any of the Souls committed to his pastoral care, he shall feel amply rewarded for the pains he has taken in preparing the manuscript from his notes, as he is accustomed to preach extempore. While it is his sincere desire that the souls of his people may be profited by the Sermon, it is also his fervent prayer that the proceeds which the sale of it may realize, may procure some spiritual nourishment for the Lambs of Christ's flock.

SERMON.

THE MESSAGE OF GOD TO KING HEZEKIAH.

II. KINGS, xx.—1.

"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

THE Patriarch Job tells us that death is "the king of terrors," and the history of Hezekiah proves that death is also the terror of kings. This common enemy of man has no respect to persons. The annals of the human race are replete with the gloomy records of his deeds. His work commenced soon after the introduction of sin into our world, and his career has ever since been marked with blood. From the day of Adam till the present moment, he has pursued the family of man, and has pointed his arrow at the hearts of its most promising and hopeful ornaments. He has caused age and youth to share the same common fate. He has snatched the infant from the bosom, and left the affectionate mother to weep over its lifeless remains—he has seized the young man, the brightest hope of all the family, and with a ruffian stroke has stretched him on the bier, a cold, a lifeless, and a ruined thing. He has laid his hand upon the father and the mother, and stripped the family of an earthly head, leaving a group of helpless orphans to deplore the havoc he had made. He has travelled in majestic terror from city to city, and from nation to nation, investing famine, pestilence, and plague with authority to kill and to destroy. He has unsheathed the sword of war, and bathed it in the blood of empires. He has entered those cities whose frowning battlements bade defiance to many a foe, and whose streets were gorged with a swarming population, and has caused them to share the fate of the empires to which they belonged. Before him the stoutest warriors of earth have been made to quail;—the Philips, and Alexanders, and Hannibals, and Bonapartes, who buried nations in a common grave—where are they? Let death answer, and he will say, "they are gone the way of all flesh." It matters not in what form this terrible

enemy approach us—it matters not whether he come in the swift career of a raging pestilence—it matters not whether he come in the wasting and withering ravages of famine—it matters not whether he come in the deafening shouts of battle—it matters not whether he enter our dwellings in the pale and ghastly aspect of consumption—it matters not whether he wrap ourselves and our families in the flames of a scorching fever—it matters not whether he sweep over our nation on the wings of a fatal epidemic,—his approach in one and all of these forms is terrible. But to enter the palace of royalty at a time when the monarch had reached the zenith of his glory; to pluck the crown from his head, to dash his sceptre in pieces, to strip a nation of its head, and bathe a kingdom in tears, makes his approach still more terrible,—and such are the circumstances under which death approached King Hezekiah.—This pious monarch had ascended the throne at the age of twenty-five, when he found the kingdom in a state of idolatry, the Church in a state of apostacy, and the people in a state of rebellion against Heaven. Among the first acts which distinguished his pious reign, was an effort to suppress idolatry and establish the worship of the true God. In this Hezekiah was signally successful. “He removed the high places and brake the images and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehustan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” The beginning of his rule being thus marked by the most obvious tokens of Divine approval—and all his enemies round about being subdued by the miraculous interposition of God on his behalf, this godly man resolved to spend the remainder of his days in promoting the religious interests of his empire. For aught we know, he had many praiseworthy projects which he intended to carry out among his people, all of which were designed to consolidate the religious institutions of the country. He and his subjects looked forward with the highest hopes to a long and a prosperous reign; but how true are the words of inspiration—“in the midst of life we are in death.” For at the very time when Hezekiah and his people least of all expected it, Isaiah the prophet was commissioned to visit him with the message contained in the words of our text.—“Set thine house in order, for

thou shalt die and not live." Although this message was at first delivered under special circumstances, it contains a general truth; and although it was intended by God to remind Hezekiah of the preparation necessary to meet his approaching dissolution, it is designed to awaken us all to a sense of the same thing. The announcement of these words suggests two thoughts, which ought to be kept continually before the mind :

I. The certainty of death, and

II. The preparation necessary for meeting it.

The message of God to King Hezekiah is addressed upon this, the last Sabbath of the year, to every one within these walls. The voice of the Almighty is speaking in every page of revelation, and in every passing movement of His providence, and admonishing us

First.—Of the certainty of death—“*Thou shalt die and not live.*” Surely this sentence fell with a terrific stroke on the ear of Hezekiah. We need not wonder that on hearing it “he turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord.” Can we imagine anything more likely to inspire him with a spirit of prayer than to be told that he was on the brink of eternity? Oh, if ever he prayed in earnest, it was on this occasion. What are all the honours which a nation has heaped upon him now?—What availeth it this monarch that he wears a crown or sways a sceptre?—What signifieth the dignity of his rank, or the splendour of his throne? All this will not deter the last enemy, nor protract the span of human existence by a single hair-breadth. Why is it that we are inclined to dwell with so much astonishment on the case of Hezekiah? Is not the same message which drove him to the throne of grace, and caused him to plead with so much importunity, addressed continually to you and me? Is it not inscribed on every page of inspiration, in such statements as follow:—“Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.” “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth and the flower fadeth.” “The days of our years are three score and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away.” The figures thus employed by inspiration to denote the brevity of human life, and the certainty of death, are so apt and signifi-

cant, that the most careless peruser of the sacred page cannot mistake the lessons which they are intended to convey. Nor are such statements disbelieved; the very sceptic, who disputes the divine origin of revelation, never attempted to deny the truthfulness of its statements on this subject. To deny them would be to deny the testimony furnished by the history of the whole human family; for the records of the human race are a verification of the statements we have quoted from the Word of God. Since the day that sin invaded our earth, it has pursued the family of man from generation to generation and from age to age. One generation has passed away, and another has filled its place—each has played its part on the stage of time, and then retired to make room for the performance of a succeeding one, while death, their merciless conqueror, has laid his fatal arrest upon them all. Having entered our world soon after the institution of religious worship in the family of Adam, death has followed the human race wherever they have travelled. His march has been over the nations of the earth like that of a sweeping whirlwind—he has not been awed by the dazzle of royalty—he has not been bribed by the riches of empires—he has not been soothed by the incantations of priests—he has not been moved to compassion by the cry of penury; but, with the sceptre of his might, he has smitten alike the monarch on his throne and the beggar in his hamlet. Do we follow death in the onward march of pestilence and plague, as they hasten from city to city, and from continent to continent—do we travel in his wake over the slain heaps of the battlefield—or do we trace his conquests amid the marshalling of elements and the battling of storms—or do we follow him in disease and affliction into the homes of wretchedness and the dwellings of poverty, the history of death is the same—it is the history of generations that were. The fact that death is certain, is thus registered in the chronicles of the human family, since the beginning of time. The same truth is equally obvious from the passing events of providence; death is walking abroad in the streets and lanes of our City at this moment, and with an arm unexhausted by the lapse of time, he is smiting all classes and orders of men. The ranks of the living are being thinned, and the abodes of the dead are being peopled more rapidly than ever. We are reminded by the daily toll of the funeral bell—by the mourning processions that are daily parading our streets—by the sable bier and the gloomy pall, that “man who

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is born of a woman is of few days." The history of the past, and the passing events of the present, like the tomb-stones of the grave-yard, declare that death has no respect to persons; for as all have died, so all must die. Nor is youth more exempt than age from the attack of the common enemy. We see that the infant, who has scarcely breathed the air of heaven, is seized by his fatal grasp and consigned to an early tomb. The school-boy from his class is torn away with the hand of violence, and borne to "the house appointed for all living." The young man and the young maiden, who have reached maturity, and are looking forward with the brightest hopes to a career of usefulness in their respective families, or in their respective churches; and the old man, wasted and withered, and pining away by slow degrees amid the decrepitude of nature—these, all these, are the victims against whom the weapons of death are indiscriminately directed, and over whom the ensigns of death are daily waving. To all these proofs of the certainty of death, we might add another class of evidences equally convincing. We refer to the experience of every son of Adam. He feels that the seeds of decay are sown in his own nature. Man is heir to a variety of pains and diseases, by which his body is daily ripening for the tomb; so that like the flower which paints the landscape, he buds, and blooms, and ripens, and then droops, and withers, and decays. To the man who inherits any of the constitutional diseases which infest our race, no proof is required that he must die save that which is furnished by the consciousness that he is born to die. He carries about with him a daily memento of the fact, that sooner or later the materialism of his nature must "return to the earth as it was, and the spirit must return to God, who gave it."

This momentous truth, being thus inscribed alike on the book of Nature, of Providence, and of Revelation, we are furnished with the most unequivocal proofs of *the necessity of being prepared to meet death*; which is the

SECOND thought suggested by the words of our text.

"Set thine house in order." Men of the world set the Christian an example in this matter. The dying man gathers his friends around him, and appoints some one to make out an inventory of his effects, and to allocate to each surviving claimant his portion. Having thus arranged his temporal affairs, he prepares to meet his God! The concerns of the world frequently pursue us to the very threshold of eternity, urging us to

make some equitable arrangement for the families we are about to leave behind us. But the prudent man anticipates death, and, while in health, he ratifies the affairs of his estate, and sets his house in order. Inspiration points to the conduct of such a man, and bids us profit by his example. The Bible recommends his policy, though it often finds fault with his principle. It draws a lesson from the practice of the worldling, and bids every man to set his heart in order, for he shall die and not live. Supposing God were to commission some inmate of glory to descend from heaven upon this the last Sabbath of 1847, and to select a man from the congregation which I now address, and to assure that man, that, before the last Sabbath of 1848, he must stand before the tribunal of the living God; what a terrific sensation would the presence of such a delegate produce, not only on the man himself, but also on the whole congregation? Oh! imagine you see an angel from heaven—a burning seraph from before the throne of God, entering these walls, and as he floats over this assembly, every heart is beating with doleful apprehension, every eye is riveted on the messenger, each one is watching the victim on whom he alights. At last he seizes upon his victim—that man becomes pale and ghastly—his heart trembles with dismay—his inmost soul is riven with dread—forlorn and downcast he retires from this place—he repairs to his home—he betakes himself to his closet, and sets to work in earnest that he may be prepared to meet death on the appointed day. We imagine that we see such a man, flinging the world behind him, abandoning the halls of commerce, forsaking his counting-house, or his vocation, whatever it may be, shutting the very concerns of his family out of his heart, watching the progress of the sun in the firmament, and counting each beat of the clock, which is measuring out the allotted span of his existence by the shortest subdivisions of time. The man in question becomes alarmed by the tidings of the angel, he also becomes earnest about the destiny which awaits him. Why, then, is this anxiety so rare among the members of the human family? Why are so few engaged in this work of a daily, an hourly preparation for death? Has not God revealed the certainty of our dissolution by proofs as indubitable as though an angel from heaven were despatched with the message to each of us? There is a monitor in the return of every season, in the interchange of every day and night, in the flight of every passing moment, which speaks with as much certain-

ty, as though a voice from heaven were to address us in the words of our motto, "Be ye also ready."

Since our text adverts to the preparation necessary for meeting death, I may be permitted to introduce one or two considerations upon this point, and in doing so, I remark—

1. That in order to be prepared for death, we ought to die daily unto sin. An eminent servant of God has remarked, that "to die daily is the best way to be ready for the day of death." A life of sin-destroying and self-denying devotedness to God, is the surest guarantee of a peaceful death. If we are dying daily unto sin, and living daily unto God, death is daily losing his power, and consequently his terror. Experience teaches us that the fiercest of nature's children can be subdued. We know that the lion can be tamed, and even domesticated; so can death. If we are crucifying sin within—if, through the aid of divine grace, we are maintaining a continual war with the inflamed passions, lusts and appetites of our own hearts,—if we are cultivating a familiarity with the death of sin in our own members, we may rest satisfied that the conquest of death will be easy at last. It is in life that the achievements of the Christian are made, and being acquainted with death, he knows that he is impotent, since the day that Christ led him captive. Die daily unto sin, and death can have no dominion over you.

"We *always* should remember, death is sure,
What grows familiar most, we best endure."

The reason why so many shudder at the approach of death is, that they keep the thought of it at a great distance. They act like the listless debtor who makes no provision for the demands of his creditor until it may be that he is under the arrest of the sheriff. They imagine that by keeping the evil day far from them, they will prolong the term of their existence, and in this way many are taken unawares,—death comes at a time when his approach is least expected; and to this fatal indifference on the part of many we are inclined to attribute much of the distress with which the minister of the gospel is often made familiar, in the course of his sick visiting. To this sad delusion we are inclined to attribute the profuse tears, the pallid countenances, the heaving bosoms, and the trembling hearts of many, who, during the course of each year solicit our counsels and our prayers on beds of affliction. Men live like heathens,—when they come to die, they would fondly die like

Christians. They live in impiety, and they die in despair. A life of sensuality and pleasure is the invariable prelude of a miserable end. It is a fact that might be registered in the sick journal of every minister of the gospel, that the man who is not dying daily unto sin, cannot die happy. If death take him unawares, it produces a few terrific struggles, and swallows up its victim in the depths of hopelessness and despair. If its approaches are slow and gradual, it only spins out the agonies of his bitter apprehension, and augments the intensity of his sufferings, by holding his agitated mind in suspense.

2. Another means of preparing to meet death, is a due appreciation of the value of time. Our days are rapidly stealing away from us, and we seem to be unconscious of it. Time is a talent, and every moment we lose is so much of the talent misspent. The hours spent in idleness, or in the pleasures which the world calls innocent, are all recorded against us in the book of accounts; and independent of the sins to which such hours of idleness give birth, we shall have to answer for the loss of the time itself, as of a precious talent entrusted to us of God. Titus the Great was wont to review his days and years, in order that he might make a regular calculation of the amount of good or evil he had done. Historians inform us that when he retired to rest on one occasion, he was unable to enjoy his wonted repose, whereupon his slave enquired why the Emperor could not sleep. Titus replied, "I have lost a day." He had done no good on that day, and therefore he deemed it lost. Oh! it was worse than lost, if he had done no good on it. In the conduct of this illustrious, though pagan despot, I see a caution to many professing Christians. If the untutored heathen was unable to enjoy the blessings of nature, because he felt he had done no good—if it was not until he laid his hand upon the head of his slave, and said, "thou art a free man," that he could enjoy his wonted repose, oh! how does it behove us to set a high value on the time allotted us of God. Each returning Sabbath, and each revolving year, is intended by the Almighty to impress upon us all the necessity of "redeeming the time, for the days in which we live are evil." The closing Sabbath of the year is especially a faithful monitor on the subject. On the last Sabbath of 1846, I saw within these walls many a face, over which, since that time, I have seen the coffin close, —many a countenance on that day looked bright and happy, which is now besmeared with decay and melting in the tomb,

—many a body on that day robed in the vigour of strength and the bloom of youth, has since been wrapped in the garments of mortality and consigned to the grave. Since the 29th of December last, I have followed to the tomb fifty-four members of the human family. These have died at all ages, between that of four months and seventy-one years, and of all diseases; some having wasted away by the pining hand of an insidious consumption,—some having fallen by the hand of sudden and unexpected accident,—some having fallen amid the flames of a violent fever, and some having gradually sunk amid the flight of years. They are all gone the way whence they shall not return: and I think I hear a voice speaking from the tomb of each of them, and warning the audience which I now address, of the shortness of time. Could the spirits of those departed friends who have been taken away from this congregation during the past year, speak to you from their respective destinies, they would admonish you of the same thing. The death-beds, the funerals, and the grave-stones of these friends, however, speak. There is a voice in each which speaks loudly to the living, and admonishes us all of the value of time and the momentousness of eternity. There is a voice issuing from every open grave, from every dying bed, and from every mourning family, which speaks in the same admonitory language, and warns you and me, that we have not a single moment to lose; yet although these are admonitions which are daily, I might say hourly, falling upon our ears, still we seem to pass them by unheeded and unheard. These are the voices of God speaking, and these are warnings from God sent for the express purpose of impressing us with a due sense of the value and preciousness of time. Supposing I address an audience of eight hundred people, or one-fourth of the congregation, including parents and children, then it is a startling fact, that, according to the average rate of mortality among us, before the last Sabbath of Eighteen-hundred and forty-eight, no less than one-sixteenth part of this audience, or one-sixty-fourth part of the entire congregation, shall be summoned to meet God in death, and to enjoy or endure their respective destinies in a future world. This is a calculation from which you feel inclined to shrink, but the data upon which it is founded are as certain as though a messenger from the world of spirits were to begin at my right hand and travel round this assembly, setting every sixteenth person apart by himself, and then to address the vic-

tims on whom the lot had fallen, saying, "before another year has run its course, you must be either in heaven or in hell!" If the data furnished by the mortality of the past year, be a sufficient guide, the calculation may be made with the most perfect safety. Now were I to announce this calculation before my audience, I have no doubt it might alarm some,—it might offend others, and it might astonish all. Still the calculation is correct—the statement I hazard. May the Spirit of the living God, convey it with power to the heart of every one whom I now address,—before the last Sabbath of 1848, one out of every sixty-four of this Congregation will either be in heaven or in hell!

Many wonderful events have occurred during the past year, all of which are designed to admonish us of the value of time. Some of you have buried your husbands; some have buried your wives; many have followed the remains of their children to the grave. Whole families have been swept away by a raging epidemic! Some have stood by the graves of their dearest relatives; and sighed when they beheld their cold remains consigned to the tomb in a foreign land; others have been doomed to weep for the loss of the nearest kindred, who have fallen amid the raging seas, or have been removed by other fatal accidents; others still have received tidings from the land of their nativity, acquainting them with the death of their nearest and dearest earthly relations.

In addition to these local and personal events, there are others of a more general and national character, which are intended by God to admonish us of the value of time, and induce us to keep death continually before the mind. Famine has been prevailing in the mother country—this has been followed by epidemic—thousands of our countrymen have been swept away by these judgments of heaven. Others, having fled from the land that gave them birth, to better their condition in colonial settlements, and in the adjacent republic, have been pursued thither by disease,—our hospitals and almshouses have become charnel-houses, and thousands of our wretched countrymen have only set their foot on a foreign soil when they were seized by the raging fever, or thrown into a foreign tomb. Famine and disease, followed by commercial depression at home, have exercised their respective influences upon a colonial population. The emigrant has carried disease into all the cities of the British Colonies in the West, while the

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amazing amount of exports, in the shape of provisions from the United States of America, has exhausted our colonial supplies, and this, combined with an accession to our numbers by a foreign or an emigrant population, threatens our colonial cities with want during the winter. Business is at a stand, and a general paralysis has seized all the commercial and manufacturing towns in the British Empire. To all this we must add the fact that crime is on the increase. Sabbath-profanation, combined with drunkenness, blasphemy and murder, is prevailing around us. National crime and national judgment, as in days of old, seem to be as intimately connected as cause and effect, in the checkered history of Great Britain during the past year. The sins of the nation have risen to heaven, and brought down famine and plague and distress among her inhabitants. Such are the circumstances that blend their colours in the portraiture of the past year; and since crime is on the increase, and sin continuing to prevail, we have no reason to conclude that matters shall be much better during the ensuing year; but in the midst of all these great national ills under which the empire groans, we hear the voice of God speaking to every surviving inhabitant, and calling upon him by the calamities of the past, and the threatenings of the future, to be up and doing, for the time is short. To neglect the admonitions of heaven, as they are uttered in these passing events of providence, is to hazard the salvation of our immortal souls.

The past is gone,—the present alone is ours; and upon the present are pending the momentous consequences of the future. The present we are apt to fill up with pleasures, and the future with regrets. Every moment we mispend, is a moment lost—and tears of deepest sorrow cannot atone for the guilt of mispending one of the highest privileges heaven has bestowed.

“The bell strikes one. We take no note of time

“But from its loss: to give it then a tongue

“Is wise of man. As if an angel spoke,

“I feel the solemn sound. If heard aright,

“It is the knoll of my departed hours.

“Where are they? with the years beyond the flood.

“It is the signal that demands despatch:

“How much is to be done! my hopes and fears

“Start up alarm'd; and o'er life's narrow verge

“Look down—on what? a fathomless abyss.

“A dread eternity! how surely mine!

“And can eternity belong to me,

“Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour?”

3. Another preparative for meeting death is personal holiness. The Scripture informs us that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and the heart which is unholy is necessarily tormented with the terror of death. The death-bed of the ungodly man furnishes us with a painful illustration of this fact. Place yourselves in imagination by the dying bed of the sinner, and listen to the tremulous voice which speaks of God and of eternity, hear those sighs which issue from a heart un-sanctified by the Spirit of God, see those eyes which are growing dim with the shadows of mortality, and behold that countenance which betrays the inward workings of remorse, and you see a fearful picture of the bondage by which the ungodly man is enslaved at a time when the consolations of personal holiness are most of all required. Why is it that the sinner is so much terrified by the approach of the last enemy? it is because he has not been made holy. The work of the Holy Spirit within disarms a man of the fear of death. While man remained holy he had no dread of death, just because he had no sin, and when a man is sanctified he has no dread of death, because the power of sin has been destroyed. Sin and death are as intimately connected as cause and effect, while holiness and death are as opposite as two extremes, and hence it is that so long as sin maintains an ascendancy in the soul, it clothes the soul with the terrible apprehensions of dissolution; while, on the other hand, so long as holiness maintains the ascendancy within, it strips death of his terror. The Spirit of God is the author of all life, and by filling the soul with spiritual life, he banishes death from its precincts. We read that Christ "destroyed death and him that had the power of death, that is the devil." This statement is as true of Christ, when he enters the human heart, as it was when he entered the grave and conquered death in his own territory.—He hunted the enemy into his gloomy dominions and broke the sceptre which he had swayed with despotic tyranny for ages—He then returned to earth, on his way to glory "leading captivity captive." In a similar way, when he enters the heart of man—He finds a soul entombed in sin,—He finds the spiritual department of our nature enslaved by the "king of terrors,"—He lays his hand upon the captive soul and death makes his escape. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ within us, and this is no sooner done than we are emancipated from all the dismal

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apprehensions which are wont to gather around the soul of the sinner on the approach of death. Why is it that the sinner shudders and shrieks, and trembles, when he sees the grim messenger approaching; while Apostles, and Martyrs, and Confessors, have come to the stake and have entered the flames or mounted the funeral pile with as much tranquillity as though they laid them down on the pillow of repose? It is because the one is unholy, and the others are holy. Why was it that Jacob could gather his family around his dying bed, and with all the calmness and composure of one who had nothing to fear, could impart a dying blessing to each child, and then gather up his feet and die, as though he fell asleep?—It was because he was holy. Why was it that Moses could ascend the top of Pisgah, and with an eye undimmed by age, survey that land of promise which lay beyond the floods of Jordan, and then fold his arms and retire to his last repose, with as much confidence as though he were retiring to slumber?—It was because he was holy. Why was it that Paul could write from the cell of his imprisonment to Timothy, and tell him with as much resignation of “the hour of his departure,” as though he were announcing his release?—It was because he was holy. Holiness is Heaven begun. The Holy Ghost, in giving holiness, places heaven in the Christian, while death places the Christian in heaven.

In concluding this discourse, we are anxious to press upon your minds the necessity of a daily preparation for death. I would have you also to maintain a daily walk with God; so that while you become familiar with death by crucifying sin in your own members, you may also become familiar with heaven, by walking with God. I would have you to read attentively the lessons of providence, which, during the past year, have been very impressive. Eighteen hundred and forty-seven has passed away; its joys and its sorrows are gone—it has left many a weeping widow, and many a bereaved orphan—it has filled many a heart with grief, and clothed many a family in mourning—it has emptied many a cheerful home of its comforts, and spread misery and distress over many a household—it has thinned the ranks of many a congregation, and erected many a tomb-stone;—its dreadful deeds are chronicled in the sufferings and loss of thousands of our fellow creatures, who have shared largely in the calamities with which it has abounded. While we thus speak of the living, we cannot forbear to

follow the dead into the land of souls. We feel impelled to pursue the spirits of the thousands who have fallen by famine and disease, into the world unseen, and to enquire, where are they? An echo seems to answer— they are either in happiness or in misery,—where some whom I now address, may be before the close of another year. Oh, let this truth still occupy your minds; carry it with you from this place—carry it into your families—carry it into your secret places of retirement for meditation and prayer—carry it with you into the world. Let it operate as an incentive to devotion and communion with God—as a defence against temptation and sin—as a shield against the weapons of death, and as a repellent against the terrors of hell. Be it yours, dear brethren, whether in life or death, to “be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”
And—

May God bless the preaching of his own word, for Christ's sake. AMEN.

