

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OVER AGAINST THE SEPULCHRE.

A Sermon

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“Sitting over against the sepulchre.”—Matthew xxvii. 61.

MARY MAGDALENE and the other Mary were last at the Saviour's grave. They had associated themselves with Joseph and Nicodemus in the sad but loving task of placing the body of their Lord in the silent tomb, and after the holy men had gone home they lingered still near the grave. Sitting down, perhaps upon some seat in the garden, or on some projection of the rock, they waited in mournful solitude. They had seen where and how the body was laid, and so had done their utmost, but yet they sat watching still: love has never done enough, it is hungry to render service. They could scarcely take their eyes away from the spot which held their most precious treasure, nor leave till they were compelled to do so the sacred relics of their Best Beloved. The Virgin Mary had been taken by John to his own home. She had sustained too great a shock to remain at the tomb, for in her were fulfilled the words, “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own heart also.” She was wise to leave to others those sorrowful offices which were beyond her own power; exceeding wise, also, from that hour to her life's end, to remain in the shade, modestly bearing the honour which made her blessed among women. The mother of Zebedee's children, who also lingered late at the tomb, was gone home too, for as she was the mother of John it is exceedingly probable that John resided with her, and had taken the Virgin to her home: hence she was needed at home to act as hostess and assist her son, and thus she would be obeying the last wish of her dying Lord when he said “Son, behold thy mother,” and explained his meaning by a look. All having thus departed, the two Marys were the sole watchers at the tomb of Christ at the time of the going down of the sun. They had work yet to do for his burial, and this called them away, but they staid as long as they could—last to go and first to return.

This morning we shall with the women take up the somewhat unusual post of “sitting over against the sepulchre.” I call it unusual, for as none remained save these two women, so few have preached upon our Redeemer's

burial. Thousands of sermons have been delivered upon his death and resurrection, and in this I greatly rejoice, only wishing that there were thousands more ; but still the burial of our Lord deserves a larger share of consideration than it generally obtains. "He was crucified, dead, *and buried*," says the creed, and therefore those who wrote that summary must have thought his burial an important truth ; and so indeed it is. It was the natural sequence and seal of his death, and so was related to that which went before ; it was the fit and suitable preparation for his rising again, and so stood in connection with that which followed after. Come, then, let us take our seat with the holy women "over against the sepulchre," and sing—

"Rest, glorious Son of God : thy work is done,
And all thy burdens borne ;
Rest on that stone till the third sun has brought
Thine everlasting morn.

"How calmly in that tomb thou liest now,
Thy rest how still and deep !
O'er thee in love the Father rests : he gives
To his beloved sleep.

"On Bethel pillow now thy head is laid,
In Joseph's rock-hewn cell ;
Thy watchers are the angels of thy God :
They guard thy slumbers well."

I. Supposing ourselves to be sitting in the garden with our eyes fixed upon the great stone which formed the door of the tomb, we first of all ADMIRE THAT HE HAD A GRAVE AT ALL. We wonder how that stone could hide him who is the brightness of his Father's glory ; how the Life of all could lie among the dead ; how he who holds creation in his strong right hand could even for an hour be entombed. Admiring this, we would calmly reflect, first, upon *the testimony of his grave that he was really dead*. Those tender women could not have been mistaken, their eyes were too quick to suffer him to be buried alive, even if any one had wished to do so. Of our Lord's actual death we have many proofs connected with his burial. When Joseph of Arimathæa went to Pilate and begged the body, the Roman ruler would not give it up till he was certified of his death. The centurion, a man under authority, careful in all that he did, certified that Jesus was dead. The soldier who served under the centurion had by a very conclusive test established the fact of his death beyond all doubt, for with a spear he pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. Pilate, who would not have given up the body of a condemned person unless he was sure that execution had taken place, registered the death and commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph. Both Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus and all the friends who aided in the interment were beyond all question convinced that he was dead. They handled the lifeless frame, they wrapped it in the bands of fine linen, they placed the spices about the sacred flesh which they loved so well : they were sadly assured that their Lord was dead. Even his enemies were quite certain that they had slain him : they never had a suspicion that possibly a little life remained in him, and that it could be revived, for their stern hate allowed no doubt to

remain upon that point, they knew even to the satisfaction of their mistrustful malice that Jesus of Nazareth had died. Even when in their anxiety they went to Pilate, it was not that they might obtain stronger proofs of death, but to prevent the disciples from stealing his dead body and giving out that he had risen from the dead. Yes, Jesus died, literally and actually died, and his body of flesh and bones was really laid in Joseph's grave. It was no phantom that was crucified, as certain heretics dreamed of old. We have not to look to a spectral atonement or to a visionary sacrifice, though some in our own times would reduce redemption to something shadowy and unsubstantial. Jesus was a real man, and truly tasted the bitter pangs of death; and therefore he in very deed lay in the sepulchre, motionless as the rock out of which it was hewn, shrouded in his winding-sheet. Remember as you think of your Lord's death that the day will come, unless the second advent should intervene, in which you and I shall lie low among the dead, as once our Master did. Soon to this heart there will be left no pulsing life, to this eye no glance of observation, to this tongue no voice, to this ear no sensibility of sound. We naturally start from this, yet must it be. We shall certainly mingle with the dust we tread upon and feed the worm. But as we gaze on Jesus' tomb and assure ourselves that our great Lord and Master died each thought of dread is gone, and we no longer shudder: we feel that we can safely go where Christ has gone before.

Sitting down over against the sepulchre, after one has ruminated upon the wondrous fact that he who only hath immortality was numbered with the dead, the next subject which suggests itself is *the testimony of the grave to his union with us*. He had his grave hard by the city, and not on some lone mountain peak where foot of man could never tread. His grave was where it could be seen; it was a family grave which Joseph had no doubt prepared for himself and his household. Jesus was laid in a family vault where another had expected to lie. Where was Moses buried? No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. But where Jesus was buried was well known to his friends. He was not caught away in a chariot of fire, nor was it said of him that God took him, but he was laid in the grave, "as the manner of the Jews is to bury." Jesus found his grave amongst the men he had redeemed. Hard by the common place of execution there was a garden, and in that garden they laid him in a tomb which was meant for others; so that our Lord's sepulchre stands, as it were, among our homes and gardens, and is one tomb among many. Before me rises a picture. I see the cemetery, or sleeping place, of the saints, where each one rests on his lowly bed. They lie not alone, but like soldiers sleeping around their captain's pavilion, where he also spent the night, though he is up before them. The sepulchre of Jesus is the central grave of God's acre; it is empty now, but his saints lie buried all around that cave in the rock, gathered in ranks around their dear Redeemer's resting-place. Surely it robs the grave of its ancient terror when we think that Jesus slept in one of the chambers of the great dormitory of the sons of men.

Very much might be said about the tomb in which Jesus lay. It was a *new* tomb, wherein no remains had been previously laid, and thus if he came forth from it there would be no suspicion that another had arisen, nor could it be imagined that he rose through touching some old

prophet's bones, as he did who was laid in Elisha's grave. As he was born of a virgin mother, so was he buried in a virgin tomb, wherein never man had lain. It was a *rocky* tomb, and therefore nobody could dig into it by night, or tunnel through the earth. It was a *borrowed* tomb; so poor was Jesus that he owed a grave to charity; but that tomb was spontaneously offered, so rich was he in the love of hearts which he had won. That tomb he returned to Joseph, honoured unspeakably by his temporary sojourn therein. I know not whether Joseph ever used it for any of his house; but I see no reason why he should not have done so. Certainly, our Lord when he borrows always makes prompt repayment, and gives a bonus over: he filled Simon's boat with fish when he used it for a pulpit, and he sanctified the rocky cell wherein he had lodged, and left it perfumed for the next who should sleep therein.

We, too, expect, unless special circumstances should intervene, that these bodies of ours will lie in their narrow beds beneath the green-sward, and slumber till the resurrection. Nor need we be afraid of the tomb, for Jesus has been there. Sitting over against his sepulchre we grow brave, and are ready, like knights of the holy sepulchre, to hurl defiance at death. At times we almost long for evening to undress that we may rest with God, in the chamber where he giveth to his beloved sleep.

Now, note that our Lord's tomb was in a garden; for this is typically *the testimony of his grave to the hope of better things*. Just a little beyond the garden wall you would see a little knoll, of grim name and character, the Tyburn of Jerusalem, Golgotha, the place of a skull, and there stood the cross. That rising ground was given up to horror and barrenness; but around the actual tomb of our Saviour there grew herbs and plants and flowers. A spiritual garden still blooms around his tomb; the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for him, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. He hath made another Paradise for us, and he himself is the sweetest flower therein. The first Adam sinned in a garden and spoiled our nature; the second Adam slept in a garden and restored our loss. The Saviour buried in the earth hath removed the curse from the soil; henceforth blessed is the ground for his sake. He died for us that we ourselves might become in heart and life fruitful gardens of the Lord. Let but his tomb, and all the facts which surround it, have due influence upon the minds of men, and this poor blighted earth shall again yield her increase: instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name.

Sitting over against the sepulchre perhaps the best thought of all is that now it is empty *and so bears testimony to our resurrection*. It must have made the two Marys weep, when before they left the grave they saw it filled with so beloved a treasure, so surely dead; they ought to have rejoiced to find it empty when they returned, but they knew not as yet the angel's message,—“He is not here, for he is risen.” Our Christ is not dead now; he ever liveth to make intercession for us. He could not be holden by the bands of death. There was nothing corruptible about him, and therefore his body has left the abode of decay to live in newness of life. The sepulchre is spoiled and the spoiler has gone up to glory, leading captivity captive. As you sit over against the sepulchre let your hearts be

comforted concerning death, whose sting is gone for ever. There shall be a resurrection. Be ye sure of this, for if the dead rise not then is Christ not risen; but the Lord is risen indeed, and his rising necessitates that all who are in him should rise as he has done.

Yet another thought comes to me,—Can I follow Christ as fully as these two women did? That is to say, can I still cling to him though to sense and reason his cause should seem dead and laid in a rocky sepulchre? Can I like Joseph and Magdalene be a disciple of a dead Christ? Could I follow him even at his lowest point? I want to apply this practically. Times have come upon the Christian church when truth seems to be fallen in the streets, and the kingdom of Christ is in apparent peril. Just now the Lord Jesus is betrayed by not a few of his professed ministers. He is being crucified afresh in the perpetual attacks of scepticism against his blessed gospel; and it may be things may wax worse and worse. This is not the first occasion when it has been so, for at various times in the history of the church of God his enemies have exulted, and cried out that the gospel of past ages was exploded, and might be reckoned as dead and buried. For one I mean to sit over against the very sepulchre of truth. I am a disciple of the old-fashioned doctrine as much when it is covered with obloquy and rebuke as when it shall again display its power, as it surely shall. Sceptics may seem to take truth and bind it, and scourge it, and crucify it, and say that it is dead, and they may endeavour to bury it in scorn, but the Lord has many a Joseph and a Nicodemus who will see honour done even to the body of truth, and will wrap the despised creed in sweet spices, and hide it away in their hearts. They may, perhaps, be half afraid that it is really dead, as the wise men assert, yet it is precious to their souls, and they will come forth right gladly to espouse its cause, and to confess that they are its disciples. We will sit down in sorrow but not in despair, and watch until the stone is rolled away, and Christ in his truth shall live again, and be openly triumphant. We shall see a divine interposition and shall cease to fear; while they who stand armed to prevent the resurrection of the grand old doctrine shall quake and become as dead men, because the gospel's everlasting life has been vindicated, and they are made to quail before the brightness of its glory.

This, then, is our first meditation: we admire that Jesus ever had a grave, and we sit in wonder over against the sepulchre.

II. Secondly, sitting here, WE REJOICE IN THE HONOURS OF HIS BURIAL. The burial of Christ was, under some aspects of it, the lowest step of his humiliation: he must not merely for a moment die, but he must be buried awhile in the heart of the earth. On the other hand, under other aspects our Lord's burial was the first step of his glory: it was a turning-point in his great career, as we shall hope to show you. Our Lord's body was given up by Pilate to Joseph, and he went with authority to receive it from those who were appointed to see him take it down. I yesterday had a glimpse at a work of art by one of our own Lambeth neighbours, exhibited by Mr. Doulton: it is a fine piece of work in terra-cotta, representing the taking down of Christ from the cross. I could have wished to have studied it more at leisure, but a mere glimpse has charmed me. The artist represents a Roman soldier at the top of the cross taking down the parchment upon which the accusation was

written; he is rolling it up to put it away for ever. I thought of the taking away of the handwriting which was against *him*, even as he had taken away that which was against *us*. The Roman soldier by authority is thus represented as removing the charge which was once nailed over the ever blessed head; there is no accusation against him now: he died, and the law is satisfied, it can no longer accuse the man who has endured its penalty. Another soldier is represented with a pair of pincers drawing out one of the big nails from the hands; the sacred body is free now, law has no further claims upon it, and withdraws its nails. A disciple, not a soldier, has mounted a ladder on the other side, and with a pair of scissors is cutting away the crown of thorns; and I think the artist did well to represent his doing so, for henceforth it is our delight to remove all shame from the name of Jesus, and to crown him in another fashion. Then the artist has represented certain of his disciples as gently taking hold of the body as it is gradually being unloosed by the soldiers, while Joseph of Arimathæa stands there with his long linen sheet ready to receive him. Jars of precious myrrh and spices are standing there, and the women ready to open the lids and to place the spices around the holy flesh. Every part of the design is significant and instructive, and the artist deserves great praise for it: it brought before my mind the descent from the cross with greater vividness than any painting I have ever seen. The nails are all extracted, he is held no longer to the cross, the body is taken down, no longer to be spit upon, and despised, and rejected, but tenderly handled by his friends; for all and everything that has to do with shame, and suffering, and paying of penalty is ended once for all. What became of the cross of wood? You find in Scripture no further mention of it. The legends concerning it are all false upon the face of them. The cross is gone for ever; neither gibbet, nor nail, nor spear, nor thorny crown can be found; there is no further use for them. Jesus our Lord has gone to his glory; for by his one sacrifice he hath secured the salvation of his own.

But now as to his burial. Beloved, there were many honourable circumstances about it. Its first effect was *the development of timid minds*. Joseph of Arimathæa occupied a high post as an honourable councillor, but he was a secret disciple. Nicodemus, too, was a ruler of the Jews, and though he had spoken a word for the Master now and then, as probably Joseph had done (for we are told that he had not consented to their counsel and deed), yet he had never come out boldly till now. He came to Jesus by night aforetime, but he came by daylight now. At the worst estate of the Saviour's cause we should have thought that these two men would remain concealed, but they did not. Now that the case seemed desperate, they show their faith in Jesus and pluck up courage to honour their Lord. Lambs become lions when the Lamb is slain. Joseph went boldly in unto Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. For a dead Christ he risks his position, and even his life, for he is asking the body of a reputed traitor, and may himself be put to death by Pilate; or else the members of the Sanhedrim may be enraged at him, and bind themselves with an oath that they will slay him for paying honour to the Nazarene, whom they called "that deceiver." Joseph can venture everything for Jesus, even though he knows him to be dead. Equally brave is Nicodemus; for publicly at the foot of the cross he

stands with his hundred pounds weight of spices, caring nothing for any who may report the deed. I cheerfully hope, dear brethren, that one result of the ferocious attacks made upon the gospel at this time will be that a great number of quiet and retiring spirits will be roused to energy and courage. Such works of evil might move the very stones to cry out. While, perhaps, some who have spoken well in other days and have usually done the battling may be downcast and quiet, these who have kept in the rear rank, and have only in secret followed Jesus, will be brought to the front, and we shall see men of substance and of position avowing their Lord. Joseph and Nicodemus both illustrate the dreadful truth that it is hard for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God; but they also show us that when they do enter they frequently excel. If they come last they remain to the last. If cowards when others are heroes, they can also be heroes when even apostles are cowards. Each man has his turn, and so while the fishermen-apostles were hiding away, the wealthy non-committal brethren came to the front: though bred in luxury, they bore the brunt of the storm, and avowed the cause whose leader lay dead. Brave are the hearts which stand up for Jesus in his burial. "Sitting over against the sepulchre," we draw comfort from the sight of the friends who honoured the Lord in his death.

I like to remember that the burial of the Lord *displayed the union of loving hearts*. The tomb became the meeting-place of the old disciples and the new, of those who had long consorted with the Master, and those who had but newly avowed him. Magdalene and Mary had been with the Lord for years, and had ministered to him of their substance; but Joseph of Arimathæa, as far as his public avowal of Christ is concerned, was, like Nicodemus, a new disciple: old and new followers united in the deed of love, and laid their Master in the tomb. A common sorrow and a common love unite us wondrously. When our great Master's cause is under a cloud and his name blasphemed it is pleasant to see the young men battling with the foe and aiding their fathers in the stern struggle. Magdalene with her penitent love, and Mary with her deep attachment to her Lord, join with the rabbi and the counsellor who now begin to prove that they intensely love the Man of Nazareth. That small society, that little working meeting, which gathered around our Master's body, was a type of the whole Christian church. When once aroused, believers forget all differences and degrees of spiritual condition, and each one is eager to do his part to honour his Lord.

Mark, too, that the Saviour's death *brought out abundant liberality*. The spices, one hundred pounds in weight, and the fine linen, were furnished by the men; and then the holy women prepared the liquid spices with which to carry out what they might have called his great funeral, when they would more completely wrap the body in odoriferous spices as the manner of the Jews was to bury. There was much of honour intended by all that they brought. A very thoughtful writer observes that the clothes in which our Lord was wrapped are not called grave-clothes but linen-clothes, and that the emphasis would seem to be put upon their being linen; and he reminds us that when we read of the garments of the priests in the Book of the Law we find that every garment must be of linen. Our Lord's priesthood is, therefore, suggested by the sole use of

linen for his death robes. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession in his tomb slept in pure white linen, even as now to-day he represents himself to his servants as clothed with a garment down to the foot. Even after death he acted as a priest, and poured out a libation of blood and water; and it was, therefore, meet that in the grave he should still wear priestly garments.

“He made his grave with the wicked,”—there was his shame; “but with the rich in his death,”—there was his honour. He was put to death by rough soldiery, but he was laid in his grave by tender women. Persons of honourable estate helped gently to receive, and reverentially to place in its position his dear and sacred frame; and then, as if to do him honour, though they meant it not, his tomb must not be left unsentinelled, and Cæsar lends his guards to watch the couch of the Prince of Peace. Like a king he slumbers, till as the King of kings he wakes at daybreak.

To my mind it is very pleasant to see all this honour come to our Lord when he is in his worst estate,—dead and buried. Will we not also honour our Lord when others despise him? Will we not cleave to him, come what may? If the church were all but extirpated, if every voice should go over to the enemy, if a great stone of philosophic reasoning were rolled at the door of truth, and it should seem no longer possible for argument to remove it, yet would we wait till the gospel should rise again to confound its foes. We will not be afraid, but keep our position; we will stand still and see the salvation of God, or “sitting over against the sepulchre,” we will watch for the Lord’s coming. Let the worst come to the worst we would sooner serve Christ while he is conceived to be dead than all the philosophers that ever lived when in their prime. Even if fools should dance over the grave of Christianity there shall remain at least a few who will weep over it, and brushing away their tears from their eyes expect to see it revive, and put forth all its ancient strength.

III. I must now pass to a third point. While sitting over against the sepulchre WE OBSERVE THAT HIS ENEMIES WERE NOT AT REST. They had their own way, but they were not content; they had taken the Saviour, and with wicked hands they had crucified and slain him; but they were not satisfied. They were the most uneasy people in the world, though they had gained their point. It was their Sabbath day, and it was a high day, that Sabbath of Sabbaths, the Sabbath of the Passover. They kept a preparation for it and had been very careful not to go into the place called the pavement, lest they should defile themselves—sweet creatures! And now have they not gained all they wanted? They have killed Jesus and buried him: are they not happy? No: and what is more, their humiliation had begun—they were doomed to belie their own favourite profession. What was that profession? Their boast of rigid Sabbath-keeping was its chief point, and they were perpetually charging our blessed Lord with Sabbath-breaking, for healing the sick, and even because his disciples rubbed a few ears of wheat between their hands when they were hungry on the Sabbath-day. Brethren, look at these men and laugh at their hypocrisy. It is the Sabbath-day, and they come to Pilate, holding counsel on the Sabbath with a heathen! They tell him that they are afraid that Jesus’ body will be spirited away, and he says, “Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as you can”; and they go and seal the stone on the Sabbath. O ye

hypocritical Pharisees, here was an awful breaking of your Sabbath by your own selves! According to their superstitious tradition the rubbing of ears of wheat between the hands was a kind of threshing, and therefore it was a breach of the law; surely, by the same reasoning the burning of a candle to melt the wax must have been similar to the lighting of a furnace, and the melting of wax must have been a kind of foundry work, like that of the smith who pours metal into a mould; for in such a ridiculous fashion their rabbis interpreted the smallest acts. But they had to seal the stone and break their own absurd laws to satisfy their restless malice. One is pleased to see either Pharisees or Sadducees made to overturn their own professions and lay bare their hypocrisy. Modern-thought gentlemen will, ere long, be forced to the same humiliation.

Next, they had to retract their own accusation against our Lord. They charged Jesus with having said, "Destroy this temple, and I will build it in three days"; pretending that he referred to the temple upon Zion. Now they come to Pilate and tell him, "This deceiver said, after three days I will rise again." Oh, ye knaves, that is your new version, is it? Ye put the man to death for quite another rendering! Now you understand the dark saying? Yes, ye deceivers, and ye understood it before; but now ye must eat your leek, and swallow your own words. Truly, he scorneth the scorers, and poureth contempt upon his enemies.

And now see how these kill-Christs betray their own fears. He is dead, but they are afraid of him! He is dead, but they cannot shake off the dread that he will vanquish them yet. They are full of agitation and alarm.

Nor was this all, they were to be made witnesses for God,—to sign certificates of the death and resurrection of his Anointed. In order that there might be no doubt about the resurrection at all, there must be a seal, and *they* must go and set it; there must be a guard, and *they* must see it mustered. The disciples need not trouble about certifying that Jesus is in the grave, these Jews will do it, and set their own great seal to the evidence. These proud ones are sent to do drudges' work in Christ's kitchen, to wait upon a dead Christ, and to protect the body which they had slain. The lie which they told afterwards crowned their shame: they bribed the soldiers to say that his disciples stole him away while they slept; and this was a transparent falsehood; for if the soldiers were asleep how could they know what was done? We cannot conceive of an instance in which men were more completely made to contradict and convict themselves. That Sabbath was a high day, but it was no Sabbath to them, nor would the overthrow of the gospel be any rest of soul to its opponents. If ever we should live to see the truth pushed into a corner, and the blessed cause of Christ fastened up as with rationalistic nails, and its very heart pierced by a critic's spear; yet, mark you, even in the darkest night that can ever try our faith, the adversaries of the gospel will still be in alarm lest it should rise again. The old truth has a wonderful habit of leaping up from every fall as strong as ever. In Dr. Doddridge's days men had pretty nearly buried the gospel. Socinianism was taught in many if not most dissenting pulpits, and the same was true of the Church of England: the liberal thinkers dreamed that they had won the victory and extinguished evangelical teaching; but their shouting came a little too soon. They said, "We shall hear no

more of this miserable justification by faith, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost." They laid the gospel in a tomb cut out in the cold rock of Unitarianism, and they set the seal of their learning upon the great stone of doubt which shut in the gospel. There it was to lie for ever; but God meant otherwise. There was a pot-boy over in Gloucester called George Whitefield, and there was a young student who had lately gone to Oxford called John Wesley, and these two passed by the grave of the gospel and beheld a strange sight, which they began to tell; and as they told it, the sods of unbelief and the stones of learned criticism began to move, and the truth which had been buried started up with Pentecostal power. Aha! ye adversaries, how greatly had ye deceived yourselves! Within a few months all over England the work of the devil and his ministers was broken to pieces, as when a tower is split by lightning, or the thick darkness scattered by the rising sun. The weight of ignorance and unbelief fled before the bright day of the gospel, though that gospel was for the most part proclaimed by unlettered men. The thing which has been is the thing which shall be. History repeats itself. O generation of modern thinkers, you will have to eat your own words, and disprove your own assertions. You will have to confute each other and yourselves, even as the Moabites and Elamites slew each other. It may even happen that your infidelities will work themselves out into practical evil of which you will be the victims. You may bring about a repetition of the French Revolution of 1789, with more than all its bloodshed, and who will wonder. You, some of you calling yourselves ministers of God, with your insinuations of doubt, your denials of future punishment, your insults of the gospel, your ingenious speeches against the Bible, are shaking the very foundation of society. I impeach you as the worst enemies of mankind. In effect you proclaim to men that they may sin as they like, for there is no hell, or if there be, it is but a little one: thus you publish a gospel of licentiousness, and you may one day rue the result. You may live to see a reign of terror of your own creating, but even if you do, the gospel of Jesus will come forth from all the filth you have heaped upon it, for the holy gospel will live as Christ lives, and its enemies shall never cease to be in fear. Your harsh speeches against those who preach the gospel, your bitterness and your sneers of contempt, all show that you know better than you say, and are afraid of the very Christ whom you kill. We who cleave to the glorious gospel will abide in peace, come what may, but you will not.

IV. And now our last thought is that while these enemies of Christ were in fear and trembling **WE NOTE THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE RESTING.** It was the seventh day, and therefore they ceased from labour. The Marys waited, and Joseph and Nicodemus refrained from visiting the tomb; they obediently observed the Sabbath rest. I am not sure that they had faith enough to feel very happy, but they evidently did

expect something, and anxiously awaited the third day. They had enough of the comfort of hope to remain quiet on the seventh day.

Now, beloved, sitting over against the sepulchre while Christ lies in it, my first thought about it is, *I will rest, for he rests*. What a wonderful stillness there was about our Lord in that rocky grave. He had been daily thronged by thousands: even when he ate bread they disturbed him. He scarce could have a moment's stillness in life; but now how quiet is his bed! Not a sound is heard. The great stone shuts out all noise, and the body is at peace. Well, if he rests, I may. If for a while the Lord seems to suspend his energies, his servants may cry unto him, but they may not fret. He knows best when to sleep and when to wake.

As I see the Christ resting in the grave, my next thought is, *he has the power to come forth again*. Some few months ago I tried to show you that when the disciples were alarmed because Jesus was asleep they were in error, for his sleep was the token of their security. When I see a captain on board ship pacing anxiously up and down the deck, I may fear that danger is suspected; but when the captain turns into his cabin, then I may be sure that all is right, and there is no reason why I should not turn in too. So if our blessed Lord should ever suffer his cause to droop, and if he should give no marvellous manifestations of his power, we need not doubt his power; let us keep our Sabbath, pray to him, and work for him, for these are duties of the holy day of rest; but do not let us fret and worry, for his time to work will come.

The rest of the Christian lies in believing in Christ under all circumstances. Go in for this, beloved. Believe in him in the manger, when his cause is young and weak. Believe in him in the streets, when the populace applaud him, for he deserves their loudest acclamations. Believe in him when they take him to the brow of the hill to cast him headlong, he is just as worthy as when they cry "Hosanna." Believe in him when he is in an agony, and believe in him when he is on the cross; and if ever it should seem to you that his cause must die out, believe in him still. Christ's gospel in any circumstances deserves our fullest trust. That gospel which has saved your souls, that gospel which ye have received, and which has been sealed upon your hearts by the Holy Ghost, stand fast in it, come what may, and through faith peace and quiet shall pervade your souls.

Once more, it will be well if we can obtain peace by having fellowship with our Lord in his burial. Die with him, and be buried with him; there is nothing like it. I desire for my soul while she lives in the Lord that, as to the world and all its wisdom, I may be as a dead man. When accused of having no power of thought, and no originality of teaching, I am content to own the charge, for my soul desires to be dead to all but that which is revealed and taught by the Lord Jesus. I would lie in the rocky tomb of the everlasting truth, not creating thought, but giving

myself up to God's thoughts. But, brethren, if we are ever to lie in that tomb, we must be wrapped about with the fine linen of holiness : these are the shrouds of a man who is dead to sin. All about us must be the spices, the myrrh, and aloes of preserving grace, that being dead with Christ we may see no corruption, but may show that death to be only another form of the new life which we have received in him. When the world goes by, let it know concerning our heart's desire and ambition, that they are all buried with Christ, and it is written on the memorial of our spiritual grave, "Here he lies ;" as far as this world's sin, and pleasure, and self-seeking, and wisdom are concerned, "Here he lies buried with his Master."

Know, you who are not converted, that the way of salvation is by believing in Christ, or trusting in him, and if you do so trust you shall never be confounded, world without end, for he that trusteth Christ, and believeth in him even as a little child, the same shall enter into his kingdom, and he that will follow him, even down to his grave, shall be with him in his glory, and shall see his triumphs for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew xxvii.
44—61 ; Mark xv. 42—47 ; Luke xxiii. 50—56 ; John xix. 38—42 ;
Romans vi. 1—13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 832, 844.