

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BELIEVER'S DEATHDAY BETTER THAN HIS
BIRTHDAY.

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.”—Ecclesiastes vii. 1.

IN this part of the world we can hardly understand how much the Easterns thought of perfumes. When Solomon speaks of “precious ointment” he speaks of a luxury highly appreciated by those who heard him. Orientals delighted to anoint themselves with fragrant oil, and to pour upon their heads unguents full of perfume. We do not so—at any rate, not to the same lavish extent; but among the luxuries of eastern life was that of delighting the nostril with sweet smells. The figure is easy to understand as it is here used to set forth the excellence of a good name. A man who is perfumed, and who has put upon his head precious ointment, is sweet and pleasant to himself. It gives him joy, and so does a good name afford pleasure to its possessor. Besides that, the perfumed person was agreeable to other people—those who were round about him were refreshed by the fragrance: and so a noble character is agreeable to all who come near it. In some cases the use of a sacred ointment, or anointing oil, signified that the man was himself pleasant even to God: the priests went not into the holy place except they had been anointed with a certain appointed compound of delicate perfumes:—and so precious ointment became the type of the anointing of the Spirit of God, and of that acceptableness which comes to men through Jesus Christ, who is a sweet savour unto the Lord God. When you understand that precious ointment, or sweet perfumed oil, was very precious to the Jew, first, because of the pleasure it gave to him and the healthy influence which he believed it exerted upon himself; next, because it made him pleasurable to others; and, next, because in its highest sacred sense it prepared him to come before God; you see why “precious ointment” was so much held in esteem. But Solomon says that a good name is better than that. I do not think he merely meant a good reputation; and yet it would be true if he referred only to an honourable character among his neighbours, for it is a good thing for a man to stand high in the esteem of his fellow-men, and he ought never

to lose their respect except for one cause, namely, for the sake of standing in higher esteem before God. The faithful follower of Jesus must be content to part with name and fame if through obedience to Christ he is evil spoken of; yea, in such a case he may rejoice and be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's name's sake. Yet even then it is a sharp sorrow to have lost one's good name among men, though for Christ's sake it should be borne right cheerfully. Every good man would be glad if it were possible to have the good word of all his fellow-men, for this is the groundwork of social peace, and would be in itself good and pleasant, were it not that sin destroys it, and turns it into a "woe" when all men speak well of us.

I believe that the text has a deeper meaning than this; for a man truly has a good name if he deserves to be held in high esteem, though he may for Christ's sake be in disrepute. His name is good, whatever men may say about it. His name is, indeed, all the better in the sight of God because he has been slandered and reproached for the truth's sake. His name shall shine out like the stars of heaven when Christ comes—even the name of the man of whom the world was not worthy. It is after all a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, our record is on high. A good character may be understood here, and assuredly that is better than the rarest luxury of kings.

Consider it spiritually, and, dear brethren, what is a good name? A good name is a name that is written in the Lamb's book of life, and that is better than the sweetest of all ointments. Oh, that I may find my name recorded in some corner of the page among the sinners saved by grace. The very thought of that has a savour in it which no earthly delicacy can rival. Oh, how blessed to be among the chosen of God, the redeemed of Christ Jesus, beloved of the Father from before the foundation of the world. "A good name." Why, that must be a name written upon the breastplate of the great High Priest. If you could have gone up to the high priest of old you would have read there "Reuben," "Simeon," "Levi," "Judah," "Dan," "Gad," "Naphtali," and the like; and they were all good names when once they were engraved there. What a blessed place to have your name inscribed—not upon a jewel that shall hang on the breast of a man, but upon the very heart of Jesus Christ your Lord. If you could see your name written on the palms of his hands you would say, "It is a good name that is written there. Blessed be the Lord that ever I had that name, insignificant as it is. Though it is a name that has been ridiculed, though it is a name that has been bandied about and kicked like a football through the world, yet it is a blessed name, for it is written on the palms of Jesus' hands." It is so if we are the Lord's own people, and are walking the walk of faith. Jesus says, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." That is a good name which is recorded in the Lamb's book of life, and engraved upon the breastplate of the Saviour. Do you not think so?

Connected with this, I may say that a name that is written among the living in Zion is a good name. Oh, there is nothing like it. Some men are very anxious to get their names upon the roll of this club or of that, or of some wonderful secret society,—or to get their names into the peerage. It is thought to be a wonderful thing to be a nobleman,

though it is better far to be a noble man. But the best list of names on earth seems to me to be the list of the people of God. I should count it a higher honour to be inscribed on the church book of a humble company of baptized believers meeting in a barn than to wear a name imported by the Conqueror, and written in the roll of Battle Abbey. The pedigree of saintship confers honour such as angels recognize; all else they think little of. Are you one of God's believing people? Have you taken up your cross, resolved to follow Jesus? Do you, as a servant, and as a soldier, bear his name as your Master and Captain? Then you have a good name, and there is a sweetness about it better than the perfume of precious ointment.

If, dear brothers and sisters, you go on, after having your names inscribed in the church of God, to get a beloved name among God's people, through divine grace, it will be better than precious ointment. Better than all the expensive luxuries which wealth could purchase to you will it be to have a name esteemed for lowly piety or sacred courage. How sweet, for instance, to be like that woman who brought our Lord precious ointment, and he paid her back with a good name, immortalizing her in the gospels, for he said, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." A humble woman like Dorcas may make garments for the poor, and this shall be better than precious ointment. A simple trader like Lydia may entertain the servants of God—constraining them to come into her house; and this shall be better than precious ointment. And a lowly man may so live as to adorn the gospel of God his Saviour—may so speak as to bring one and another to the Saviour's feet; and this shall be better than a blaze of courtly honour. "A good name": that is a name for humility, a name for love and affection, a name for liberality, a name for zeal, a name for warm-heartedness, a name for prayerfulness, a name among the people of God for being a whole-hearted, sincere man, a name for being one who is ready to help you in time of trouble, a name like that of Barnabas, the son of consolation:—a good name of this sort it should be our ambition to win and to wear. A good name that shall arise out of our exhibiting a compound of many precious virtues shall be better than an ointment formed of the rarest spices, however pleasant it may be. You may be in the church and yet you may not have a good name as a member of it. I mean as to your own personal character as a Christian; for some professors are in the pot of ointment, but I wish we could pick them out, for they are flies, and they spoil everything. There are such in this church—oh that they had gone elsewhere! If they would but have flown into a pot of the world's honey, or something of that kind! But for them to get into the church's ointment is a great pity. May God grant that you and I may never be dead flies in the pot of ointment. Some get a name in the church for quarrelling and fault-finding. "Oh," people say, "if anybody can pick a hole in the sermon, I know who it is." You need only have half-a-dozen words with this crab-apple critic and you surely and speedily lose what enjoyment you have had during the service. Alas, that many Christian women have not a good name, for they are addicted to gossiping. A word to the wise on this matter will, I hope, be enough. I will not at this time dive deeply into any of your

faults, whatever they may be, but will cover them all over with this truth—A good reputation, well earned among your Christian brethren, is better than precious ointment.

It is of persons who have this good character, and are known by the sweet savour of their lives, that the latter part of the text is spoken,—“The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

You must have a good name,—you must be written among the living, in Zion, written on the heart of Christ, written in the Lamb’s book of life, or else the text is not true of you; and, alas, though the day of your birth was a bad day, the day of your death will be a thousand times worse; for when you die, my hearer, recollect what will happen to you unless you have that good name. You will be driven from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power, and begin to feel the terrors of his vengeance; and then, when the day of judgment comes, God will prove that he is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; for there must you dwell in everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels, so that the day of your death will be a day of darkness and not of light, and it will be better for you that you had never been born.

But now, if you are one of God’s people, trusting in him, look forward to the day of your death as being better than the day of your birth. It is possible that you may never die, since the Lord Jesus may suddenly come a second time; but if this should not occur in our day, we shall in due course fulfil our service and fall asleep. At this hour, ere yet the sand in the glass shall all be run, the long-expected Lord may suddenly appear in his glory; therefore let us stand ready, as men that wait for their Lord, with our loins girt and our lamps burning. But if he do not come for the next hundred years—and he may not, for our Lord has not committed to us a knowledge of the times and seasons—then we shall die; and in that case it is no small consolation that “the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

I. First, then, OUR DEATHDAY IS BETTER THAN OUR BIRTHDAY: and it is so for this among other reasons—“*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.*”

When we are born we begin life, but what will that life be? Friends say, “Welcome, little stranger.” Ah, but what kind of reception will the stranger get when he is no longer a new comer? Very likely he is not long in the world before he begins to feel the poverty of his parents, and perhaps the misery of an unholy home. A troop of infantile diseases are waiting around him; and the little candle that is newly lit is in great danger of being blown out. Infancy is a very dangerous passage for a tiny boat unfitted to bear rough buffetings. Those first few years are full of rocks and quicksands, and many scarce begin life before they end it. He who is newly born and is ordained to endure through a long life is like a warrior who puts on his harness for battle; and is not he in a better case who puts it off because he has won the victory? Ask any soldier which he likes best, the first shot in the battle or the sound which means “Cease firing, for the victory is won.” The soldier does not deliberate a moment; there is no room for question. Since the day of a believer’s death is his time of triumph and of victory, it is better than the day of the first shot—the day of

one's birth. When we were born we set out on our journey; but when we die we end our weary march in the Father's house above. Surely it is better to have come to the end of the tiresome pilgrimage than to have commenced it. We wave the handkerchief, and bid good-bye to those who start upon a long voyage, and it is meet that they should be made as cheerful as they can be; but, surely, it is a better day when at last they reach their port, all danger over, and come to their desired haven. So, then, it is better to die than to begin to live, if we be indeed the Lord's people.

Better is the day of death than our birthday, because *about the birthday there hangs uncertainty*. I cannot tell you, good woman, what is to become of the little child who is pressed to your bosom this evening. God bless it, and make it a comfort to you, and an honour to his church! But it is all matter of hope as yet. Children are certain cares, they say, and uncertain blessings. I hardly like the phrase. They are blessings anyhow; but there is certainly this about them: we cannot tell what will become of them when they grow up and come under the influence of evil. You look upon a youth as he grows up, and you feel, "I cannot quite see what you will be. You may be led astray by temptation; or by divine grace you may cleanse your way. You may be useful and honourable; or you may be dissolute and degraded." Everything is uncertain about the child on his birthday; but everything is certain about the saint on his deathday. I heard this morning of a dear friend who had fallen asleep. When I wrote to his wife I said, "Concerning him we speak with certainty. You sorrow not as those that are without hope. A long life of walking with God proved that he was one of God's people, and we know that for such there remains joy without temptation, without sorrow, without end, for ever and ever." Oh, then, as much as certainty is better than uncertainty, the day of the saint's death is better than the day of his birth.

So, too, in things which are certain the saint's deathday is preferable to the beginning of life, for we know that when the child is born he is born to sorrow. Whatever else is uncertain about him, we are quite sure that those little eyes will weep; that those little limbs will know weariness and pain; and that his little heart will be distracted sooner or later by many griefs. We know this, for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." No man has ever been able to find a perfectly smooth road through this mortal life. Trials must and will befall, and your little one who is born to-day is born to an inheritance of grief, like his father, like his mother, who prophesied it as it were by her own pangs. But look, now, at the saint when he dies. It is absolutely certain that he has done with sorrow, done with pain. We know that they shall die no more; "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Now, surely, the day in which we are certain that sorrow is over must be better than the day in which we are certain that sorrow is on the road. For this reason we set up the headstone of the grave above the tablet which records the birth.

Ay, and this holds good about subsequent birthdays. It is wise thoughtfully and cheerfully to mark each birthday. It should be a holy day in every Christian's case—a day of grateful thanksgiving that we

have come so far upon the road of life. It is a very blessed thing to sit down on the milestone and say, "Well, now, I have come twenty miles—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy miles of my journey. I shall never tread those miles over again. So many troubles are past : so many waves have risen that will never wash over me a second time ; so many tossings to and fro I have endured, and I shall never feel them any more." Every man should say at the end of a sickness, "Thank God, that is gone. I shall not suffer a repetition of that self-same sickness ; I shall not feel those pains over again ; I shall not groan through those same weary nights for a second time." For every pang that shoots through the bone you should say, "That bone will not ache that pain over again, at any rate." Be joyful that you are so far on your journey ! There remains that other portion of the journey ; long leagues of pilgrimage may lie beyond. There are still battles to fight, mountains to climb, dark nights in which one sighs for light ; still temptation ; still sin. Ay, but when we get to the day of one's death then the whole journey lies behind. It is all over now. On your coming to die there is nothing left to do but to die. All else is done. The battle is fought, and the victory is won for ever. Oh, is not that better than even the best birthday that we have ever had, good as they have been, and cause for thanksgiving as each one certainly has been ?

I think, then, I need not dwell longer on this point. "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth."

II. Now I will give the same thoughts in another form. The day of death is **BETTER TO THE BELIEVER THAN ALL HIS HAPPY DAYS.**

What were his happy days ? I shall take him as a man, and I will pick out some days that are often thought to be happy. There is the day of a man's *coming of age*, when he feels that he is a man, especially if he has an estate to come into. That is a day of great festivity. You have seen pictures of "Coming of age in the olden time," when the joy of the young squire seemed to spread itself over all the tenants and all the farm labourers : everybody rejoiced. Ah, that is all very well, but when believers die they do in a far higher sense come of age, and enter upon their heavenly estates. Here, you know, in this life we are very much as children who are under governors and tutors, and we differ little from servants. We still have to be chastened, and kept under rule, and denied much which is nevertheless ours. We have many good things kept from us because we are not able yet to appreciate them. "Now we know in part." It is only in a small measure that we come into possession, enjoying only the earnest of the inheritance. Ay, but—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wish'd below ;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

Then shall I pluck the grapes from those vines that I have read of as enriching the vales of Eshcol ; then shall I lie down and drink full draughts of the river of God, which is full of water ; then shall I know even as I am known, and see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face. Speak of heirs, of heirs coming into their estates ! Why, our day of death shall be such a day as that. What a jubilee day it will

be! If we were really in our senses the thought of fearing death would be ridiculous. No young man is afraid of coming to be one-and-twenty. No; he says, "Fly away, fly away, days and nights. I shall be glad to get out of my nonage, out of my infancy, and to come into my full manhood, and into possession of everything." So might we say, "Fly away, years! Come, grey hairs. Fly away, years, and bring me into possession of things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Another very happy day with a man is the day of his *marriage*: who does not rejoice then? What cold heart is there which does not beat with joy on that day? But on the day of death we shall enter more fully into the joy of our Lord, and into that blessed marriage union which is established between him and ourselves. Then we shall enter into the guest-chamber where the supper is to be spread, and we shall wait a while with joy, the bridegroom being with us, till the word shall be given, and the trumpet note shall ring out, and then we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not to look at his guests, but to be ourselves part and parcel of that blessed bride, the Lamb's wife, in whom Christ finds all his heart's content. Oh, yes, we may long for our departure because it is to the saint a marriage day in which he shall be "with Christ," which is far better: and, as the bride longeth for the wedding, so may the heart that is full of faith long for the time when we shall be for ever with the Lord.

There are days with men in business that are happy days, because they are *days of gain*. They get some sudden windfall, they prosper in business, or perhaps there are long months of prosperity in which all goes well with them, and God is giving them the desires of their heart. But, oh, beloved, there is no gain like the gain of our departure to the Father; the greatest of all gains is that which we shall know when we pass out of the world of trouble into the land of triumph. "To die is gain." As for prosperity, what worldly prosperity can be compared with the eternal years in which we shall dwell in infinite felicity above? To die is to enter upon days of peace, rest, joy, satisfaction; and hence the day of our death is better than our happiest days.

There are days of *honour*, brethren, when a man is promoted in office, or receives applause from his fellow-men. But what a day of honour that will be for you and me, if we are carried by angels into Abraham's bosom! Our honourable escort will manifest how highly the Lord thinks of us. Oh, the honours that will be heaped upon the saints when they shall be recognized in glory as brethren of Christ, heirs of God, joint heirs with the Redeemer!

Days of *health* are happy days, too. But what health can equal the perfect wholeness of a spirit in whom the good Physician has displayed his utmost skill? Days of recovery from sickness are happy days: but, oh, to be clean recovered—to go where "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." When Jehovah Rophi shall restore our whole spirit to perfectness then will a new gladness take possession of us.

We enjoy very happy days of *social friendship*, when hearts warm with hallowed intercourse, when one can sit a while with a friend, or rest in the midst of one's family. Yes, but no day of social enjoyment will match the day of death. Some of us expect to meet troops of blessed

ones that have gone home long ago, whom we never shall forget. We have priceless friends over yonder, and the bliss of reunion will be sweet. Some of you old people have more friends in heaven than you have on earth; you may forget all sorrow as to those you will leave in the joy of meeting those with whom you will be united again. What family greetings there will be! Mother has gone; father has gone; uncles and aunts that were in the Lord, and brothers and sisters too, are all gone before; and all these are waiting for us, and we shall soon be in full fellowship with them. Best of all, *he* has gone before whom our hearts love, and who is more to us than brother, sister, and mother. Oh, the bliss of meeting with our risen Lord! Oh, the joy of meeting in him all that are truly our own kin! The saints will meet around the throne, an unbroken family; not one of God's children will be away. We shall have no brothers or sisters who will not be there. "Oh," say you, "I am afraid that we have some who are still unconverted, and who will not be there." They will not be your brothers and sisters then. Ties of merely natural kinship will come to an end; only spiritual relationship will last and survive. We shall have none to mourn over; our kindred will all be in glory. Those that were truly related to us in the bonds of everlasting life shall all be there. One might wish for it to come soon for the joy of being for ever with the people of God, sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

III. In the third place, going a step farther, the day of a believer's death is BETTER THAN HIS HOLY DAYS ON EARTH.

I think that the best holy day I ever spent (yes, I think I must put it as high as that,) was the day of my *conversion*. There was a novelty and freshness about that first day which made it like the day in which a man first sees the light after having been long blind. My conversion day, shall I ever forget it?—when my heart began to beat with spiritual life, and the lungs of my soul began to heave with prayer, and the hands of my soul were stretched out to grasp my Lord, and the eyes of my soul beheld his beauty. Ay, that was a very blessed sight, but what will it be to see him face to face? What will the first five minutes in heaven be? Surely those dawning moments will be for ever remembered, and spoken of by holy beings as they commune with one another concerning their delights. Oh, for a celestial visitant to tell us of his experience in the first five minutes in heaven! No; I think he had better not, because we might be frightened at him, and he would talk language that we could not understand. He would say things which it were not lawful for a man to utter. Brother from the glory land, you may go back; it were better that we did not hear your story of the better country. We will think of it, and begin expecting it. It will certainly be better to see the Lord in death than when we first of all saw him here below.

Since then we have known many blessed days; our *Sabbaths*, for instance. We can never give up the Lord's day. Precious and dear unto my soul are those sweet rests of love—days that God has hedged about to make them his own, that they may be ours. A young man said to me yesterday, when he came to join the church, "I often wish that all the week was made up of Sundays." I thought, "Yes, and so do I," only I could not always be preaching. I should want to come down and take

a turn at hearing; although it is always precious to talk about God's word. Oh, our blessed Sabbaths! Well, there is this about the day of one's death—we shall then enter upon an eternal Sabbath. We shall go

“Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

And the glory Sabbaths will be real Sabbaths, never disturbed or distracted; blessed Sabbaths, shut out from sinners and from that filthy conversation which often vexes us even on the Sabbath day. “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.”

“To that our labouring souls aspire
With ardent pangs of strong desire.”

Our *communion* days have been very holy days. It has been very sweet to sit at the Lord's table, and have fellowship with Jesus in the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine; but sweeter far will it be to commune with him in the paradise above, and that we shall do on the day of our death. I might go on mentioning all our holy days one after another; but whichever you should select as the season of your highest joy on earth I should say of the best of them, “Yes, but the day of one's death, as ushering us into a higher and holier state, is better than any of those days.” Those days have been good, I am not going to depreciate them, but to bless the Lord for every one of them. When we say that a second thing is “better,” it is supposed that the first thing has some goodness about it. Ay, and our holy days on earth have been good; fit rehearsals of the jubilee beyond the river. When you and I enter heaven, it will not be going from bad to good, but from good to better. The change will be remarkable, but it will not be so great a change as thoughtless persons would imagine.

First, there will be no change of nature. The same nature which God gave us when we were regenerated—the spiritual nature—is that which will enjoy the heavenly state. We shall not carry with us our depraved nature; we do not want to do so, I am sure. Mr. Ready-to-halt, in Bunyan's “Pilgrim,” performed his journey on crutches, but when he died he threw them away. He did not want to carry his crutches into the land of perfection: and we shall carry no sinful infirmities with us into Paradise, nor, indeed, any infirmities at all. As to Mr. Feeblemind, he gave orders that his feeble mind should be buried in a dunghill: he did not want to import a trembling heart into the skies. But all that is good about us, all that is really ourselves as we have been begotten again in Christ Jesus, all that will go to heaven, without loss of any portion thereof. I shall be the same man there that I am here; and I have not the slightest doubt that you will know me. At any rate, you will be bigger fools in heaven than you are here if you do not. Did I hear some one reply, “We shall not know you in the disembodied state, for here we only recognize you by your outward appearance”? I answer, Many of you know me in another manner than after the flesh; you not only know me by my looks; but you know my spirit. If I could get out of my body, and I could not use a voice, but yet could influence your spirits by my spirit, you would know my spirit. You know what spirit I am of. I will not try to describe myself, but you know me. I know you do. Nobody is exactly like me

in some traits of character : each one stands alone. Nobody is exactly like you, dear friend ; so that there will be peculiar points by which to distinguish man from man. We shall know each other certainly. Yes, and we shall be the same persons ; and when our bodies rise they will be the same bodies. "Every seed its own body,"—changed and perfected, but still preserving its identity. On earth we have had good days, because we have had a good nature given us by the Holy Spirit, and we shall possess the same nature above, only more fully grown and purged from all that hinders it.

We shall follow the same employments above as we have followed here. "Oh dear," says one, "I hope not. I do not want to work hard there as I have had to do here." No, perhaps not ; but I mean the employments of our spirits will be similar to what they have been while we have been in the world. What are the employments of our spirits here ? Why, one of the sweetest of them is to sing the Lord's praises. We shall spend eternity in adoring the Most High. To draw near to God in communion—that is one of our most blessed employments. We shall do it there, and take our fill of it. Nor is this all, for we shall serve God in glory. I do not know what God will want us to do in heaven, I have never been there to see ; but I am sure that he will make use of us. Does he not say, "They shall see his face, and his servants shall serve him" ? Oh, yes ; he has something for me to do up there, and for you to do, too. You active-spirited ones, you shall find an intense delight in continuing to do the same things as to spirit as you do here, namely, adoring and magnifying and spreading abroad the saving name of Jesus in whatever place you may be.

We shall certainly possess the same enjoyments, for our richest enjoyments as saints are found in fellowship with Christ and with one another, and we shall have these above. We shall live upon Christ. We shall rejoice in God there as we do here. And there is one thing I like to think of—we shall have the same company. I was visiting a poor old woman who was near to death, and she said to me, "One thing makes me feel quite safe about where I am going ; I believe that I shall go to my own company ; and for the last sixty years I have never had any company but the Lord's people ; and if a stranger has come in here, and begun to talk about worldly things in a carnal way, I have wished him gone. I said to myself, 'The Lord won't take me away from my own people. Surely he will let me go where they go ; and if I go where those people go that I love, I know that I shall be happy.'" So, dying believer, you will not change company ; only the company will be all improved, and you will be improved as much as any of them. It will be the same company, and this makes it look so much like going home. The day of our death has nothing so very strange and mysterious about it as to make us fear it. You and I ought to live like people who, when they hear a knock at the door, do not go into fits at the startling sound. Some people are terribly alarmed at a knock or a ring because they have not paid their rent, and they are afraid that somebody is after them for money. You and I have paid our debts, or rather, they have been all paid for us. The Lord Jesus Christ has set us free ; and when death comes and knocks at our door, all that we shall have to do will be to answer the summons and go with God's messenger at once. Our friends will say, "He is gone ;"

and if we have lived so that we have had a good name, that is better than precious ointment; they will know where we have gone; and if they lament on that account they will be very foolish, for they ought rather to say, "Thank God that our friends have entered into their joy and rest." There was a dear mother, a woman of great faith, who loved her daughter very much, but she loved her Lord more, and when her dear daughter was dying she kissed her, and said to her, "My dear girl, you will be in heaven within a few hours, and I congratulate you. The thought of your joy fills me with joy concerning you, and I cannot weep. I congratulate you, and wish I was going with you." Let us think of death after that holy manner.

IV. I have not time to finish my sermon. At least, I have time to finish it, but not to continue it as long as I would. I was going to say, in the fourth place, that the day of a saint's death is BETTER THAN THE WHOLE OF HIS DAYS PUT TOGETHER, because his days here are days of dying. The moment we begin to live we commence to die.

"Every beating pulse we tell
Leaves but the number less."

Death is *the end of dying*. On the day of the believer's death dying is for ever done with. The saints who are with God shall never die any more. Life is wrestling, struggling; but death is the end of conflict: it is rest—victory. Life is full of sinning. Blessed be God, death is the end of that; no transgression or iniquity shall follow us into heaven. Life is longing, sighing, crying, pining, desiring. Heaven is enjoying, possessing, delighting one's self in God. This life is failure, disappointment, regret. Such emotions are all over when the day of death comes, for glory dawns upon us, with its satisfaction and intense content.

The day of our death will be *the day of our cure*. There are some diseases which, in all probability, some of us never will get quite rid of till the last Physician comes, and he will settle the matter. One gentle touch of his hand, and we shall be cured for ever. All infirmities, as well as sicknesses, will vanish in our last hours. Blind sister, you will have your eyes. You that have lost your hearing shall listen to the songs of angels, and enter into the most refined of their harmonies. You who must limp to your graves shall dance by-and-by. Infirmities you shall have none. Death will also be the cure of old age. No doctor can help you about that; but this doctor will end all. You shall renew your youth like the eagle's. You shall be girt about with power when your body rises from the grave, and till then your soul shall enjoy all the freshness and juvenility of youth. You shall be at your prime in glory.

Our death day will be *the loss of all losses*. Life is made up of losses, but death loses losses. Life is full of crosses, but death is the cross that brings crosses to an end. Death is the last enemy, and turns out to be the death of every enemy.

Dear friends, put all your days together; they shall not equal that last day which shall be to you the beginning of days of another sort. The day of our death is *the beginning of our best days*. Sometimes even that part of a dying day which is spent on earth is the best that the dying believer has ever lived. I have seen believers die, and if anything can convince a man of the reality of religion, of the truth of

the Scriptures, and of the power of the Spirit, it is the death of saints. I have seen many persons who seemed to be as much dying of their joy as of their disease, they were so happy. Their eyes, their face, their whole bearing were those of persons in whom the utmost pain was forgotten in an excess of joy, while weakness was swallowed up in the delights of the heaven which was dawning upon them. I believe that angels come and meet certain departing ones, that they come trooping outside the gate, and that dying ones frequently see that which is supernatural. I am not dreaming. I believe that they actually see what eye hath not seen, and that there comes upon them a light which is neither of the sun, nor of the moon. At any rate, they speak words of wondrous import. Dying children have spoken words which certainly they never learnt, for none have ever heard the like before; and other departing ones have uttered words of rapture and ecstasy and almost delirium of bliss; for Christ has come to them, and they have seen the King in his beauty, even in the border land before they have crossed the river and entered into Canaan. "Is this to die?" said one. "Well, then," said he, "it is worth while to live even to enjoy the bliss of dying." The holy calm of some and the transport of others prove that better is the day of death in their case than the day of birth, or all their days on earth.

And then that later part of the day which is spent among the angels! They breakfast with Christ on earth, but they sup with him in heaven. Oh, that eventide of the day! Then to think that it shall be without end; for ever happy, for ever triumphant, and for ever more and more so; for "from glory unto glory" makes us look for progress even there. We shall rise from seeing Christ to seeing him yet more, and to discovering more and more beauties in him; we shall ascend from one perfection to another perfection; from fulness up to our capacity to an enlarged capacity and an equal fulness; from glory unto glory; from sunlight to Godlight; from Godlight to the light of God yet more received and enjoyed.

There! I cannot go farther. Good night "till the day break and the shadows flee away"; and then you and I will know in ten minutes more than all the bench of bishops could tell us in a year. You will know more in half a second than I could tell you if I were to keep you here the live-long night. Only mind you do not miss the way, one of you. Mind you do not miss the way! Turn to the right, by the cross, and keep straight on. God lead you by his Holy Spirit.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—821, 829, 828.