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THE SPIRIT-LIFE.

A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE METHODIST CHURCH,

AT RICHLANDS, NORTH CAROLINA,

NOVEMBER, 15, 1868,

AT THE

FUNERAL SERVICE OF JOHN M. FRANCK,

BY WILLIAM S. BALCH.

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1868.
TO MARIA FRANCK.

Sister:—You will recognize, in the following pages, little more than the sentiments of my discourse at the funeral services of your late husband. Having been delivered without any notes and under the peculiar impressions of the occasion and the surroundings, it is impossible for me to recall the language or the spirit which gave it so much of the merit which you and the friends attach to it. I think you and they will find the substantial part, the doctrine of the sermon here, what it was there.

Hoping it may serve to remind you and them of the great value of the doctrine of the Spirit-Life as taught by our blessed Lord, and help to give cheerfulness and resignation I commit it to you, praying for the blessing of God to attend and comfort you and all that mourn.

Thine fraternally

W. S. B.
THE SPIRIT-LIFE.

I have come a long way, my friends, to perform a special service; to speak to you who are assembled here, the words of comfort and hope. I am come at the living and dying request of one who has lived among you, whom you have known and greatly respected; but who is with you, in bodily presence, no more.

I feel impressed, under these circumstances, by a sense of duty, to speak of the goodness of that Faith and Hope which blessed him while living, made him a good man, a faithful friend, a kind neighbor, an honest and peaceable citizen, and gave him peace and joy in the prospect and hour of death.

I have chosen for a guide to our thoughts the words of Jesus recorded by St. John, chap. xi; 25:26.

"And Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believeth thou this?"

Lazarus, a particular friend of Jesus, was sick in Bethany. His sisters, anxious for his recovery, sent for Jesus who was, at the time, in Gallilee to come and visit and heal him. Jesus delayed his coming till Lazarus had died and was laid in the tomb.

When it was known that Jesus was coming, Martha hastened out to meet him, to pour her grief into his ear and obtain comfort from his words of counsel and sympathy. She tells him of her confidence in his power to have preserved the life of her brother, and hints "that even now whatsoever he would ask of God, God would give it him." Jesus assured her that her brother should rise again. Of this she professes an abiding conviction, based, no doubt, upon a doctrine which had come to the Jews from other nations, but which bore no near resemblance to the doctrine of life and immortality brought to light in the gospel.

Jesus proceeds to indicate, not the truth of her notions, but what he means by "rising again." "I am the resurrection and the life."
He does not refer this to a physical resurrection to take place "at the last day," or at any future period. "I am the resurrection and the life." So sure, so strong, so efficient was this work of grace on all who received it by believing, that though one "were dead, yet should he live; and whosoever lived and believed should never die."

These words cannot, by any fair use, be referred to a future resurrection of the body from the grave; for Jesus manifestly uttered them to correct the misapprehension of Martha touching the doctrine of a future life, and to place before her a sure foundation of hope and comfort whereon to rest her weary spirit in this hour of grief.

From ages long before, philosophers, poets and dreamers, in many lands, had wandered in imagination far beyond the fields of all human knowledge, beyond the thick curtain which separates the present from a future being. They had conjured up, in their dreams and visions, states and conditions according to their own fancies, to meet and answer, if possible, the natural want and longing of the soul for a continued life. All of their notions were tinctured and colored by thoughts and passions, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, love and hate, successes and failures, desires and distinctions of the present life. But so low and carnal was their estimate of the future life, that the more sedate and excellent preferred to look upon death as a sleep, a condition of silence and darkness, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

By close contact and frequent intercourse with surrounding nations, especially during and after their captivity, the Jews had learned, and a portion of them had accepted, the crude notions of the heathen as possible truths upon which to rest their expectations of another life. Many of the Pharisees who thought themselves so much better than others, found it not difficult to believe they might be raised into a future state of being at "the resurrection of the just"; while the more learned Sadducees rejected all such notions, and believed, like the earlier Jews, in no conscious hereafter for any man.

It is certain they had no treatise, no direct authority, no revelation, on this subject. Their scriptures were silent respecting the fact and conditions of a future life. The patriarchs thought and spoke of death as a sleep, a state or place of silence, "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Their later writers believed "the dead
know not anything;" that "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." It is generally, if not universally, admitted by all good students of the Old Testament, that the doctrine of a future life is not taught in it. It has indications, types, and shadows of good things to come; promises, purposes, and plans, which to us, involve such a doctrine and cannot be fulfilled without it. Thus by induction and inference we may now learn what those to whom the old revelation was given did not understand.

In the economy of God it was reserved for the new revelation by Jesus Christ, to "abolish death and bring life and immortality to light." The doctrine was true before, but it was not "brought to light," to be believed and enjoyed by mortals on earth. Jesus was the "first born from the dead," "the first to rise from the dead to die no more." He was to swallow up death in victory; to "destroy death and him that had the power of death, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage." He is to "reign until the last enemy, death, is destroyed"; and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain; for the former things shall pass away, and all things be made new; "all things be reconciled unto God" that "God may be ALL IN ALL."

Martha's expectations were not well founded. Jesus indicated to her the true source of comfort in affliction, the sure foundation of hope in a future life and a re-union of spirits, by giving her to understand the nature and success of his work for humanity. The occasion was a fitting one. Here were centered the strength of pure affections; fearful anxieties, bitter anguish, terrible uncertainties, remembered kindness, disappointed hopes, rushed upon her, all crushed and trembling, in the dark and silent presence of death. No ray of light streamed through the darkness into that sad and weary, and still loving soul. No warm glow of love and re-awakened hope came to dry the tears that flowed from eyes that saw no bright and beautiful hereafter. It was the time and the place for just such words as Jesus spake; for just such doctrine as Jesus taught; for just such hopes as he inspired. It was just the time to show the living presence of the spirit and its sufficiency; the power of truth over error, of joy over sorrow, of life over death, of God over all things. It was just the time to make known the wisdom and power
of God in planning and fulfilling the high destiny of man, in constituting the soul for a spirit-life and a blessed immortality.

What then, we may ask, was the doctrine Jesus taught in his conversation with this weeping daughter of Zion? What view, what insight, did he give of a spirit-life, a life beyond death? What prospect did he spread before the sad soul to gaze upon with fixed regards and sufficient; while death, with poisoned arrow, had transfixed the form of a brother beloved, already mouldering in the tomb?

It concerns us all to know the answer to questions like these; for such a time is in waiting for all of us, when nothing on earth; neither wealth nor wisdom, goodness, love, friends—nothing human, shall be found sufficient to meet the demands of a soul departing, or of mourners remaining. Something more than human, quite divine, is needed to give fortitude, hope and happiness in such an hour; when all of thought, all of love, all of power, all of everything—eternity itself, is crowded into a single conviction and is to color and decide everything; when its hold on earth is surely giving way, and its holiest desires are reaching out into the darkness to find something stable to rely upon. If their be a word, a sentence, a doctrine, a promise, a revelation from the loving Father, it must be for such a time as this. And if the claims of Christianity are real, and not a cheat, they must be equal to the wants of every soul struggling mid these conflicts of its imperfect being, and about to launch from these mortal shores out upon the dark waves of a shoreless eternity.

What did Jesus teach concerning a spirit-life?

He certainly did not teach the general resurrection of the body at the last day, to be followed by a general judgement, in recognition of all the distinctions and follies of the present world and an endless separation based upon them, and make a belief in such a doctrine the ground of hope and comfort in sorrow and in the front of death. His words cannot be construed to give countenance to any such idea. He says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Martha had some faith in the heathen doctrine of "the resurrection at the last day." That doctrine he did not approve. This she did not understand in its fulness. It was new, and peculiar to the gospel of Jesus Christ, not yet established in its spirit among men.
In the next chapter Jesus says; "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

I suppose this language refers to the same great fact in the work of God for the redemption of mankind from sin and unbelief, by raising them into the kingdom of God, into the spiritual life which Jesus had come to reveal and establish for the comfort and salvation of the world. His was a moral kingdom, a spiritual dominion over the hearts of the people. His was a present work. He came to seek and to save, to reform and to bless, to give a knowledge and judgment, a faith and a hope, a confidence and a joy, not hitherto possessed by men. He came to draw the human soul from the errors, follies and vices, from the low estimate and fallen condition of the age; from the superstitions and bigotries long prevalent among the nations; to impart to it a new spirit and power of moral life; to deliver it from the ignorance and slavery into which it had fallen; to bring it into a new and higher state of moral perception and action than the world had ever attained; to raise it into the light and loving presence of God; to reconcile it to all the ways of his providence—to all the methods of his government; to start it on its high destiny, to obtain perfect liberty in Christ, and to possess itself of the heavenly inheritance among the children of God, the saints in light.

Thus Jesus was to establish the kingdom of heaven, the reign of God, in the earth. He was himself to reign with God by love in human hearts, to subdue and reconcile all their passions and desires to the will of God, and prepare them for the glorious career of a happy, blessed, and immortal life with all the redeemed of God. Thus prepared, God was to dwell in them, and his love was to be perfected in them, that they might dwell in him. Thus filled with the light, and love, and presence of God, they could have no fear, no distrust, no anxiety for the future. Death had no more dominion over them, but they were passed from death unto life."

Now it was the object of Christ's mission to draw all men into this condition of spiritual life and peace. As he was already in it, pure and perfect, entirely subject to the will of the Father, he was plainly what he declared himself to be, "the resurrection and the life." And such a power was there in him, such a moral force did he im-
part to all who believed in him, that whoever lived in the new spirit-life "should never die."

The spirit, and power, and love, and will, and work of God are not limited to time, nor shut up in one part of creation, and shut out from all the rest. God is everywhere. His eye and his arm are over all his works. What we call death is not darkness to him. All is light where he is, and he is everywhere. Our sins, our ignorance, our unbelief, divide between us and him and darken and make sad the souls on which their shadows fall. But God is light. In him is no darkness at all. Our sins, our ignorance, our unbelief, can not remain forever; for Jesus came to save the world from sin. And he shall not fail, but finish his work. He came to fulfil the new covenant, to write the laws of God in all hearts, that "all should know the Lord from the least unto the greatest."—Heb. viii, 10-12. And "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." God's benevolent designs shall not be frustrated by man's weakness. Death does not bar God from doing all his pleasure. "He will swallow up death in victory," and "there shall be no more death." Believest thou this?

For them that believe in Jesus there is no death: "they shall never die." Our brother "believed this." He did not die. He "passed through" the open gates into the city of God, the holy place of the Most High, into the glorious presence where purity, love, and joy abound forever.

This doctrine embraces continued existence and moral character, and the just judgment of God in rendering to every man according to his works. He does so now in the earth: "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his works."—Ps. lxii, 12. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner." Prov., xi, 31. There is no reason to expect God will in any way alter the method of his government in the future life. He changes not. Therefore justice and judgment, which are the habitation of his throne, will be meted out to every moral being in that state as truly as in this.

Our hope in the final salvation of all men rests solely on the ground of their salvation from sin—that all men shall be holy; for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." In the flesh no man
is perfect; for "in the flesh dwelleth no good thing." Holiness is a principle, a quality, a possession, to be acquired—to be obtained. It is not possessed by nature; that is, by a mere animal existence. It belongs to our moral or spiritual nature, and is obtained in it's strength and perfection through the revelation made by Jesus Christ, by whom we are called unto holiness. He was "the last Adam, made a quickening spirit." He teaches and commands in the name of the Father: "Be ye holy; for I am holy." And he is to reign till "all things are gathered together in him—till every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God, the Father."

If I am asked "When, and by what ways and means this glorious result of Messiah's reign, designed and promised from the beginning, is to be accomplished;" I am frank to confess I do not know. We know but little of the ways and means of God beyond what he has revealed unto us. Very many of life's highest aspirations and noblest attainments are the works of faith, more than of knowledge; and by far the largest and best portions of human life are lost to us when faith is wanting. We walk by faith, not by sight. I do most earnestly and devoutly believe that such a result shall be attained "in the dispensation of the fullness of times" by ways and means known unto God: for he has desired it, purposed it, willed it, designed it, planned it, promised it; and I believe he will do it. Patriarchs believed it; prophets foretold it; saints and good men pray for it, and work for it; and to Jesus was given all power in heaven and in earth that he might not fail to accomplish it.

I do not feel authorized, by any amount of knowledge yet possessed, to magnify hindrances mighty enough to oppose successfully and finally the will, plan, purpose, promise of Almighty God, so as to weaken or destroy faith in Him, and in his declaration that his "counsels shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."

Abraham, old and childless, with a wife past age, and everything against it, believed God. He did not stagger at the promise because he did not see and know the ways and means of its accomplishment. Sarah did: she laughed at an idea involving so many difficulties; and when, finally, she half believed, and would, in her wisdom, help God fulfil the rest, Ishmael, and not the promised son, was born. Not so with Abraham. He believed God, and started
for the promised land; but like many in our day, he passed through it, not knowing whither he went or where he was—a pilgrim and a stranger, seeking a country and a city. And, like many others, he wandered too far—quite over the desert beyond it—and found himself in Egypt; whence, after prevaricating a little,—as such often do,—he returned and dwelt in one corner, the narrowest and roughest part, of the promised inheritance. Despite the ridicule of his wife he did not falter, but continued to believe. In due time Isaac was born. The proffered counsel of Sarah to employ the help of Hager did no more than suggest doubts to overcome apparent difficulties in the way of Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, and help to array oppositions to the peaceful enjoyment of the promised blessing. When called to the last trial of his faith, Abraham did not hesitate to obey God and offer up his only child—the son of his old age. He still believed, despite all darkness and difficulties, that God would make all plain and right in the end.

Do the opposers of faith in the success of God’s great work through Jesus Christ really think there is any weight in their limited knowledge—in their ignorance of God’s ways and means of working—to lead us to doubt and disbelieve that he will execute his own will, fulfil his own designs, and do all his pleasure? Do they ask us to set what they see and know, and what they do not see and know, over against what God has planned, and undertaken, and sent his Son to accomplish; that we shall believe that he will do what he never desired or designed, willed or wished to do,—what only bad men and devils would ever be pleased to have done; and his own great work of redemption become a failure?

Such should know that the limit of knowledge is not the measure of our faith. Because “now we see not yet all things put under Jesus,” shall we believe they never will be? The sphere of human knowledge is very limited; and our perceptions of the deep things of God in his eternity are not yet quite perfect, that we should judge him by any human standard, and go beyond what he has been pleased to reveal to us of his good pleasure concerning the future and final destiny of our race. We are satisfied to leave the disposal of all with him; and, while we are thankful unto him, we would seek to obey him, and in all things to be resigned to his most holy will.
To return. There are natural and insurmountable obstacles in the way of the heathen doctrine of the resurrection of the body. It is a fact established beyond controversy that the human body, like the bodies of other animals, is made up of material substances, and is continually undergoing changes, so radical, sure, and complete, that no particle of matter composing the body at childhood remains in youth, and none of youth remains in manhood, and none of manhood in old age. Physiology teaches conclusively that the body undergoes an entire change every seven or ten years. The body grows, matures, declines, dies, and returns to its primordial elements. These elements are taken up to nourish vegetable forms. Grains and grasses on battle-fields and in grave-yards are nourished by the blood and flesh and bones of human bodies. These, in turn, are consumed by other men and animals, and go to form parts of other bodies; and so the change is perpetually going on. What constitutes parts of our bodies may have passed through many other bodies before. How then can all these bodies be raised up at once, and each have all the parts of its own body?

Then, which of all our bodies shall we have? The last? Then what shall become of the others? Shall we have the young, round, terse, blooming body of childhood and youth? the strong, hale, vigorous body of manhood? or the pale, diseased, wrinkled, decayed, seared, emaciated, cadaverous body we shall have on in old age or at death? The soul surely can not wear them all at the same time; and if the sick, the weak, the halt, the blind,—if these bodies with all their infirmities are to be raised up and made immortal—and "there is to be no change after death," heaven will not be the agreeable, beautiful, happy place it has been represented to be.

Besides, what can there be consoling and hopeful in the thought that these poor bodies which have caused us so much pain and anxiety are to be raised up, and we be sent to inhabit them again and forever? The heathen world held such doctrines long before Jesus was sent to abolish death and be himself "the resurrection and the life." Why insist on them with such tenacity and try to prove them Christian, when Christianity ignores them, and teaches another doctrine, at once reasonable, consistent, and glorious?

The church made a great and grievous mistake when it preferred the mysterious, inconsistent, and obscure traditions of heathenism,
to the simple, sublime, and beautiful doctrine of Jesus, and engrafted them into the name of Christ, and made them an essential part of "a saving faith."

The declared object of Jesus' mission was to save sinners, to overcome evil, to destroy death, and restore all men to holiness and happiness. This was to be done by raising or elevating the human soul out of the depths of vice and ignorance and corruption into which it had fallen, into the light and knowledge of truth, love, and God.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, exhibits the doctrines of Jesus in a very clear and forcible manner. I have not time to quote what he says. You may read at your leisure the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters, where you will see clearly stated and fully argued the Christian doctrine of the resurrection. The same may be found in both his letters to the Corinthians, (I Cor., xv; II Cor., iv-v.,) and in other portions of his writings.

The substance of what he teaches may be summed up in few words, thus: Man was created a human being, and made subject to a system of laws which regarded his whole existence, and contemplated his highest good. Being subject to vanity, and not knowing good and evil intuitively, he was left to the force of temptation, appealing to his physical or carnal feelings, which he lacked the spiritual or moral power to resist. The penalty of transgression was death. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." He yielded to temptation; he sinned; he died. "To be carnal minded is death." "The wages of sin is death." All men sinned, and so death passed upon all men. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: by raising them out of the dominion of sin and death, giving them the spirit of truth, that they might "be risen with him and walk in newness of life." "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." "The gift of God is eternal life." "As many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "You hath he quickened (raised up) who were dead in trespasses and sins." "And you, being dead in your sins, hath he quickened (raised up) together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."—Cor., ii, 12-13. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." "We know that we are passed from death unto life."—John, v, 25; I John, v, 13.
Passages might be multiplied without number which prove what was the especial work of Jesus with mankind; that he came to raise human hearts above the dominion of sin, by leading them, by his Father’s spirit of wisdom, truth, and love, in ways of holiness they had not known; that they should be holy as he is holy, in all meekness and godly conversation, loving one another and doing no evil; that the life they should henceforth live should be by the faith of the Son of God—God dwelling in them and his love being perfected in them.

Now Jesus sought to impress this great truth upon the sad heart of Martha that she might feel her soul drawn out in love and submission to the will of God. He represented himself in his true relation to humanity: “the resurrection and the life;” the representation and embodiment of the spirit-power of God over sin, death, and the grave; that they all were subordinated to his divine and glorious purpose to “work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

If it be still insisted that Martha did not comprehend this doctrine, I have only to reply that it was because Jesus was not yet risen to prove it, and make it plain beyond all controversy. In this case, as in others, Jesus asserted what was not yet understood, what the world could not know, but might believe, without the striking evidence to be afterwards given. But he did strike the central fact of the new revelation,—the power of the quickening spirit over the lusts of the flesh, whereby it obtained an insight into the wise and benevolent designs of God in his government and providence over the imperfections and weaknesses of this mortal life, preparatory to the entrance upon the full joys and blessedness of immortality.

When Jesus was risen from the dead many things were made plain to his disciples which they did not comprehend before. Among others was the certainty now felt that there is help and strength for the struggling spirit of man to obtain the ascendency over the body, and to live in a higher and nobler form of conscious being, when the dust shall have returned to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it.

Faith in this power of the spirit became the strength and hope and
comfort of the believers, and sustained and cheered them in their toils and sufferings, and made them conquerors and more than conquerors through him who loved them and gave himself for them. It was the anchor of their souls, sure and steadfast, amid all perils. They relied upon it for themselves, and commended it to others as sufficient for all trials and sorrows—a safe support in every need. They dwelt upon it with utmost confidence and satisfaction. It shed a light and lustre over all the conditions of life, removed the sting of death, and dispelled the victory of the grave. They did not die.

St. Paul is very lucid and distinct in his treatment of this subject. He says: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved (if the body were decomposed), we (the inner man) have a building of God, an house (spiritual body) not made with hands eternal in the heavens: for we that are in this tabernacle (body) do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed (rid of life because of suffering), but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

In his first letter, Chap. xv, he treats the subject more at length, and shows most conclusively that the body we now inhabit is not to be raised, is not the body we are to have, any more than the grain that dies in the ground. The germ, the spirit-life, is to start into a higher life and be clothed with such body as God shall give it, retaining its own personality, because God shall give to every seed his own body. "It is sown a natural (earthly) body; it is raised a spiritual body,—and as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Thus it will be seen that Christianity reveals the great glad truth that man shall not die, but continue to live in a higher and purer state of being, though the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved. It was in the office of Christ to reveal and make prominent this doctrine of life and immortality. He stood forth separate and distinct from all who had come before him in his advocacy of it as the antidote of sorrow, the ground of hope, and strength, and joy, and life, for all who believed it. He did not come to create it, or make it possible for them who might believe. He came to reveal it as a truth, as a fact of God, hidden for ages and generations, but now to be made manifest by his resurrection from the dead, whereby as.
surance was to be given unto all men that, as he lives, we shall live also; for he will swallow up death in victory and wipe away tears from all faces and take away his rebuke from all the earth.

Let us consider this glorious truth on the individual heart in the presence of death. Jesus gives it a power sufficient to remove the thought of death from the believer's mind so effectually that death had no more dominion over it, "for whoso believeth in him shall never die." Jesus felt the power of this great truth as he stood there talking with the weeping sister, and when at the grave of his friend Lazarus. He was sustained by it when treading the wine press alone in the garden, in stern conflict with duty and the cross on one hand and self-will and disobedience upon the other. He conquered though he fell. He won a victory for humanity the world had never known; for through suffering, he was made perfect that he might succor others and be for salvation unto the ends of the ends of the earth.

St. Paul felt the power of it when the time of his departure was at hand. Having fought the good fight and kept the faith, he had no fear of death. He was ready to be offered—to depart and be with Christ in the still more intimate relation of a perfect spirit-life. He did not die; he "passed through" the dark valley to the better land. Peter and John and all the disciples and martyrs for truth did not die; they went home—"passed through" into the immortal home.

I think this subject must be plain, very plain, to all who will examine and reflect upon it, and bring the teaching and spirit of Jesus right home to their own hearts as a life power and a guide to the truth. I think it was very plain to our dear brother's mind while he lay there so calm, so humble, so childlike, so perfectly resigned to the will of the loving Father that no murmur of complaint ever escaped his lips. Perfectly conscious that the hour of his departure was near, he made all preparation for it, that could be made, by arranging his earthly affairs in wisdom and prudence for the good of others, giving such directions and advice as seemed important and practical; then waiting patiently for the angel of God to come and guide him to the heavenly inheritance, to the beloved in the bosom
of the Father. He saw no death. He felt no fear. He believed in him who “is the resurrection and the life;” that he had abolished death and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel. He did not die. His last words, whispered to his beloved and faithful wife who was leaning over him, were, “I AM PASSING THROUGH.”

Yes, he did not die. He was only “passing through” to the blessed land, to the house not made with hands, to be clothed upon with the spirit-body and dwell with God, and Christ, the angels, and ransomed spirits evermore; to bask in the clear sunlight of truth and love; to wander at will amid the trees of paradise and bathe in the river of water of life, mingling his heart’s purest devotions with a ransomed world; in songs of ceaseless praise to Almighty God in everlasting gratitude for his great goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

May we not, friends, learn lessons of wisdom and have confidence in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, when we see such efficacy in the power of Christian Faith, such blessedness in Christian Hope? We are all of us mortal, in our earthly being; and all of us have spirits which have need to be touched and trained to the love and life of God, that the lives we now live may be by the faith of the Son of God and in hope of joys to come. We have need to learn of Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart, that we may find rest unto our souls. It will not do to trust in an arm of flesh. Nothing earthy can abide us in times of our greatest need. Our hearts must be staid on God. The doctrines of men, of sects, are not enough. They partake too much of the spirit of this world, of its selfishness, of its pride and folly. They will not abide us when standing naked before God. Our souls must be absorbed into his love and light and life, as revealed by Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and life. We must believe in him, live in him, walk by faith, and we shall have the life of God renewed within us. We shall live in constant preparation, in full assurance of the immortal life. We shall, indeed, have it now,—“shall have everlasting life, and not come into condemnation, but be passed from death unto life.” “God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him.” — Luke, xx, 38. We have need to know this truth; to feel it as a conviction, a power abiding within us, guiding our hearts, control]
ing our passions, shaping our conduct, forming our characters, and preparing us to enter into the joy of our Lord to go no more out forever.

A living faith in Jesus Christ as the great Teacher and loving Saviour sent of God to represent his divinity and our humanity, and show us how his spirit in us—"the inner man of the heart"—should be raised into a rightful supremacy over the flesh, "the outer man," and make us the willing subjects of God's most holy government, established over all for good and not for evil, that we should "purify our souls in obeying the truth through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, loving one another with pure hearts fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever." We must consent to be led by his holy spirit; "for as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." The old man with his lusts must be crucified and passed away; and we must put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

This result of a living faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, will impart to the soul a conviction, a power, and a presence, which no fear can disturb, no sorrow darken. It accepts the hand of God and feels itself drawn into the realm of love, purity, and peace. It leans on the arm of God and finds support through all trials, sickness, sorrow. Death can not weaken it. It looks up to God through shadows and tears and sees him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, that we might live with him, and be glorified together.

Let us, my brethren and sisters, examine our own hearts, learn our own minds, prove our own feelings, and see whether we be in the faith, rooted and grounded in Jesus, and growing up into him who is the head in all things. Our lives, our hearts, our thoughts, our whole being belongs to God. He made us; he preserves us; he feeds and clothes us. In him we live, and move, and have our being. "Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." "Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do all to the glory of God."
With such a faith we shall be prepared to live, to rejoice and be glad all our days. With such a faith we "shall never die," but like our good brother, we shall "pass through" to our happy, glorious, immortal home, to dwell with those we have loved, with all the pure and holy; and, with every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, in the sea, and all that are in them and join the universal anthem of deliverance from sin, of victory over death, of salvation and praise; "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."