
Death Swallowed Up in Victory

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Andrew Symington (1785–1853) was a Scottish Reformed Presbyterian minister known for his keen mind and kind spirit. He graduated M.A. from Glasgow University in 1803, was ordained in 1809 to serve in his hometown of Paisley, and in 1820 was appointed professor of theology for the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He was honored with the Doctor of Divinity degree from both Western University of Pennsylvania (1831) and the University of Glasgow (1840). He and his wife, Jane, had fourteen children, of whom only six outlived him. He died after a railroad accident.

Dr. Symington published many tracts and sermons, and a few books, including *The Martyrs Monument* (1847) and *Elements of Divine Truth* (1854). Together with his younger brother, William Symington (1795–1862), he was counted by the Reformed Presbyterians as one of the most preeminent ministers since the end of the seventeenth century. His balanced approach to Christianity helped the next generation of Reformed Presbyterian ministers to be rooted in the Scriptures, devoted to missions, and gracious to other evangelicals outside their denomination.

Death Swallowed Up in Victory

"He shall swallow up death in victory."

—Isaiah 25:8

It is the morning of the holy Sabbath. This hallowed day, as it commemorates the victory of Jesus over the grave, should be a season of joy and triumph to the Christian. Why do I observe so many worshippers clad in the apparel of mourners?¹ Why is every countenance so sad and so deeply traced with the unequivocal indications of heartfelt sorrow? Alas! the countenance of him that so long and so lately gladdened you from this place is now changed and shrouded. The lips that instructed and exhorted and comforted you are now

1. Preached on the Sunday following the death of the Rev. William Goold, editor of the *Works of John Owen*.

silent in death. You shall see your lately beloved pastor no more till the morning of the resurrection. We have followed his mortal remains to the grave and deposited them there to rest in hope. While proceeding through the streets of your city in the performance of the last sad offices, we were forcibly reminded that death prevails over all, and leaves behind it everywhere memorials of its universal reign. Your deserted palaces, your dismantled and untenanted castles, and your effort to give immortality to mortals, in the monuments you have erected to the soldier and the senator, the philosopher and the bard, as well as your garnished cemeteries, are so many memorials of the victories of the universal conqueror. Death is indeed a great conqueror, but there is a greater; and to direct your view, to inspire your faith and hope, and to comfort your hearts on this mournful occasion, I am to tell you of a greater conqueror than death—one

who encountered and vanquished this great destroyer. Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears. Jesus, your Savior, has conquered death; yet a little while, and shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54).

The Christian hearer knows at once to whom and to what the brief and memorable words of this prophetic oracle apply; but it may contribute to our satisfaction to mark the connection in which they stand. Isaiah has predicted in the preceding part of his prophecy the fall of the enemies of Zion. Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Babylon, Dumah, Arabia, and Tyre, sink in succession under the burden of divine judgment. From the uttermost part of the earth, songs are heard reiterating, "Glory to the righteous—the Righteous One, the Blessed Savior. The moon is confounded and the sun is ashamed in the splendor of Zion's triumphs, and the Lord of hosts

reigns in mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously" (see Isa. 24:23).

Then follows the song in the chapter from which we have taken our text. From the first to the eighth verse the prophet celebrates blessings enjoyed and expected, and the concluding verses give a response of gratitude and exultation. From the first to the fifth verse, the prophet speaks to God in the name of the church, and from the sixth to the eighth he speaks in the name of God to the church. This not only presents a variety, at once relieving and agreeable, but seems instructively to express the reciprocation of joy which obtains between God and the church. She celebrates His praise, and He rejoices over her with joy. Whatever immediate reference may be supposed to be made to Babylon or other vanquished enemy of Zion, the text must refer to Him whom the ancient deliverances prefigured, whose day they prepared and pre-indicated, and

must be applied to the victory and triumph of the Messiah on His cross, in His gospel kingdom, and in the ultimate resurrection of the just, when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

In the text we have Death, the grim king of terrors, the formidable foe of man, the great devourer of the human race. And conspicuously placed in opposition to Death, we have Jesus Christ, the Lord of hosts, the Seed of the woman, the Child born, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Mighty God. The two are supposed to meet in dire encounter. The issue is a victory on the side of Christ. "He shall swallow up death in victory" (Isa. 25:8). Mark the language, which of course is figurative. Animals swallow their food. The lion swallows up his prey. In the prophetic dream, the lean and ill-favored cattle swallowed up the seven fat cattle. The rod of Aaron, in ancient miracle, swallowed up the rod of the Egyptian sorcerers. Water

swallows up the heavier substances cast into it. A numerous army swallows up a smaller. An earthquake swallows up men and their habitations, as it did Korah and his associates in rebellion. Death is the great devourer, swallowing up the successive generations of the human family, and may be fitly described by the prophet: "Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it" (Isa. 5:14). This devourer came upon Jesus, gaping upon Him with his mouth as a ravening and roaring lion, but it was swallowed up in victory; language expressing, if not the ease with which the foe was vanquished, his entire and final destruction.

Let us direct our attention to this glorious victory. It may be contemplated in three aspects: as achieved by Christ in His immediate personal conflict with death; as prosecuted in the deliverance of His

redeemed people; and as consummated in the resurrection and in the ultimate triumphs of the celestial state.

I. *Jesus has swallowed up death in victory in His personal conflict with death.* Why is it, we naturally inquire, that Jesus must encounter death? He is not a transgressor of the law, which declares that the wages of sin is death. He is not connected by natural descent or federal representation with the one man by whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin. His encounter with death is connected with the gracious design of God to save others from sin and death. Rebellion had been raised against the throne of God in the angelic and human families. Divine justice took effect in the expulsion of rebel spirits from heaven and in the condemnation of man, who, through the instigation of Satan, had been seduced into disobedience. As in matter of fact, so by an unimpeachable constitution, the human race is implicated

in the sentence of death pronounced upon Adam; and, in holy and retributive judgment, Satan has received a judicial power in carrying the sentence into execution.

But it was the sovereign and gracious purpose of God to save sinners of the human family, and arrangements are made to carry this into effect in consistency with the divine perfections, the honor of the divine law, and the interests of the divine government. Accordingly, we read that the designs of mercy were conditioned on the sufferings and death of Christ, and that by these He was to obtain the victory over Satan. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12). In ancient prophecy, He is boldly represented as eagerly anticipating the contest and exulting in its issues; "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O

death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" (Hos. 13:14).

And when the fullness of time came, He assumed human nature for this very end, "knowing, intending, and contemplating all the results of that act of assumption, through the period of the designed humiliation, and for ever" (John Pye Smith). "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; and forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

Thus, in the arrangements of mercy, and in the prospective and comprehensive view of the Savior, death has an essential connection with His delivering others from death. Accordingly, no sooner was the Savior born than death marked

Him for its prey. The dread monster stood at Bethlehem to devour Mary's child as soon as He was born. Thirsting for His blood, Satan found a ready instrument in the jealous Herod, but he was defeated. Though disappointed, he still pursued his object and conducted the Redeemer to the pinnacle of the temple, seeking to engulf Him, as he had done man, in self-destruction. Still defeated in his aim, he instigated the inhabitants of Nazareth to destroy Him by violence; he stirred up the priests and scribes against Him; he instigated the traitor; he united the mocking Herod and temporizing Pilate in enmity against Him; he prompted the false witnesses; he animated the popular cry, "Crucify him, crucify him"; and they hurried Him to the cross. Death pursues Jesus from the manger to the tree, and seems to challenge Him as the Philistine did David, "Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field"

(1 Sam. 17:44). But stay, proud Goliath! A stone from the sling of the despised Bethlehemite may yet penetrate thy forehead; and thy sword, red with the blood of thousands, may yet sever thy head from thy body and proclaim thy power destroyed. The combatants close in bloody, mortal grapple. Jesus dies, and death seems to have the victory—if won, the most signal and illustrious of his numerous victories. But is it so? Just views of the case will show the contrary; Jesus is the conqueror, and death is swallowed up in victory.

This will appear if we reflect on the perfectly voluntary nature of the death of Christ and the power He put forth in it. We observe about the Savior a perfect willingness in all that He did and suffered; and in a sense peculiar to Himself He died voluntarily. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death" (Eccl. 8:8). Believers in the triumph

of faith on their beds are ready to die, and holy martyrs have triumphed over all the pains and the fears of death on the scaffold; but they had no power over the spirit in the moment of death. Jesus had this power. His life was not taken from Him by wicked men nor by Satan; no, not by God Himself. He laid down His life. His death was His own voluntary act, in a sense in which no saint or martyr ever did die or could die. Having commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, He bowed His head and gave up the ghost; and, voluntarily dismissing His spirit, He expired. He died with dignity and majesty as the Prince of life. He died a conqueror. The Serpent had succeeded in Eden, but was defeated here; for his head was crushed by the very heel which he bruised. The conflict was dreadful and the Redeemer fell, but "death was undermost in the struggle" (John MacLaurin)

But we must consider here the intensity

of His sufferings and the infinite merit of His death. Jesus, in His death, had something more to contend with than the dread and murderous malignity of Satan. Death is the proper expression of the holiness and righteousness of God, as embodied in the sanction of the divine law; and when carried into execution, it is the law put into operation by the divine power. Death is the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the unrighteousness of man, and it takes effect upon the soul; and this appeared in the unutterable mortal sorrows of the Redeemer. Not the fear of natural death, not the fear of failing to support a proper deportment in the last scene, not the desertion of His disciples, not the miseries coming upon Jerusalem, could make Him cry, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). It was not the crown of thorns, nor the pains of crucifixion, nor the taunt and contempt of man, nor the assault of devils,

that called forth the shriek, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Sin appeared to Him in all its atrocity and desert; and that countenance whose light is the life of saints and the joy of angels was hid in penal frown, and a sense of wrath seems to have penetrated the soul. He stood in the room of the guilty, and suffered and died, the just for the unjust. Upon no other principle can the providence of God, in the sufferings and death of the innocent and holy Savior, be vindicated from indelible imputation. In His death, Jesus made atonement for sin, abolished death, and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and thus He obtained the victory. "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of

them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:14–15).

The demerit of sin was swallowed up in the infinite satisfaction of His death. His sufferings were appointed of God, and they were endured voluntarily; and they derived an infinite value from His divine dignity. And thus was Satan's power destroyed. The secret of Satan's strength lay in the law, and the victory was won in the satisfaction of the law. Satan's main strength did not lie in his physical power, nor in his intellectual subtlety, nor in his moral malignity, which could easily have been over-matched by the infinite power and wisdom and love of the Savior; but the secret of his strength lay in the divine law, and the victory was achieved in the satisfaction of this law. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 15:56–57).

Through death, He destroyed (abolished the power of) him that had the power of death, and thus was death destroyed by itself, as Goliath's head was severed by his own sword. Satan was thus taken in his own snare, his power of death abolished, and he fell down at the foot of the cross, like the lords of the Philistines, when the pillars of the house were shaken by the right and left hand of him whom they had blindfolded.

This victory is further manifest in the resurrection of Christ. When they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in the sepulcher. His burial was necessary to fulfill ancient prophecy, to give full evidence of the fact of His death, to confound further His enemies, to prepare consolation for His friends, and to make His entrance into heaven and His glory more illustrious. His enemies crucified Him, but His friends buried Him. With all

the mitigation of this circumstance, death seems for the time to prevail. The grave is death's territory, but in this case it was entered only to be spoiled, as the event of the morning of the third day declares. The house appointed for all living never had such a tenant; but it was not to Christ a long home. There is no time to erect His monument. Let us go to His grave. He is not here, but He is risen, and in circumstances that indicate triumph. He arose from the dead by His own power. His resurrection was authorized by the Father, and it declared His entire satisfaction; the quickening of the dead body was the work, in respect of efficiency, of the Holy Spirit; and the resumption of the body into union with the briefly disembodied spirit was the glorious victorious act of the Redeemer Himself, the Lion of the tribe of Judah going up from the prey. We may say at the tomb which is opened by sin, *swal-*

lowed up in death, but at the tomb of Christ, death swallowed up in victory.

There are many indications of victory. The trembling keepers, the composed state of the grave-clothes, the quaking earth, the attendant angels, all proclaim a victory. Let us lift the napkin which was left behind, wipe away our tears, and looking up to our exalted Savior, ask in triumph, "O grave, where is thy victory?" O death, thy dark escutcheon is for once inscribed, *alive for evermore*. Death has been pursued to his last quarters and slain, like the king of Chaldee, in his own capital. The ever-hungry grave, the great devourer, when it caught the dead body of Christ, swallowed its own destruction.

And we must not overlook here the power with which the Savior is invested in consequence of His death. The power of death has been taken out of the hand of Satan and put into the hand of Christ. He conquered on the cross and descended

to the grave only to strip the slain and to come forth with the spoil. He has now the keys of hell and death, emblems of His universal power. To Him now belong the issues from death. He will henceforth take the prey from the mighty. At the very cross we see His power put forth, the opening graves at His feet and the dismissal of a soul to paradise proclaiming His victory. It was promised, "He shall divide the spoil with the strong" (Isa. 53:12); and He declared this as an object of His immediate anticipation in His death. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:31-32). And again, "And when he, the Comforter, is come, he will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (see John 16:7-11).

Little did Satan think of the results of that dread work which he was hurrying on in the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus! The crown of thorns became a crown of gold, the reed a scepter, and the very cross a throne of glory, and a triumphal chariot in which the Redeemer would ride prosperously, conquering and to conquer.

II. *Jesus swallows up death in victory in the deliverance of His redeemed people.* Death extends its power beyond the body of man. The body is not now in its state of primeval beauty and vigor; but in its deformity and infirmity and disease and subjection to the service of sin and to dissolution, it resembles the mangled carcass that has been in the mouth of a beast of prey—enfeebled, bleeding with wounds, and ready to be swallowed up at the pleasure of the devourer. But oh! This is the least part of the evil of death. Death has extended to the soul and appears in the

privation of the moral image of God. The eye of the understanding is darkened, the spiritual senses are benumbed, and no pulsation indicates the operation or existence of any holy affection toward God. The soul is dead in trespasses and sins, and man is thus emphatically dead while he lives. The entire privation of life is predicated of those who are without faith. "He that hath not the Son hath not life. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death" (1 John 5:12; John 6:53; 1 John 3:14). Alas! we are sometimes deeply affected when we think on the mortality of the body, while we are utterly unconscious of the dominion of spiritual death in the soul; and this unconsciousness is itself strong evidence of the mournful fact! No instruction, argument, reproof, allurements, or terror can take saving effect upon the soul of man till the spirit of life in Christ Jesus

sets it free from the law of sin and death. But He shall see His seed. "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12).

Having achieved the victory, the Redeemer takes the spoil. His Father distributes to Him many for His portion, and He shall take them as a spoil from the great adversary. In consequence of His death, the Redeemer has received power to take the prey from the mighty and to deliver the lawful captive. He sends His gospel "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Luke 1:79), and makes it "powerful to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:18). "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5:25).

The Redeemer swallows up death in

victory, in the regeneration of the spiritually dead, and in the justified state of all believing in Him. He quickens whom He wills, and every converted sinner is spoil taken from the enemy, a lamb plucked from the mouth of the devourer, and a soul saved from death. In imparting spiritual life to the soul, death is destroyed; for the soul is born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of truth, which liveth and abideth forever. Whosoever liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die. This spiritual life is of a high order of excellence. It is not only more excellent than the animal and rational life possessed in common with others, but it is more excellent than that possessed by Adam in innocence, which was subject to mutability, and than that of angels in their first estate, which also was subject to change; it is life especially hid with Christ in God, and it is grafted into the life of Christ, in whom it shall live forever and

ever beyond the reach of change, of decay, or of destruction.

All this is secured in the justified state of the believer and in the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit. He is pardoned all his iniquity and accepted in the beloved. He has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Is not death swallowed up of life in the glorious statement of evangelical doctrine by the apostle Paul? "If by one man's offence *death* reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in *life* by one, Christ Jesus" (Rom. 5:17). And fear of condemnation is swallowed up in the victory of Christian faith and hope inspired by the triumph of the arisen Savior. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again" (Rom. 8:33-34).

Ample provision is made for sustaining the Christian life in Christ Himself, the living bread that came down from heaven. The bread that perishes sustains by the divine providence the perishing body, and death gets the victory at last; but "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:51). And in it death is swallowed up in victory. Paradise is regained, the flaming sword is quenched in the blood of Christ, and a way is opened to the tree of life whose laden boughs, pendent with immortal fruit, invite to eat and live forever.

Is not death also swallowed up in victory in the warfare of believers on earth? Sin, Satan, the world, and every enemy have been overcome by Christ, meritoriously in the satisfaction of His sacrifice, exemplarily in His own life and death, and efficiently in the power and grace imparted to His people; so that in their warfare, however hot and obstinate, they

have assurance of ultimate victory, the victory that overcometh, even their faith. A troop may overcome them for a time, but they shall overcome at the last. They may lose a battle, but not the war.

And how is death swallowed up in the peace, the joy, the consolation, the assurance of the Christian, in all these things more than a conqueror through Him who loved him? And in the believer's death itself there is victory. Mark the triumph of Christian faith over the last enemy. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. I am persuaded that death shall not be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord" (Ps. 23:4; see Rom. 8:38–39). Death and the grave and hell have no power over the redeemed in the hour of dissolution. Death has power indeed over the wicked and is said to feed upon them, and the first-born of death to devour their strength; but to the

Christian death is a conquered foe, and so swallowed up in life that the day of death is better than the day of birth; the soul is in safety in stronger than angels' hands; and when the body dies because of sin, the soul lives because of righteousness. And in the moment of dissolution it triumphs in immortality, not merely in that immortality which it holds of God by natural constitution and by which it survives death in every case, but in that glory, honor, and immortality which it has in union to Him who was dead and is now alive forevermore. Death is to the believer not a curse but a blessing, and has been transferred from the penalty of the law to the promises of the covenant. It has still its repulsive form, but it is harmless as the serpent without its sting; and the believer finds in reality what he had anticipated in his triumphant faith, "O death, where is thy sting! Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory!" (1 Cor. 15:55, 57).

III. *Jesus shall swallow up death in victory in the resurrection, and in the ultimate triumphs of the celestial state.* The scenes of the Redeemer's victories already contemplated have been on earth, on His cross, in the soul of the believer, and on the death-bed of the Christian. We must now carry our view upward to the heavens, forward to the resurrection, and onward and upward to the final celestial state of eternal glory.

We have satisfactory evidence that the heavens have received Christ until the times of the restitution of all things. In the epistle to the Hebrews, His entrance into heaven is described in reference to His priesthood, in that after offering a sacrifice for sin, He entered into the most holy places not made with hands. He made this entrance in human nature, as the representative of His people, with infinite acceptance on the part of the Father, with infinite joy to Himself, with unspeak-

able gladness to the angels and saints in heaven, and with infinite advantage to His people on the earth. He now lives to make intercession and has taken His seat at the right hand of God, prosecuting the ends of His sacrifice, and expecting all His enemies to be made His footstool. The entrance of Christ into heaven is also represented in the light of a triumph, bearing more immediately on His kingly character.

To nothing short of this do the lofty descriptions in the book of Psalms ultimately refer: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises unto our King, sing praises. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive" (Ps. 24:7–8; 47:5–6; 68:18).

This is the language of triumph; the victory follows the battle, and triumph follows the victory. Jesus, after a most dreadful battle and a decisive victory, received a glorious triumph when He ascended to heaven, laden with the spoil, greeted by angels and the redeemed hosts, and above them all welcomed by His Father to sit down with Him on His throne. We can conceive of nothing so magnificent as the triumph of the Savior ascending to heaven, with death, the grave, hell, and Satan who had the power of them all now conquered and dragged at the glowing wheels of His triumphal chariot while thousands of thousands shout, "Sing unto the Lord a new song, for...his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory" (Ps. 98:1). There He triumphs in life, having left the shades of death for the light of heaven. He feels not now, as in His humiliation, the infirmities and pains of the body, or sorrow

of soul in penal separation from the face of His Father. "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him...thy salvation; honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever; thou hast made him exceeding glad in thy countenance" (Ps. 21:4-6). In that blessed place where there is no death, the words have been fulfilled for Him, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore" (Ps. 16:11).

Death is also swallowed up in victory in the glorification of the spirits of the just. The soul of man has by the will of its Maker a natural immortality, and is not subject to dissolution with the body. But this is not the victory of which we speak, nor is this a consequence of the death of Christ. The natural immortality of the soul must prove a death that never dies to the impenitent. But the souls of the redeemed are at their death made perfect in holiness and imme-

diately pass into glory. Witness the soul of Lazarus carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; the penitent malefactor dismissed to paradise; the spirit of Stephen received by Jesus standing at the right hand of God; under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held; and a great multitude which no man can number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and having palms, the emblems of their victory, in their hands. They formerly triumphed in their faith and hope, but now in complete realization; and, made more than conquerors over sin and Satan and the world, and affliction and persecution and death, through Him that loved them, they triumph in life eternal. The spirits of just men made perfect sleep not with the body, nor are they sent to purgatorial fires, but they are with Christ, trophies of the victory which He won on Calvary.

Nor must we overlook here the progressive triumphs of the Redeemer's kingdom on earth. For though gone to heaven, He is still prosecuting His victory on the earth, conquering and to conquer. This world is covered with death's shade; but through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. The cross on which the Savior conquered is the grand instrument of converting sinners from the error of their ways, and saving souls from death. The preaching of it is the institution of the Savior, and though a stumbling block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, it is unto them that are called the power of God and the wisdom of God. The power of the gospel is forcibly represented by Paul in allusion to the successful operation of military engines upon a strongly fortified city: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to

the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4–5). "Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most mighty! ...and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and righteousness. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee" (Ps. 45:3–5).

Heaven looks down with interest to earth, while this warfare of love and mercy proceeds. Every sinner that repents swells its song of triumph. The cross has triumphed already in the erection and preservation of the kingdom of Christ on the earth. In opposition to the malice of Jews, the idolatry of the heathen, the learning of Greece, and the power of Rome, it spread abroad. It has triumphed in surviving the most bloody persecutions at the hand of pagan and papal Rome; and

its very martyrs overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives unto the death.

We are assured greater victories are yet to be achieved, when the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ shall come. The cause of truth shall prosper over all opposition, and those that have gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, shall stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God and singing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb. Truth shall obtain a victory over error, and in the spread of the gospel and its power by the Spirit of God, death shall be swallowed up of life in the conversion of thousands of millions. It is cheering to think of the ultimate triumph of Christ in the spiritual conquest of the world, and to know that the crowns of many victories are to shine on the head of Him who conquered

on Calvary, and who is now in heaven, where His glories are being celebrated with increasing triumphs.

But our text is to receive its fulfillment in the resurrection and glorification of the bodies of the redeemed. It is well to mark the connection between the Old Testament and the New, and to study both Testaments in the light which they reflect on one another. As in the burial of Christ death seemed to prevail, so it seems presently to have the victory over the bodies of the saints. Soon was the victory declared in the case of Christ; and His resurrection is the pledge of that of all His saints. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, ... then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:53–54). It thus appears that the victory in our text has a special reference to the hour that cometh, in which all that are in their graves shall hear

the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth, and they that have done good go on to the resurrection of life. The body which has borne the image of the earthly Adam shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Freed from all disease and deformity and weakness, it shall become celestial, incorruptible, immortal, glorious, powerful, and spiritual—a fit receptacle for the glorified spirit. The temples of the Holy Ghost which had lain for a time in ruins shall be rebuilt, and of every one it may be justly said, the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former. “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4). It is with us no incredible thing that God should raise the dead. We know the Scriptures, and the power of God, and the victory of the Savior; and as soon shall the conquered grave recall Christ

from the heavens and swallow Him up as retain the bodies of His redeemed children. Let the Christian triumphing at the grave of Christ adopt the challenge for himself, as well as for Christ, "O grave, where is thy victory!"

And here let us reflect on the completeness of this victory, in the perfect gathering together of the redeemed unto Christ. Mark the Savior's words, as bearing upon a perfect comprehension of all the redeemed: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:39). Not one shall be retained by death. All shall be raised or changed and transferred to the enjoyment of eternal life, untouched by the second death. Over them the first death had some dominion, although no penal power. But over them the second death shall have no power. As expressive of the final triumph of the Sav-

ior over death, we read, "And death and hell [that is, the bodies of the wicked and their souls that had existed in the separate state] were cast into the lake of fire: this is the second death" (Rev. 20:14). "Now he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev. 2:11). While swallowing up its millions, it shall have no power over the redeemed.

And to crown the whole, Satan shall at this time be cast down into final degradation. He has had the power of death. As he had seduced man into sin and brought death by sin, he received a judicial power to inflict death, and he is the executioner of the awful sentence in the case of the wicked, in the alarms of their consciences, in his full retention of them, and in the final inflictions of the place of woe. He shall be bound and cast into prison, and, after being loosed for a season, in the rampant wickedness which shall immediately precede the judgment, it is said, "The devil

that deceived the nations was cast into the lake of fire, and shall be tormented for ever and ever" (see Rev. 20:10). This is the judgment for which the angels that sinned and kept not their first estate have been reserved in everlasting chains under darkness. Now is come "the time" they dreaded, in the day of the Savior's sojourn on earth. And now a long protracted and dreadful conflict closes in glorious victory. While mercy will triumph in the eternal salvation of the redeemed, justice will triumph for ever and ever in its victory over the unrighteousness of human and angelic criminals. Tell it now, seducer of Adam and tempter of Christ, whose is the victory? Death is swallowed up in eternal life, and he that had the power of death is cast into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever.

Such, then, is the victory of the redeemed over death and over him that has the power of death. Glorious, final,

everlasting victory, felt in the degradation and final punishment of the devil, his angels, and wicked men; and celebrated in the eternal jubilations of those who are around the throne!

Toward an improvement of this subject, one word in our text demands, in the first place, our attention. It is death—the dreadful thing; the object of universal fear. We see its effects upon the human frame, consuming its beauty, wasting its strength, and cutting it off with pining sickness or violent pain. We see its effects in the changed countenance, the pallid cheek and lip, the cold hand, the stiff limb, the shroud, the coffin, the grave, and the worm. We feel its effects in the rupture of tender ties and in the irreparable blank and desolation which it leaves behind. Various are the instruments by which it works. It approaches us, not only in the diseases to which the body is subject, but it lurks and works in the air, in the fire,

and in the water; in the food we eat, in the water we drink, in the path on which we walk, and in the vehicle in which we are conveyed; it is in the calm as well as in the tempest. It spares neither rank nor sex. The very infant unborn, the infant, the playful child, the blooming virgin, the ruddy youth, the man of strength in the midst of his days, and the man trembling on his staff are alike liable to death; and the great and the mighty who keep the world alive, as well as the obscure and unknown. Gold cannot bribe it, wisdom cannot elude it, eloquence charm it, greatness awe it, power resist it, or tears melt it. It is everywhere, and has made the world a field of graves and the inhabitants mourners.

To appreciate aright the nature of this great evil, we must view it in the light of the Scriptures; finding it first as the penalty annexed to the divine law when promulgated to man, and then as the sentence of the eternal Judge of all, when omniscient

justice found man a transgressor. It is an evil of appalling magnitude, extending to the soul as well as to the body, and it is the just desert of sin. It is no debt of nature or tribute of being, as some speak, no imperfection in the constitution of things, no arbitrary infliction, no paternal chastisement. It is the wages of sin, and its universal prevalence confirms the divine word, and pleads God's holy cause against man's rebellion. But we see the least part of it, for when the dust returns to the dust whence it came, the spirit returns to give account to God. We feel the beginnings of this evil in the conscious fears of our own minds, but we would need to contemplate it in the alarms of a conscience awakened to a sense of sin, in the case of a sinner who feels that his diseased body cannot live and his guilty soul cannot die. It would be well to look at Death as sitting on his pale horse, and Hell following with him, and making his advance to

ourselves. We would need to look down into the place where the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched, and to see hell from beneath moved to meet the sinner at his coming. Our busy occupations, our thoughtlessness, our procrastination, our doubts and skepticism cannot change its certainty, mitigate its nature, or give us safety and hope. It has reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to the present generation, and it is continuing to make havoc of the human race and menace the generations to come, like the Dragon in the Apocalypse standing to devour the child so soon as it is born. Insatiate monster, gorging up the human race, who shall contend with thee?

Let us turn from the appalling scene, and direct our thoughts to Jesus' victory over this great foe. Warriors that have slain their thousands become at last the powerless victims of this destroyer; but here is One who has triumphed over death. He

was not its victim when He died on the cross, nor its prisoner when He lay in the grave, for to both He voluntarily submitted, and in both He conquered. And now the Redeemer has not only dissipated the natural darkness which broods over human destiny, by certifying the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, but He has chased away the deep penal gloom which sin has brought over the future state, having abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. These beam with a clear and steady light from the cross. The victory achieved there was won for others. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture; He tasted death for us, and in the great truths of His atonement, and righteousness, and grace, the prey of a great spoil is divided. The death of Christ was the death of death to all that believe in Him. "It is finished!" was not the groan of dissolving nature, but the shout of victory. In His death and in His

resurrection He accomplished His own words, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" (Hos. 13:14), and the believer, standing at the cross and at the grave of Christ, may begin to triumph, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

The Redeemer's victory is the only antidote against the evil and the fear of death. The gospel proclaims this victory and the believer rejoices in it "as one that findeth great spoil." Realize it for yourselves, my hearers, by that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. You know it is appointed unto men once to die, and it is well to be prepared for this greatest and most important of all certainties. Your utmost care will not prevent it; your vigilance will not escape it. It will baffle your physician, it will pursue you to the most healthy climate found beneath the sun. Be therefore ready. Wait not for

intimations of its approach, for it may surprise you in a moment. Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for tonight thy soul may be required at thy hand. And oh! think what death is, when all relations to this world shall be broken up, and the soul be separated from the body and placed before the tribunal of God.

Man cannot live forever here, and though he could, his life perpetuated without holiness and without the divine favor, could not meet the necessities of his nature, nor give him felicity; nor would such a boon, could it be conferred, be worthy to be compared for a moment with the peace and joy of a life of Christian faith and hope. But it is vain to speculate here. You must die, and it is wisdom to be prepared for it. You are not abandoned to the darkness and apprehensions of your own minds. You are not left to the ambiguous oracles of reason or the philosophy of the world. Look to the cross of Christ and to

His grave, and meditate on His victory over death. Reflect on the satisfaction and merit of His obedience unto death, on the righteousness and salvation which are now brought near, on the abounding of sin and the super-abounding of grace, on the reign of sin unto death and the reign of grace through righteousness unto eternal life, and on the love and power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and live forever. In view of death, commit your spirits unto the Savior, confiding in the love that burns in His bosom, in the merit and virtue of His blood, in the fullness that it has pleased the Father should that it should dwell in Him, in the promises by which that fullness is accessible to you, in His intercessions within the veil, in the sympathies of His heart, and in the power that is in His arm. Thus shall you have peace with God and be delivered from the tormenting fear of death; thus

shall you have successive victories over sin, and Satan, and the world; thus shall you have communion with God and with heaven. Contemplating the present life as preparatory to another, you shall rightly appreciate your present state. When death shall come, at the time, and where, and how, as it shall please the sovereign Lord, it shall prove not the executioner of justice, but the messenger of grace and deliverance to dismiss the spirit unscathed into the presence of Christ and to leave the flesh to rest in hope of resurrection unto life. Alas! for the folly and the criminality of those who live without faith in the Savior. Live forever here they cannot, and though they could, it would be beneath the end of their being and their capacity of happiness. Die they must. Have you made a covenant with death? Are you in agreement with hell? Your covenant shall be disannulled, and your agreement shall not stand. Death, and Hell following

with him, approach you, and you cannot escape but under the scepter of Him who conquered both. Remember the words of the wisdom of God: "Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:35–36).

Let this subject be improved for consolation on occasion of the death of the righteous.

We are prone at such times to dwell on our privation, to indulge in mournful recollections and dark forebodings, and we are apt to be much carried off with what is merely sensible. Our thoughts wander around the tomb, and our imagination takes afflicting looks of the moldering clay. Instead of this, it were more befitting that our faith follow the disembodied spirit into the presence of Christ, and that we rejoiced in the victory which has been wrought for the believer in the triumph which he

now celebrates when he has exchanged the helmet for the crown and the sword for the palm. Would we with our tears and our repining bring him back again to the battlefield? This, were it possible, would be unkind. Rather, let us put on the whole armor of God, fight what remains of the good fight of faith, and, looking at the cross, anticipate the victory through Him who loved us, expecting through grace to join the happy throng who stand before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and who cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God and unto the Lamb" (see Rev. 7:10). And what time we descend from these celestial contemplations, and "go to the grave to weep there," let us go in faith, and, despite sense, believe that we shall see the glory of God, when in the resurrection, "death shall be swallowed up in victory, and mortality swallowed up of life."

My friends, what blessed hopes and

strong consolations does the faith of the gospel inspire! Can infidelity do anything like this? What do we lose should these hopes be in doubt, which God forbid we should entertain for a moment? What boon do unbelievers offer us for renouncing the Christian hope of immortality and glory? What promise do they give? Gloomy consolation! The promise of an eternal sleep; a promise, too, which they cannot make good.

To conclude, let us all realize by our faith the victory achieved on Calvary. Let us fight the good fight of faith under the Captain of our Salvation, and let us rejoice in the hope of ultimate victory over death and the grave, these universal conquerors. You have heard of the oft-repeated and instructive action of a Saracen conqueror who, immediately before his death, ordered his herald to fasten on a lance the shroud in which he was to be buried and to carry it about, proclaiming, "This is all

that remains of Saladin the Great." Of similar import was the answer made to the complimentary question proposed to one by a courtier, riding with him in the splendor and shouts of a triumphal procession, "What is wanting here?" "Continuance," was the reply. Ah! My friends, is a winding-sheet all that remains, is the pageant of a day all that the world can give to those who have slain their thousands? We have something better in the spoils of the Redeemer's victory: a certified and illuminated immortality, and a glorious resurrection, and all this enhanced by everlasting duration. Yes, "white robes" of celestial light, not to array the dead body for the grave, but to clothe the glorified person, and "palms" to wave in a triumph whose joys and splendor shall continue and increase forever and ever.

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