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SERMON CCCLXXXVIII.

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THE APPROACH OF DEATH - A NEW YEAR'S SERMON.

"Behold I come quickly." - REVELATIONS iii. 11. (First clause.)

THE hopes, my brethren, which belong to you on the first Sabbath of a New Year, do not contemplate for yourselves a greater good than do the wishes of him who now addresses you. The object of your hopes, may indeed be different from that which my wishes for you respect, but I am sure that you will not compare them, in point of intrinsic worth, or in regard to the certainty and permanency which characterize them respectively.

The state of the human mind, at a season like the present, is for the most part, one of expectation. We have done with the concerns of the old year, and we are awaiting the development of a new one; and turning down the page upon which our previous history has been written, and the lessons of experience have been recorded, we are giving licence to imagination to fill up the sheet upon which reality has not yet traced a letter. I am not wrong in supposing, that this page of the future, as it now appears to us, is full of scenes of joy; or, if in any case fear predominates over hope, the faint lines in which it traces its object, and the very undecided shading which it throws over it, stand in very strong contrast to the bold strokes with

which hope paints its visions, and the bright colors in which it sets them. It is a scene of earthly joy which our imagination is describing. We are filling up the prospect of the coming year with hours of comfort and peace, and with days of prosperity. There are no clouds about that earthly horizon, as hope presents it; and an imagination under the tutelage of hope troubles us with no dreams of coming sorrow, anxiety or painful changes. Now, my brethren, it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure connected with many of those mental hallucinations to which men are exposed, during which reason is dethroned, and yet we always pity their subject as wholly unfitted, as well for the duties as the joys of real life; and who cannot see that however delightful to the mind may be the visions of a deceitful hope, there is an evil connected with its uncontrolled influence? Who cannot see that it must unfit us to meet any of those changes, those thousand nameless contingencies, which sober reason tells us must help to make up the future, as they have furnished the materials of the history of the past. Who, at least, cannot see its vanity, in view of one great event which we know to be certain, and which, yet, we are apt to throw entirely out of all our calculations? And, if I call your attention to that event to-day, it is only to render effective my wishes for your good. If I throw upon the canvass before you, in strong colors, death, in some of its most interesting associations, it is because that is an event whose certainty no earthly hope can destroy, whose rapidly approaching steps it cannot cause to linger, though it may tend to unfit us wholly for its experience. It is, then, with a view of preparing you for a higher, nobler, greater good, than any which your most rational, enlarged and sanguine earthly hopes contemplate, that I call you to-day to ponder, for a few moments, the message which the Son of God sends to each one of us—"Behold I come quickly." If the influence of the theme is salutary, we will dwell upon it, though its relations may be painful; if the draught which our physician mingles for us gives us the promise of returning health, we will drink it however bitter or nauseous it may be to the taste.

My subject, then, this morning, is death—and my object is to set it before you, in some of those aspects and associations which belong to it, and in the light of which it is calculated to exert a healthful moral influence over the mind.

It is far from my purpose, my brethren, to endeavor to establish the proposition that we must *die*—I would not insult your understanding by such an argument—are you not every day treading upon the dust of generations who have gone before you? Have you in your minds no remembrance and on your persons no emblems of mourning for friends whose eyes your own hands have closed? Has not disease already more than once shattered your own frames, and made you sigh over the

elements of death at work within yourselves? No, my brethren, we shall not undertake the proof of a proposition already so firmly established. And yet, though we may not deny it, we are certainly apt to forget it; or, if we do not forget it, we look upon it as a mere isolated fact, separate entirely from all those connexions and results which alone give it power over the human mind. Practically, death is a forceless thing; and we too frequently live as though Providence had given us a dispensation from its experience, and rendered us invulnerable to the shaft which must pierce every other bosom; or, to say the very least, we give the subject in our minds too little importance; neglect its application to ourselves, and act by it, as though familiarity with it had entirely changed its aspect, and taken away from it all its solemn relations and consequences. It is my business, then, to remind you of it; to secure for it your attentive consideration, in those views of it, which give to it its importance, and invest it with interest to man.

I. The first thought then upon which I would fix your minds, is the most obvious; death, is to separate us from this world, change our mode of existence, and break up all our present associations. There is, my brethren, an instinctive attachment to life, which God for the wisest purposes has implanted in our natures. We shrink back at once, no less from the thought than from the hour of our dissolution. Death is nature's most perfect abhorrence. There is something in the grave, the pall, and the winding sheet, something in the silence of that house appointed for all the living, something in the ravages to which our clay must submit, in the cold, damp, gloomy sepulchre, to which we never can be reconciled. Reason about it as long, and as much as we please, we never reason away its repulsiveness, set it in whatever light, and dress it in whatever garb we may, there is still the same appalling features standing out to the view. When we speak to you of death, we speak to you of the sundering of those ties which have bound that spirit to the tabernacle which it inhabits; we speak to you of that manly and vigorous form tottering to its fall; of that countenance becoming blanched, of that eye looking for the last time upon the objects in which you delighted, and then losing its brightness, and becoming glazed with the frosts of the tomb. No, God never meant that we should be reconciled to such thoughts and no influence can bring our feelings into harmony with such changes. Life indeed may have associations which render it insupportable, and which may drive a man to death, as a refuge from still greater evils; and the religion of the gospel of Jesus Christ as it presents in clear colors the bright scenes beyond the waters, may enable us to go down into the cold waves of that stream which separates us from yonder world of light and joy—but neither the concerns of the present life, nor the hopes of the life which is to come can even reconcile us to death, as

death—God forbid that they should do so, they should convert the tenants of this earth into suicides, and the world which they inherit into a charnel house.

It is not, however, a mere feeling of nature, which binds us to our present mode of existence. We are here living in a scene of constant excitement, as our thoughts and affections are engaged with the objects by which we are surrounded. We have our plans, our enterprizes and our hopes: What living man has not some link to bind him to this world—some association amid which he wishes to muse—some object which makes present existence desirable? We have formed our schemes, it may be, for earthly aggrandizement, and we are engaged in their execution; or we are busy with our plans which contemplate earthly honors as their results; or we are surrounding ourselves with a thousand earthly endearments, or we are mingling in scenes of joy, and painting the prospect of brighter joys to come. We know not, my brethren, how many, or how strong are the ties which bind us to this world, until they come to be sundered. But we shall very soon know, Whatever may be our plans, whatever the stage of their progress, death will terminate them; it will break up all our earthly associations however tender and interesting, and dissolve all our connections, shut us out from all these scenes, and put an extinguisher upon all these bright hopes.

The termination of any course of pleasurable action is painful; the last hour spent in familiar scenes, the last sight of objects upon which we have been wont to dwell with delight, always stirs up emotions of deep regret, even when we hope our separation from these scenes and objects is not to be perpetual, how much more painful must our feelings be when our adieu is an eternal one—when with our heads upon our dying pillow, we shall be forced to think, that yonder sun which has shone upon our pathway, shall to us, rise no more; our voice shall no more be heard among our fellows; the pursuits of time no more engage our attention, but while we are shut out from human view, the current of affairs shall run on as ever, and men shall tread upon our sepulchres, not knowing, or forgetting that we have ever been. It shall be so to all of us—Death will work out the demonstration of all I utter.

And yet these are the most unimportant and least interesting associations of the event, which we are now called to ponder. There is a connection between the present and the future, as there has been the past and the present. Life is but the first stage of our being; the second has yet to come. We are now but rehearsing the parts, which we are hereafter to act in an eternal scene. Conscience no less distinctly forebodes a judgment, than do the analogies of things foretell a future. This life, therefore, is not only the stepping stone to another, but the scene of preparation for it. Here are to be formed

characters which are there to be confirmed: here we are to authorize actions, which are there to be punished or rewarded. We do not stop to prove this point, the evidence of which is so clear and strong in every man's bosom, that he can neither escape nor stifle it.

Taking this view of life, death is a subject of intensely interesting thought to us, whatever may be our character and relations. If so far as our own personal interests are concerned, we are ready to abide its issues, so that death will not extinguish our hopes and blot out our joys; yet it will bring to a close all our opportunities of earthly usefulness. The very nature which God has given us shows most clearly, that he never designed we should live for ourselves exclusively. The social principle of our being, as it prevents men from occupying entirely isolated positions, brings them within circles of reciprocal influence. Every member of society acts upon some other member of society, and when God converts a man, he consecrates his social influence to sanctified ends. The constitution of society, as God has announced it, is wonderfully evincive of his wisdom. Religion breaks up no natural associations, and sunders no natural ties. It is easy to perceive that if a line, a palpable line of separation, were drawn between the religious and irreligious, if the order of society was such, that the moment a man became a Christian, all his connections must be dissolved, and new ones, purely religious in their character, formed, not only should the influence of the Gospel keep society in a state of constant revolution, and change, but the circle of religious influence should be very much circumscribed. As it is, "the salt of the earth" is much more generally diffused than at first sight we might imagine it to be. The line of spiritual separation, runs through the nearest and dearest relationships of human life—human beings are linked together by the strongest ties of blood, affection and interest, who spiritually stand at a great remove from each other—whose sympathy mingle upon every other subject, save this one of religion. Were it otherwise, as in all probability it should have been, had the circumstances of men been of our arranging, we can see that the opportunities of Christian influence and usefulness had been very much diminished in number. Now there is not one of us for whom God has not opened channels in which his influence may run, and to whom he has not given opportunities for usefulness. There is not, probably, a single Christian whose relations do not furnish him with an ample field for Christian enterprise. And how, if we are the true disciples of the Son of God, can we be otherwise than thankful under the influence of the thought, that scarcely a day passes without furnishing us with some opportunity of doing good.

But, my brethren, death is, in this respect, to change our circumstances. Then all our influence is gone, as we are re-

moved from the sphere in which alone it can find room for play: and if there is anything which can embitter death to a child of God, when he may be confident of his own personal safety, it is the thought, that as he departs, he is leaving behind him some whom he loves, and whose state reproves his own unfaithfulness, and whom he must meet again, and whom he may meet at the judgment seat, unreconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

But, my brethren, if it should be otherwise with ourselves, so that we are not able, personally, to abide the issues of this trying hour, then death comes to blot out all our hopes, and to extinguish all our joys. It is so, because, now, and here, under the influence of the Gospel, the arrangement of Providence, and the dispensation of the Spirit, we may prepare for the world which is to come. No man who is out of Christ would ever disparage his present circumstances, by a comparison of them with a world of retribution. He feels that now there is hope, which then there will not be, and if his mind has anything like correct views of his position and relations, he can enter into the meaning of the poet as he sings

" While God invites, how blest the day,
How sweet the Gospel's charming sound."

But do we not know that death will change this scene. Are not our very circumstances, as they define our probation, constantly heralding their own change? Does not every Sabbath's sun, as it rises and sets upon us, tell us of the time when it shall rise and set no more? Oh! what a wondrous change will death make in a sinner's position. The light of this holy day, which speaks of hope, never breaks in upon the darkness of the sepulchre; nor does the voice of mercy's messenger interrupt its silence; nor do the movements of the Spirit disturb its deep repose; all that the human mind, in such a state, after death knows of hope, is embraced in the recollection of its former brightness and promise; all that it knows of means of grace and recovering influence, is found in the memory of their abuse and rejection.

While death thus blots out all the hopes of the unbeliever, it at the same time extinguishes all his joys. The facts upon the subject of human happiness in this world, are precisely the reverse of what we should have supposed they should be, reasoning solely from the character of God in ignorance of his plans and purposes. The actually existing state of things has more than once staggered human faith. "As for me," said the Psalmist, "my feet had well nigh slipped, when I beheld the prosperity of the wicked." It is not to be denied, that sinful man has many enjoyments in this world. It is perfectly idle to say, as we look over a festive circle and see the cheerful

countenances, and hear the merry peal and vivacious laugh, that there is no enjoyment there—the whole scene would contradict us. There may be some hearts concealed under those gay exteriors, but for the most part those who compose that circle, are for the moment in a state of pleasurable excitement. And so, too, abounding wealth and popular applause are sources of great happiness to unsanctified hearts, and such as judge only from outward appearances, are apt to look upon this world's votaries, as the monopolizers of enjoyment. We have, however, here only the front view of the picture; examine it more closely, and you will see in the background the angel of death advancing, and one and another of these figures moving through the scene, are dropping at his touch, and these happy souls in quick succession are exchanging all their hilarity and high excitement for the sorrows and the darkness of an eternal night. Thus the world is moving on, day after day, perpetually changing its phases. Thus end every day in more or less numerous instances, all the joys which the world can give. If we take this earth for our portion, it is our only portion, and however large it may be, it is soon to be wrested from us, and then the human mind is left to feed for ever upon reflection; and the only word of consolation, if consolation it can be called, which falls upon the ear, is this—"Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivest thy good things." "Death, what a melancholy day to those who have no God."

There is one more view to be taken of the subject before we have done with those of its relations and aspects which give it interest and importance. Death is but the coming of the Lord. The time, the circumstances, the manner of our departure, are not left to fate or lawless contingency. We are too prone to look at death solely as a natural event, something which takes place in accordance with a law of physical necessity. In one sense it is a natural event, as nature is sinful, but in every other sense it is the most unnatural event that takes place in God's Kingdom; and every man feels it to be so, and his emotions in view of it, require some other explanation than such as the laws of nature furnish. We may talk like philosophers upon the subject, but we feel like men; and after all, this is the thought which gives death its power—it is the appointment of heaven—it is the coming of God to the soul. Do we doubt it? Need we be told by whose order death desolates all our joys? Can we for a moment harbor the supposition, that a universal law, whose operation no skill can evade, no power interrupt, to which there have been no exceptions, but such as have displayed the presence in his wondrous Sovereignty, of Him who alone can control his own laws, is the offspring of contingency or the creature of chance? Is the being in whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life, housed in the grave without his knowledge, and become the

food of worms without his order? No, brethren, it cannot be. The author of life must be the appointer of death. "He hides His face and we are troubled," he takes away our breath, and we return to the dust. He clothes the King of Terrors with his armor, assigns to disease its work, numbers our days and summons us away.

And why so terrible? Is it painful to part with earthly friends, earthly possessions, and earthly joys? It is. But yet the feeling is the same, whatever be our earthly circumstances and relations. Here poverty in its rags trembles—there wealth in its splendid attire crouches and weeps, and the proudest, loftiest spirit shivers through fear. Ah! death, as the coming of the Lord, is terrible; because man feels that there are enmities with which he has sported, and he is sensible of the painful reaction of his folly upon his own soul. There is a controversy managed by a being whose reasoning he cannot refute, even with that God who has appointed him to die, who in death revives the power of conscience, gives vividness to the memorials of the past, and a clear foresight of the future. "Death is the wages of sin," and sentence of "death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

II. But secondly, the coming of the Lord is not only certain but it is close at hand. Our dying hour is very near. "Behold," says the master, "I come quickly." If death, viewed in its relations, should excite thought, the rapidity of its approach should add to its exciting power. That we shall die, we know, but when we know not; of this much, however we are certain, we must die ere long. We do not believe it. We calculate upon a long time in the future. Who, in this congregation, dreams to-day of dying soon, very soon. And yet upon this subject, the providence of God has taught us some very impressive lessons, and uttered them in very emphatic tones. Have none of us been called, during the last twelve months, to part with friends whose hopes of life at the beginning of the year were as bright as ours now are? Do my youthful hearers miss none from the circle of their companionship? They passed away, how quickly, and very soon death shall extinguish the lustre of that eye, and blanch that cheek of health, and consign that active frame to the stillness of the tomb. I hear a message coming from the graves of eight of those who composed this congregation twelve months ago. I know not for whom the message is designed, but I do know it is meant for some one within these walls to-day. Its meaning is very intelligible, its utterances are very distinct. My hearer, death comes nigh to you. Ere this opening year shall have completed its revolution, death shall have separated you from earth, its possessions, its honors, its hopes, and its joys; your dust shall return to the earth as it was, and your spirit shall go to the God who gave it. What a thought to ponder. If I never felt how

inadequate to their theme are human conceptions, and how powerless is human language. I feel it now. We are standing and communing upon the very verge of the grave, and in a few moments are all to burst upon the realities of judgment and eternity. What a reflection; how calculated to impress every heart, and awaken all the anxieties of the human bosom. Listen! oh my soul! listen! my dying hearers. It is the voice of our maker and judge. [^] Behold, I come quickly."

I must add one more thought to finish my subject. Death comes *suddenly*. How silently and surely he steals his march upon his unsuspecting victims. As in the dread hour of midnight, when all are wrapped in sleep, unconscious of his movements, insensible to his designs, dreaming of security and peace the thief approaches, "so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Almost uniformly death takes men unawares. Even the wise virgins slept with the foolish until the midnight cry startled them. And it is always so with men whose portion is in this world. They are saying continually "Soul, take thine ease," "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." They are very prudent—they have made their calculations with great accuracy, and they feel confident in view of their arrangements, that when death does come they shall be prepared; and accordingly, their minds are occupied with their plans, and their hearts with their prospective pleasures, and the world keeps them in a flurry of perpetual excitement; and when they have just matured some new enterprise, and start out with souls buoyed up by the hope of certain success, the King of Terrors meets them. Death—inexorable death—waits for the accomplishment of no plans, tarries for the enjoyment of no pleasures. Deaf alike to the voice of entreaty and the cry of despair, it hurries away its victim from his unfinished enterprises, and his untasted, though anticipated pleasures, to the dread realities of the world which is to come. I would put the question to my hearers: Did you ever know a man who was not taken unawares, and that, notwithstanding all his warnings, though disease was strewing its victims around him, and shattering his own frame, though his tottering steps were every day foretelling his fall. And so he will come to you, "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh," is a truth which is yet to be illustrated in your experience.

There is not one of us, my brethren, who, whenever death approaches, will not be able to give many apparently very good reasons why he should not die. Yet we cannot, by argument disarm the King of Terrors of his power, nor by any reasoning, kindle his compassion. He has his work to do, and he does it, and does it often, in a way, and always at a time wholly unexpected. Yes, this is death; these are its relations, its circumstances and its issues.

Upon what fearful subjects, then, do we treat to-day, and

what solemnity they throw over the thoughts and associations of the present hour. Every thing upon which the mind fastens, seems to gather hues from a dying hour. This sanctuary is full of the intimations of death—this first Sabbath of a new year is heralding judgment.

And have I spoken the truth, my brethren? Have I said no more than the word of God commands, and the Providence of God instructs me to utter? And is it in reality so? Are these the circumstances and relations of our being? Must we die? Resign to others who labored not for it, the fruit of our toil? Be cut down, just when we had prepared for ease and comfort? Be torn away from the things of earth, its plans, its pleasures, and its hopes; and as though nature had nothing else to tell us but that we are dying creatures, must we be tortured every hour, be warned by every circumstance, as death-obtrudes itself every where upon us, in our business, our retirement, our enjoyments, writing his summons upon our couch, inscribing vanity upon all we own, and all we ask—defeating our purposes, sporting with our plans, and while hope is gilding the far-stretched landscape of earth, substituting in its place a judgment whose awards are to be eternal. Yes, my hearers, it is even so. We do not ask you to admit the fact, but to consider it. One would think, that once admitted, we never could forget it—for can we imagine anything so foolish as unconcern about it? Any thing more irrational than in these circumstances to cling to life with a fondness which nothing but an everlasting possession can justify, and to merge all the vast interests of an eternal world in the comparatively trifling business of an hour? Why should we, my brethren, think so little of an event so awfully important? Why bury ourselves in earthly things, and leave this entirely out of our calculation.

I know there are seasons when men do think of it. The hour of death seems to have arrived, and then they feel its importance, and it presses with all its weight upon the unsanctified bosom, and they avow the concern they should have felt before. Ah! how often in these circumstances have been heard the voice of self-reproach—the prayer for indulgence—the promise of amendment—and then conscious guilt triumphs over every assurance of pardon, or false hope arrests inquiry and deceives the spirit, or stupor steals over the frame and deprives of reason. It is madness to postpone the thought of dying—it calls for our meditation now, the inquiries it starts demands our instant attention. Sport not with a theme so dreadful.

These reflections gather interest and impressive power from the rapid approach of that dread consummation which suggests them. It is, indeed, so, that before this year closes, some of us who are this day in the sanctuary, shall be numbered among

the victims of the fell-destroyer? What, then, can justify our hardihood? My youthful hearer, what means your presumption? Man of reason, why your folly? Why so credulous, so anxious about every thing else, so incredulous and unconcerned here?—here where facts are written as with a sunbeam before your eyes, as death walks all around you, clothed with omnipotence, regarding none of the distinctions which obtain among men, destroying alike the old and the young, the rich and the poor. Surely, there is enough in the message I bring, and in the facts which enforce it, to alarm the most secure, and quicken the most stupid. Come, my unconverted hearer, ponder it well; gold and silver, houses and lands, earthly pleasures which command your attention, are all trifles compared with this subject of your studied and persevering neglect. The anxieties they kindle in your bosom, and the efforts they call forth, are all misplaced and misdirected, perverted and abused in your circumstances. Death, which is to tear you away from these objects, demands all the anxieties they awaken, and all the efforts they secure; death, at your very doors, claims your first notice, and if we are men of reason, capable of thought, and of distinguishing between good and evil, there is one message which will sink deep into our hearts, and possess all our souls—"prepare to die."

Oh! I am not wrong when under the influence of such reflections. I preach to you of death—death rapidly approaching. It would be well if it were written upon the walls of the apartment where pleasure leads on her revelries—upon the coffers in which the miser hides his gold, and if every breath of popular applause wafted its warning to the ear, I would let childhood learn it, and not suffer old age to forget it. It is a melancholy task I have to perform—a painful theme upon which I am called to dwell. But I come a messenger of God to the domain of death. The spirit of the Lord has sent me to walk among the bones which are very dry. I may be repulsed but I will repeat the warning, multiply the arguments, renew the entreaty. Forget them who may; undervalue them who may; despise them who may; I will be faithful to you, though you may be unfaithful to yourselves.

We have said that death was God's appointment. It is the coming of the Lord; do we really believe it? How strange the truth. He kindled the sun to light us on our way. He unlocks his storehouses, and scatters around us his varied beauties. What goodness marks his dispensations, what glory shines in his procedures. But death—anomalous death—bringing suffering and woe, burying in ruin the beauties we admire, and blighting our dearest joys; this, too, is the appointment of God. We may say, that we believe it—but our faith is a useless principle of a thoughtless mind, wholly inefficient for all purposes of moral activity, and foreign from every exer-

cise of right feeling. On what course correspondent to our conviction of the fact have we entered? In what practical habit has this thought been embodied? When so busily engaged in the affairs of the present world, to the exclusion of all considerations of the affairs of the world which is to come, do we really believe that death is the appointment of God? No! it comes we know not whence—commissioned by, we think not whom. It is a law of necessity, which prevents inquiry—a freak of fate of which there is no rational solution. Did we really believe that death was but the sentence of the eternal one, very different emotions should agitate, and very different plans should occupy our minds. Other views should attend us through the perplexities of the day; follow us to our nightly slumbers, be present with us in the place of prayer, give greater importance to the varieties, and another meaning to the joys and sorrows of life. Prove me this, and you have introduced me to a train of thought of high and awful character—thought which conveys a shock to the inmost soul, and fills it with emotions to which otherwise man must be a stranger. Did we but feel it as true, the awful secrecy in which he has wrapped up our destiny, would wrest from us all our fond, but false calculations, and make a matter of present interest the event whose considerations we postpone to future years. With what cautious step should we tread through a world which, on every side, presents to us the symbols of death. In what a prayerful frame should every change find us; how full our preparation to depart. How precious, then, should every Sabbath seem. We should not, then, so often speak to you in vain—argue without convincing—entreat without affecting you. Oh! my brethren you do not feel it because you do not believe it. You shut your ears when we declare it—you steel your hearts when we would urge it.

Oh! what an assembly have I been addressing; what solemn, fearful truths have I uttered. Brethren, beloved brethren, if I reproach you, it is in kindness—it is in the discharge of a duty, springing out of a relation which God has established between you and me, and over which, as a God of love, he himself presides; and you know that not without cause, I speak as I have done.

Death is the wages of sin; and can the sinner go cheerfully on, adding to his sin, to aggravate his death? Will he spend the last hour in thoughtlessness, and even while quivering on the verge of the grave, turn away from, perhaps the last admonition? Will he amuse himself with sin, and make profaned Sabbaths, a neglected sanctuary, and abused mercies his pastime? Oh, this is fearful trifling with the anger of an Omnipotent God.

God will come suddenly—he will break in upon all your schemes, and as you are running in the full chase after worldly

pleasures, throw in between you and the object of your pursuit his summons to judgment, to check you in your course and bring you away. The elements by which he means to affect your change, are even now at work in your bosom, imperceptibly to yourself, but they are shortly and surely to develop the fearful catastrophe—and if you can still be unconcerned, we can but retire to weep over ineffectual admonitions.

Do you ask me what you shall do? I preach to you, then, Jesus, “the resurrection and the life.” I preach him to you, my hearer, for yourself, an able Saviour, and willing to save unto the uttermost. He hath borne your griefs and carried your sorrows. By his own death he has destroyed death, and him that had the power of it. Believe on him, and you shall share with him in his triumphs, and have part in the first resurrection. Do it at once. Renounce every false hope. Beware of the deceiver; he secretly lurks for thy soul. Reason not against the truth; stifle not your convictions; smother not your impressions. Believe not that the hope of the Gospel is the acquisition of an hour; the child of disease, the boon of death. Think not that reason must light up her lamp amid the storm which destroys you, and discover to you there the paradise of God. Think not that the angel of pity must compassionate your last agony, and give you a joyful hope. These are all deceitful, damning expectations, oh repeat them no more to a convicted conscience. They will serve but to hush you to a deeper sleep, and render more fearful the crisis when it shall arrive.

Brethren, my warning is concluded. My message, perhaps, may be ineffectual; its impressions may die away with the sound of your speaker’s voice. But of this I am sure: If it has been received with the same interest with which it has been prepared and uttered, the scene of the judgment will show that it has not been spoken nor heard in vain. We leave its results, then, to the developments of that solemn scene.

SERMON CCCLXXXIX.

BY REV. DAVID MAGIE;

ELIZABETHTOWN, N. J.

THE MINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT.

“Shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious.”—2 CORINTHIANS 3 : 8.

Nothing seems to reach perfection at once. In the visible, material world, we see first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. The acorn grows into a majes-