



THE

TWO DEATH-BEDS.

BY

A. P. G.

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TWO DEATH-BEDS.

I. WITHOUT CHRIST.

SOME time ago I was staying with friends in one of the Midland counties, and while walking one day in the garden I met a respectably-dressed middle-aged man, of whom I knew nothing, but to whom, after a few words on ordinary topics had passed between us, I spoke about his immortal soul. He listened willingly and respectfully enough, but I soon found he knew nothing of, and cared not for, the eternal realities I was pressing on him ; and on my speaking

of that great reality—the eternal punishment of the lost, of those who reject God and His word, who despise His grace, who go on satisfied with themselves, *their* thoughts, *their* opinions, *their* theories, without even thinking of testing them by that which is the only true test, *the word of God*; and even where they find them untenable, if so tested, prefer to keep their thoughts, and reject the word of God—I say, when I spoke of *that* eternal reality, he laughed a scornful laugh, and said, “Excuse me, sir, but I don’t believe in hell; I don’t believe there’s any such place.”

Though shocked, I was not surprised; for it is only what one finds on all sides in the present day, either

openly proclaimed or secretly believed. And I have really more respect, in one sense, for the man who (however terrible it may be) openly states his unbelief, than for the one who either conceals it, or, *professing* to believe in the reality of that place of torment, goes on practically denying it, by living for himself in this world, instead of bowing to the great truth of the gospel, that he is a lost sinner, and accepting Him who came to seek and to save the lost. The one is, in a certain sense, honest in avowing his disbelief; the other is deceiving himself and all around him. *Both end* in the same place by-and-by; and whether you openly deny the word of God with your lips, or practically

deny it by your life, be you the most profligate or the most moral, the end will be "the lake of fire."

All I could do (and all I would do in such a case) was to bring to bear upon him *that Word* which he denied. I read to him from Luke xvi. 23, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," and I asked him if he dared to say that the Blessed One who spoke those words was saying what was false. I read to him passages from the Revelation, and other parts of the Word, in which that terrible reality is so plainly spoken of; but no, he laughed his scornful laugh, and said, "*Nothing shall ever make me believe it.*" (Mark the words, dear reader.) "No one has ever come

back from hell to prove there is such a place," and so on. I felt I had nothing more to say. If he would not bow to the word of God, I knew he would not to anything I could say, so I left him with this one remark, "I pray God that, before you die, you may be brought to believe in the reality of what you now deny."

Not long ago I was staying in the same place, and heard that he was dead; and the particulars of his death left on me an impression which nothing can ever efface. May God, in His infinite grace, use them for the blessing of any poor, unbelieving sinner who may read this.

A Christian gentleman in the neighbourhood, hearing he was dying, went

more than once to see him; but found him, even with death and eternity staring him in the face, persistently denying what he had already denied to me, hardened against the truth of God, apparently going into His presence with that lie in his mouth. But *God would not let him*. Two days before he died he awoke to the terrible reality that there was a hell. "*I know NOW,*" he said, "*that there IS a hell, and I'M GOING THERE.*" *For those two fearful days that was the burden of his speech. And so he died.*

Oh, beloved reader, poor unsaved sinner, pause a moment, I beseech you. Do you believe in the reality of that place of torment, from which "the smoke of their torment ascendeth

up for ever and ever ; and they have *no rest* day nor night " ? (Rev. xiv. 11.) Or do you think the Word of the living God is a fable, to be accepted or not, as you judge best ? You will find out your mistake some day, and will have to bow to the reality of it. Oh that it may be before it is *too late* ! Perhaps you will say, you are not a rejecter of the word of God ; that you do believe in it ; that you lead a moral and religious life, doing your best, endeavouring to keep the law (obliged to admit, if you are honest, that you have broken it) and so hope to work your way to heaven. What ! Christ left out ? Whom do you think He came to die for ? Those who do their best ? Those who are

satisfied with themselves? Those who float quietly down in the stream of this world's religion, "making the best," as they say, "of this world," and hoping to get the best of the next? No, but for the *wretched*, the *undone*, the *ruined*, the *ungodly*, the *lost*. (Rom. v. 6; Luke xix. 10.)

Perhaps you will say you do not leave out Christ, that you do hope to get the benefit of His death, though how, I am sure you cannot say. But think how terribly dishonouring it is to add anything to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ; above all, to add any wretched works of your own, to get to heaven. To profess to believe in Him who came down to save poor sinners, when nothing else

could save them but His taking upon Himself death and judgment. He took that judgment even to being forsaken of God, when He was bearing sin that was not His own. I say, to profess to believe in Him, and yet not to know the first great truth the gospel presents, that you are not only a sinner, but a *lost* sinner — this is darkness indeed.

Surely, a *Saviour* is for the lost; and if you, unsaved sinner, unforgiven sinner, profligate sinner, religious sinner, *lost* sinner, be you who you may and what you may, bow to that truth, and turn simply to that Saviour, giving up all but Him, you are saved, saved for ever; death will be no longer a terror to you, for you belong

to Him who has conquered it; judgment no longer feared, for He has borne it for you, and borne it to the very uttermost—even to the being forsaken of His God that you might not be. Believe, and all is yours; for Christ is yours. Oh, what a real possession is Christ! Could all the possessions of this world give you one moment's peace with God, or relieve your burdened conscience? The possession of Christ does both—nay, far more, it lifts the heart of the poor rest-seeking sinner up to Him who died that He might save him—who breaks the sinner's heart with a sense of sin, and then pours in the healing balm of His love, that He may have that broken heart

for Himself. Oh, what a reality is the possession of Christ! Is He yours, dear reader, your very own? "He that *hath the Son hath life*; and he that hath not the Son of God *hath not life.*" (1 John v. 12.) Test yourself honestly in the sight of God, by that one verse, Have you got life? Have you got Christ? Do not think it is a mere phrase—it is a blessed reality, known *only* to those who have it.

II. WITH CHRIST.

Turn now with me, dear reader, to another scene, and, oh, what a scene! the death-bed of a saint of God—the death-bed of one who knew Christ and His love; knew the reality of both. I think, in this poor world of unreali-

ties, there is nothing more blessed to witness than the death-bed of a child of God. By such an one I stood but lately. She was eighty years old and upward, and of those years she had known the Lord for fifty-five, and it may truly be said, had lived for Him; and now she is passing away, departing to be with Him, which is far better. Not the shadow of a cloud at that death-bed; great weakness of body, great prostration; she cannot even move in her bed without loving hands to help her—the hands of those whom she has made it the object of her life to bring to Christ. By the infinite grace of God she has seen them, one after another, brought to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

Children, grandchildren, faithful old servants, surround that bed, all safe in Christ, all eager to do some little thing to help that beloved one who is passing away from them here. Oh, how weak and helpless in body is she! She has just been moved in her bed, and is speaking—clear come the words—“Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” No strength of her own, but how strong in Him! In the moments of her greatest weakness, of her wandering, how she always brightened up at the precious name of Jesus; at a verse repeated out of the word of God—that which had been her food for fifty-five years. And when, for some days before she fell asleep, she no longer, except

at rare intervals, recognized those who spoke to her, even the nearest and dearest, there were always two things uppermost in her mind.

It might be a son, a daughter, a grandchild, who came to her bedside—she was wandering as to natural things; but what does she say? “Are you happy in the Lord?” “Yes.” And what then? “*Don't be half-hearted for Christ.*” Yes, that was her little parting word of counsel to all, “Don't be half-hearted for Christ;” and surely we can say, She “being dead, yet speaketh;” for those words remain graven on the hearts of those who heard them; and may the Lord bring them home to any poor feeble one belonging to Him who reads them here.

And now the scene is about to close. She has been lying very quiet for a time, with closed eyes, when suddenly she opens them wide, gazing steadfastly upwards. The glaze of death is already on them, but there is no flinching in that look. And it is the more remarkable from the fact that, for the few days previously, her eyes had never been fixed on any one object for a minute at a time, wandering restlessly from one to another, and all over the room. But now there is not even the motion of an eyelid, nothing but a fixed, steady look upward—straight upward. The look is so remarkable and so sustained that a daughter by her side says, “What are you looking at, darling

mother?" No answer, the look still upward. Then another daughter, lying on the bed at her side, says, "You see Jesus, don't you, mother?" Not a movement of the eye, but out comes the answer, clear and strong, "Yes." It is her last word. A few moments more and the eyes gently close, and the spirit has fled to be with Him.

Dear reader, if the Lord tarry, and your death-bed come, which will it be with you? Which would it be were your death-bed to come now, to-morrow, next week? Would you have to look back on a life spent for yourself, eternity before you, and Christ not yours? Come to Him now, if you have not come yet.

Listen to His own blessed words, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Accept that loving invitation now. Take your burdened heart and conscience to Him, and you will find rest indeed.

Surely, you know you are a sinner, and surely a sinner needs a Saviour; and there is One who has been saying to you all these years, "Come unto me . . . I will give you rest," and you have turned a deaf ear and a hard heart to those loving words. Oh, how solemn the words spoken by that same loving One, "Ye will *not* come to me that ye might have life." The time is coming when the door of grace will be closed; when the last

one shall be gathered in ; when those who belong to Christ will go to be with Him ; and then, no hope for those who have not obeyed the gospel ! The time is coming, and it is very near too. The cry is gone out, " Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ! " and there are thousands of the Lord's dear ones waiting and looking for His return. Are you ? To the last moment of her life, the dear saint of whom I have written was looking for that, and would not have been at all surprised if He had come even the moment before she was taken to be with Him. She was constantly repeating part of her favourite hymn—

" I'm waiting for Thee, Lord ; "

and it was sung over her grave by many who loved her. Reader, ask yourself if you can sing it from your heart.

“ I ’m waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord,
I ’m waiting for Thee,
For Thy coming again.
Thou ’rt gone over there, Lord,
A place to prepare, Lord ;
Thy home I shall share,
At Thy coming again.

“ ’Mid danger and fear, Lord,
I ’m oft weary here, Lord ;
The day must be near
Of Thy coming again.
’Tis all sunshine there, Lord,
No sighing nor care, Lord,
But glory so fair,
At Thy coming again.

“ Our loved ones before, Lord,
Their troubles are o’er, Lord ;
I ’ll meet them once more
At Thy coming again.

The blood was the sign, Lord,
That marked them as Thine, Lord,
And brightly they 'll shine
At Thy coming again.

“Far spent is the night, Lord ;
Soon all will be bright, Lord ;
Not faith then, but sight,
At Thy coming again.
For, oh ! 'tis Thy face, Lord,
Thy beauty, Thy grace, Lord,
My heart longs to trace
At Thy coming again.

“E'en now let my ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord ;
For brief are the days
Ere Thy coming again.
I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord ;
No triumph for me
Like Thy coming again.”

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