

WHAT IS THERE AFTER DEATH ?

A Gospel Address, delivered at the Victoria Hall, Exeter,
By HEYMAN WREFORD

“ And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame ” (Luke xvi. 22, 23, 24).

WHAT IS THERE AFTER DEATH? Whatever there is, it has to be faced. Not one of us can escape eternity; and the solemnity of it all is that every minute, as it passes, bears us onward; we cannot stay the progress of time, we *must* go onward to eternity. And in that eternity is God. And you and God must meet one day.

It is said, as the clock ticks a soul goes into eternity—a soul for every tick! Where do they go? Men and women are dying all about us: the flight of souls into eternity seems to darken the air around us. And we are all going one day—where?

The prophet in old days cried: “ PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD.” Are you prepared to meet Him? If one of His angels, Michael or Gabriel, came from His presence to-night and stood here, and, facing this audience, said, “ I have come at God’s command to take one from this company into the presence of God this evening,”

what would your feeling be? Would you say with dry lips of fear, "Not me, not me; I do not want to go where God is." Sinner! You cannot be where God is not. HE IS HERE.

A lady who was unsaved had a dream. She dreamed she was out one night in an awful thunderstorm. The lightning flashed before her, and the thunder roared around her. The wild clouds like dark phantoms swept across the sky driven by the fury of the tempest. By and by the storm ceased, and the heavens were filled with the silver radiance of the moon. She gazed in wonder at the change, and her wonder grew as she saw the moon slowly change its shape, until at last it seemed to take the semblance of a mighty hand, and in the hand was a mighty pen. And then the hand moved across the face of the heavens, and the pen wrote the dreamer's name, and underneath the name these words :

"PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD."

Filled with terror she awoke, glad to find it was a dream. It led her to meet God in Christ, and her soul was saved. When one thinks of a world of sinners, and of the peril of the unsaved, one longs for the power to stand on the summit of earth's loftiest peak, and to be able to cry with a voice loud enough to reach from pole to pole, "*Prepare to meet thy God.*" May the words shine before you to-night; may they burn into your heart, until their solemn meaning is learnt, and you are upon your knees crying for mercy from your God.

WHAT IS THERE AFTER DEATH? There is no speculation about the future with the Christian. He has no doubts as to what there is beyond. He can mount like the lark into the skies of faith, singing as he goes, until earth recedes and the song gets fainter to our listening ears. He can say with Paul, "TO DEPART AND TO BE

WITH CHRIST." Ah! to be with Christ. There can be no speculation when Christ is before the soul. And so Paul says again, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord"; and "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

Peter says, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." He speaks of the Lord's coming; of the passing away of all things here, and of all things being made new.

John looked into heaven and saw wondrous things; things past, present, and to come. The panorama of events *after death* passed before him. He saw the risen and ascended Jesus, the Lamb slain, on the throne of God. He saw the bride of Christ in the everlasting glory. He heard the praises of heaven, and saw the great tribulation fall upon the earth. He saw war in heaven, and Christ coming with His saints to judge the nations. He saw the mighty angel bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit. He saw millennial glory shining over all the world. He saw Satan loosed for a little, and the last apostasy and rebellion. He saw the devil cast into the lake of fire for ever. He saw the great white throne, and the dead, "small and great," standing there before God. He saw them judged and cast into the lake of fire.

He beheld the new heaven and the new earth, and "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." In matchless language he describes the glory and the peace of heaven.

The "wall great and high" around that Holy City, the twelve gates, and the mighty angels by them. The twelve gates, twelve pearls, and the wall built of jasper, the foundations garnished with precious stones,

and the street pure gold as transparent glass. He tells of this and more. Read it, my friends, read it! Of God wiping away all tears, of the passing away of death and sorrow, of crying and pain; of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and His servants serving Him, seeing His face, and walking with Him in white, in the brightness of a light that came neither from sun nor moon, for the Lord God giveth them light, and "they shall reign for ever and ever."

And this is for the Christian. With such a future shining before him, what room is there for speculation or for fear? Let the unbeliever speculate, and drift on the sea of life with no rudder of faith to guide him.

For the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ the glory waits, beyond all telling; we should sink beneath the rapture of it all were we to realise what it means to be with Christ. A dear Christian was walking with a friend in the field, and they talked together of the state of the church of God on earth, of the divisions among Christians, etc. Suddenly he paused, and looking upwards said, "There Christ is all and in all." He then sank slowly to the ground and passed away into the immediate presence of the One who had so entranced his soul.

Christian! What is there after death for you?
"Christ, and the glory of the Father's house."

Yes, it is so. Come with me and stand by a Christian's death-bed for a moment. The light of heaven is falling softly on the upturned face, as the lips repeat,

"O Lord, my pilgrim spirit longs
To sing the everlasting songs
Of glory, honour, power;
'Till then when Thou all power shalt wield,
Blest Saviour, Thou wilt be my shield,
For Thou hast to my soul revealed
Thyself, my Strength and Tower."

The wife and children stand around the bed, and he wishes them all good-bye. He sends a message to his absent son, and waits in perfect peace for the home call.

Suddenly he lifts his eyes filling with eternity. "Hark!" he exclaims. All listen as they gaze upon the shining face. And now he cries loudly and clearly:

"Yes, Lord Jesus, *I'm coming!* I'M COMING! I'M COMING!" and then he went. He knew where he was going; he knew to Whom he was going. Perfect rest, and perfect peace for the believer who rests upon the finished work of God's beloved Son.

What is there after death? The narrative I have read to you is fearfully solemn. The question is answered there. First, then,

THERE IS EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH

The rich man and the poor man lived their lives on earth—the one had his "good things," the other his "evil things." They died and passed into eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ follows them beyond the portals of the grave, and tells us where they are, and how they are.

If you took a walk through our crowded cemetery any day, and read the epitaphs, how little would you know of the eternity of those who lay beneath the printed stones. But every one has his or her eternity, and the Lord Jesus Christ knows every one. What a revelation it would be if on every grave there was marked the destiny of each soul—"HEAVEN" or "HELL."

The dead lie there, but the immortal soul is in eternity.

"THE BEGGAR DIED," and around him as he died the waiting angels stand to carry him into his place of rest—Abraham's bosom. There is no word spoken of his burial. Was he buried? Did the dogs who licked

his sores consume his body? Was it thrown upon some dunghill when the angels had done with it? Poor worn-out casket, the soul-jewel that was once in thee has been taken by holy hands to God! Poor man, thou wast a beggar on earth, sitting at the rich man's gate; but now thou art as a prince in Paradise! Thou didst eat gladly of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, but the plenty of the Father's house is thine for ever now!

“ THE RICH MAN ALSO DIED, AND WAS BURIED; AND IN HELL HE LIFT UP HIS EYES, BEING IN TORMENTS.” And when he died, no angel of brightness waited for his soul. He passed into eternity amid all his affluent surroundings. He left his sumptuous feasts and costly apparel to wear the cerements of the grave, and to go down to darkness. He was buried. Yes, he had his funeral train on earth, and the hired wailers and the mourners; they could rend their garments and throw dust into the air, and pass with noisy clamour to his grave. Could they have seen him in eternity—in hell! They talk of his wealth, his splendid home, his well-spread table, of his servants. But where is he, the lord of it all? IN HELL.

Build the splendid monument; rear the costly shrine. Let the tomb of the dead be imposing in its grandeur; cover the pampered body with sycophantic marble; but who will toll the knell for the lost soul? Who will weep on earth for him who wails in torment?

“ THE RICH MAN ALSO DIED, AND WAS BURIED; AND IN HELL . . . ”

These are indeed solemn things to engage our thoughts. I think of *you*, and *your* death, and *your* eternity. People will say of you one day, and it may be soon, So and so is dead and buried. But where will your soul be? Man! if you died now, where would your

soul go? Woman! if you went to eternity now, where would you be? Answer in the presence of God, and answer now.

Let me tell you of a solemn ending to a life.

DEAD—WITHOUT WARNING

The lights of the public-house were shining on the bar and its surroundings, and falling on the faces of those who stood there drinking. The laugh, the song, the impure jest were heard, amid the jingling of the glasses and the constant orders to the bar-tenders.

All at once there was a sound of breaking glass, and a heavy fall.

What is it? A man has fallen along the floor, fainting, dying, or—they falter at the word as they crowd around, and lift him up; but it has to be pronounced, he is DEAD. A strong, powerful man to look at; a man of forty, it may be; broad-chested and with large limbs, now dead, lying there with the gas light shining upon his dead face.

They take him up and carry him out, pick up the broken glass, and scatter the saw-dust over the floor. It is of no use making too much fuss over it, it will hinder trade. Talk of politics, the weather, the living, anything to drive away thoughts about that cold form upstairs, and that soul that has just passed into eternity.

I saw the body of that man in the post-mortem room of the London Hospital. The doctors examined him to find out the immediate cause of death. Their knives were sharp, their opinions learned and based upon scientific principles; but not one of them hinted at the real cause of it all. They said he died a drunkard, and on account of drink, and they described its actions upon the heart and brain.

They gave their verdict; and it was printed in the newspapers. But as they thus disposed of the body, I

seemed to hear the voice of God speaking, and it said, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; and then the final words seemed to ring around the room, God's verdict as to his soul, "*nor drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God.*"

Oh! it seemed solemn to gaze thus upon the cold face of a man whose soul had gone to torment. It was sin that brought him there, and "The wages of sin is death."

I always feel it to be a solemn thing to gaze upon the faces of living men and women who are on their road to destruction. Sinner, where are you going? You may die suddenly; you may die to-day. Look at your face in the mirror now. What do you see? "Myself," you answer. But how do you see yourself? As God sees you—a sinner? Your face may be fair; you may be young or old; your cheek may be flushed with health, or pallid with sickness; but unsaved you are a sinner in your sins, and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Those eyes of yours, what shall they gaze at in eternity? Shall they "see His face"? Your tongue, shall it praise Him then? Or shall you weep and wail, with the lost in hell, in an eternity of torment? "Why will ye die?" As you look at your face, look within; think of your sin-stained heart, and then through the rain of the tears of penitence look to Jesus; look away from self to Christ. Blessed Jesus, Saviour, Friend—the sinner's Friend!

He calls you now, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." Down on your knees sinner, and, as you kneel, so come to Christ, saying:—

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me;
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee—
O Lamb of God, I come!"

THERE IS SIGHT AFTER DEATH

“ In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

What a sight for those tortured eyes to see! “ Abraham, *afar off*, and Lazarus, transfigured and radiant with happiness, in his bosom.” He had seen the beggar at his gates on earth, and with lordly condescension may have tossed him a coin now and then. He may have missed him when he died, but little thought when and where he would see him again. And oh! the change that death had wrought. It had made the rich man poor and a beggar; it had made the poor man rich with everlasting love and rest. He wanted nothing, and the rich man wanted all. And yet how often we envy the great on earth; we envy them their position, their riches, their titles, and their fame. Not one of these things can bring happiness apart from Christ. The monarch goes into eternity without his crown; the rich man with empty hands; the warrior must leave his crosses and his medals all behind him; the pomp and pageantry of earth all fades away with eternity in view.

Balaam must have felt that when he cried, *“ I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh.”* Yes, every eye shall see Him.

I wonder if that unsaved man yonder will see his believing wife for a moment after death? She, *“ afar off,”* and happy with her Saviour; and he with the curse of unforgiven sin upon him in hell. And some of your children are in heaven, and others are on their way. And when you die your Christless death, will you for a moment see *“ afar off ”* your little ones with the light of heaven on their faces, and the peace of God like a crown upon their heads? Oh! these eternal separations! Families broken up for all eternity. Some in light and some in darkness. Nursed at the same knees,

living in the same homes on earth, growing up together, and when death comes separation for ever and for ever.

I knew a fashionable, pleasure-loving mother, who was one day nursing her little child. And the child says, "Mother, I had a dream last night." "And what did you dream, my darling?" "Mother, dear, I dreamt that I was going UP, UP, UP, and you were going DOWN, DOWN, DOWN."

Yes, God may take your child out of your unbelieving arms any day, and you will go down, down, down, unless you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved. "And they shall SEE his face." This is the Christian's expectation: to see Christ and be with Him in glory by and by.

THERE IS TORMENT AFTER DEATH

"In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments . . . I am tormented in this flame."

He was in actual torment. And remember these are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is fashionable now to decry eternal punishment, and pooh! pooh! the flames of hell. But what seems to be so inconceivably solemn about it all is the fact that the compassionate Saviour is the One who speaks the most about it. He speaks of a "*furnace of fire*," into which the wicked shall be cast, where "*there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*." He also speaks of the "*outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*." He tells us it is better to enter into life halt or maimed, or having one eye, rather than to have two hands or two feet or two eyes, and be cast into "*everlasting fire*," or "*hell fire*." He it is who says, "*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*."

The Lord tells us also the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son, and one guest came with-

out the wedding garment ; and the command of the king was, “ *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* ” The wedding garment prefigures Christ, and if you attempt to appear before God without Christ, you will be bound hand and foot and cast into torment. And when, with fierce denunciations, He exposes the utter vileness of the religious hypocrite, He says, “ *How can ye escape the damnation of hell ?* ” But this is enough ; hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, but through the wickedness of man, hell “ *hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure* ” ; and as sure as you sit here this evening, hell will be your dwelling-place for all eternity, amid the “ *everlasting fire,* ” and the “ *weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,* ” in the “ *outer darkness,* ” *tormented in the flame,* unless you repent of your sins and come to Christ to save you.

A Christian called to see a dying man, and when he saw the man of God by his bed he caught him by the hand and said, “ R——, pray for me, that God may forgive me. But oh ! it is too late ! it is too late ! ”

He turned to his poor wife who was standing there, and said, “ Ah ! my lass, I refused when God called me, and now He mocks me when my calamity is come. Ah ! my wife, my wife ! I am going where mercy never comes, and where pardon is never offered, and where a drop of water is never given. I am going to be lost ! ” The next day he died crying, “ I ’m lost ! I ’m lost ! ”

THERE IS PRAYER AFTER DEATH

“ *He cried, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.* ”

What a prayer! "Have mercy on me." You may have read of the dungeons of the Inquisition, where the vile Roman Catholic inquisitors tortured their poor victims until they died. Every cruelty that these abominable wretches could contrive was spent upon these martyrs. And the cry, "Have mercy on me," must have rung a thousand times in their unfeeling ears. But these things had an end, and the suffering spirit passed away from human fiends to God and heaven.

But here, the cry for mercy can never have an answer. There can be no mercy in the "*damnation of hell*," no alleviation of the "*everlasting fire*," and no star of hope ever illumines the "*outer darkness*." "The worm NEVER dies, the fire is NOT quenched." Mercy's bright angel can never approach the dwellings of the lost. *Mercy's hour is gone.*

Oh! you unsaved sinners, sporting carelessly on the brink of hell; will nothing arouse you? I heard a preacher once say, "SOME OF YOU HARDENED SINNERS WANT TO BE TAKEN BY THE HEELS AND SHAKEN OVER THE PIT OF HELL." Would to God you would now appeal for mercy. "God be merciful to me THE sinner." Think of hell, and thank God you are out of it.

If a lost spirit could stand here for a moment, what would be his message? We can fancy the tortured soul crying to you men and women, with despair in his eyes, "*Flee, FLEE, FLEE, from the wrath to come.*" "*Our God is a consuming fire.*" "*It is a FEARFUL thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" "*God is NOT mocked.*" "*Because there is WRATH, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.*"

He prays for a drop of water to cool his tongue. He had doubtless drunk the most luscious wine on earth, and had everything that heart could wish for. Now in

torment he prays for a drop of water to cool his tongue. Oh! agonising thirst of hell that can never be allayed! There can be no drops of heavenly dew to moisten the sinner's lips in hell. To save the sinner, He who made the rivers and the streams, cried upon the Cross, "I thirst." He knew the desert drought of a land where God was not. He said, "*My tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*" But from the crucified Christ—the smitten Rock—there flows the river of eternal life to slake the thirst of one and all. Pray for God's salvation now! Drink of the water that He shall give you, and never thirst again. Or you will be with the rich man in eternal torment.

THERE IS A GREAT GULF FIXED AFTER DEATH

The moment you die your eternal destiny is foreclosed; there is no amelioration after death; no purgatory for you to be prayed out of, nor any "larger hope" to give you solace in your sinning now.

Listen: "*Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf FIXED; so that they which would pass hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.*" An impassable gulf! Oh! my God, upon which side of that gulf will these people be? Men and women, I have preached to you for years; you may be on one side or on the other to-night.

Stern, inexorable words; they are the words of God, they must be true. To think of it; you are sitting side by side this evening, and to-morrow there may be a *great gulf* FIXED between you. No arms of love can reach across that gulf. Husband on one side—wife on the other. The one radiant with everlasting happiness—the other "weeping and wailing, and gnashing the teeth," in the awful, endless torment of hell.

There is such human love in many of your homes that

you cannot bear to be parted for a day; what then must it be to be eternally separated?

Eternity lays such hold on me at times that I close my eyes and shudder at the thought. A father came to me once, the tears streaming down his cheeks, and said, "Oh! do pray for my poor children." Oh God! to think of one of our loved ones going to hell, the great gulf FIXED between us. I never shall forget the anguish I saw in the face of a Christian wife once as she gazed on her dying husband, who had poisoned himself. He was just breathing his last, but she cried, "Do look to Jesus, pray to Jesus, even now come to Jesus." And then, when all was over, she spoke of the meetings he had attended, and the sermons he had heard. "Oh!" she said, "if Mr. — had only spoken less about the stars, and more about Christ, my husband might have been saved."

Oh! that great gulf FIXED. On which side are you? On which side are your children, your husband, your wife, your parents? You love earthly life, but you must leave it; you love your earthly home and friendships, but you must give them up. You MUST GO into eternity.

Death came into a house and called a man into eternity. In vain he struggled and cried, "*I will not die; I cannot die; I am not saved; I'M GOING TO HELL.*" He had to go. His awful cries were hushed in the solemn silence of the grave, and his poor soul went—where? The great gulf was FIXED. Oh! what of you, my hearers? Flee to the Saviour crucified for you, and like happy Lazarus know the blessedness of everlasting rest.

THERE IS MEMORY AFTER DEATH

"*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.*"

“ SON, REMEMBER ! ” Remember the life of ease, the selfish evil days of human life ; when all good things were poured into thy lap. Remember now the sorrows of the poor man at thy gate. Thou didst not see the chariot of God descend to take him home, nor the angels that stood around him when he died. But now, when *he* is comforted and *thou* art tormented—REMEMBER.

And sinner, when you too have passed away into darkness perhaps, because you will not come to Christ, you will *remember*. And what memories shall be yours in hell? The memory of every opportunity you have had of coming to Christ ; the memory of this meeting and of others all through your life, when salvation was offered and refused. The “ good things ” of this world preferred to the treasures of heaven. You will REMEMBER the days and nights of sin ; the haunts of vice, the revelings, and the banquetings, and the wild whirl down the broad road to hell. You will remember the godly influences that sought to win you for Christ, and your utter rejection of it all. You will remember the wreath of folly you placed about your brow, and the mad infatuation of sin that made you defy God and man. REMEMBER ; *yes, you will never forget in hell*. The chords of memory will be swept to the awful wailing of the lost.

You may think of your loved ones left on earth, and seek, as Dives did, to send a message to them. But no, the stern silence of eternity forbids. *The great gulf is fixed* against all such errands of mercy there!

“ SON, REMEMBER.” Oh! they are remembering now. The lost souls in torment are remembering now. Perchance some are thinking of the Victoria Hall meetings, and the time when they sat where you are sitting, and heard the same gospel as you are hearing to-night. *They were not saved!* THEY WILL NEVER BE SAVED ; but they will always remember.

Oh! poor lost souls in torment! The drop of water to cool your burning tongues can never be given. If tears of sorrow could assuage your pain we would shed them for you. If prayers could mitigate your woes, how we would pray! But no, it cannot, cannot be. You chose death, and ye must die.

But you, living men and women, in time still, and not in eternity, what will you do to-night?

WHAT IS THERE AFTER DEATH FOR YOU? Thank God, I can lift my eyes to heaven now, and by faith see the Saviour crowned with everlasting light. I can hear the voices of a multitude that no man can number; and beyond the pearly gates there shines the radiance of the golden pathway leading upward to the throne of God and of the Lamb. I shall be there for all eternity in that eternal glory. Not for any good in me, but because *I was a sinner and I came to Christ*. I have washed my robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. AND SO MAY YOU. Hundreds who have heard the gospel in this Victoria Hall will be there. You have loved ones with the Lord Jesus. Will you join them by and by?

Lord Jesus! send Thy blessing down upon this people, so that they may come to Thee, and come now. May they never join the rich man down in hell, but after this life is over see Thee face to face in all the glory of Thy home above!

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