

## CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN

### NO. 476

A SERMON  
 DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 12, 1862  
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“For our conversation is in heaven;  
 from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”  
 Philippians 3:20*

THERE can be no comparison between a soaring seraph and a crawling worm. Christian men ought so to live that it were idle to speak of a comparison between them and the men of the world. It should not be a comparison but a contrast. No scale of degrees should be possible, the believer should be a direct and manifest contradiction to the unregenerate.

The life of a saint should be altogether above and out of the same list as the life of a sinner. We should compel our critics not to confess that moralists are good and Christians a little better, but while the world is darkness, we should manifestly be light, and while the world lies in the wicked one, we should most evidently be of God, and overcome the temptations of that wicked one.

Wide as the poles asunder, are life and death, light and darkness, health and disease, purity and sin, spiritual and carnal, divine and sensual. If we were what we profess to be, we should be as distinct a people in the midst of this world, as a white race in a community of Ethiopians. There should be no more difficulty in detecting the Christian from the worldling than in discovering a sheep from a goat, or a lamb from a wolf.

Alas! the church is so much adulterated, that we have to abate our glorying, and cannot exalt her character as we would. “The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!” O for the time when “our conversation shall be in heaven,” and the ignoble life of the man, whose god is his belly and whose end is destruction, shall be rebuked by our unworldly, unselfish character.

There should be as much difference between the worldling and the Christian as between hell and heaven, between destruction and eternal life. As we hope at last that there shall be a great gulf separating us from the doom of the impenitent, there should be here a deep and wide gulf between us and the ungodly. The purity of our character should be such, that men must take knowledge of us that we are of another and superior race.

God grant us more and more to be most clearly a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that we may show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Brethren, tonight I exhort you to holiness, not by the precepts of the law, not by the thunderings from Sinai, not by the perils or punishments which might fall upon you if you are unholy, but by the privileges to which you have been admitted. Gracious souls should only be urged by arguments from grace. Whips are for the backs of fools, and not for heirs of heaven.

By the honorable citizenship which has been bestowed upon you, I shall beseech you to let your conversation be in heaven, and I shall urge that most prevailing argument, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming, and therefore we should be as men that watch for our Lord, diligently doing service unto Him, that when He comes He may say unto us, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” I know that the grace which is in you will freely answer to such a plea.

Our text, I think, might be best translated thus—“Our citizenship is in heaven.” The French translation renders it, “As for us, our burgessship is in the heavens.” Doddridge paraphrases it, “But we

converse as citizens of heaven, considering ourselves as denizens of the New Jerusalem, and only strangers and pilgrims upon earth.”

I. The first idea which is suggested by the verse under consideration is this: if our citizenship be in heaven, then WE ARE ALIENS HERE, we are strangers and foreigners, pilgrims and sojourners in the earth, as all our fathers were.

In the words of Sacred Writ, “Here we have no continuing city,” but “we desire a better country, that is an heavenly.” Let us illustrate our position. A certain young man is sent out by his father to trade on behalf of the family, he is sent to America and he is just now living in New York. A very fortunate thing it is for him that his citizenship is in England, that though he lives in America and trades there, yet he is an alien, and does not belong to that afflicted nation, for he retains his citizenship with us on this side of the Atlantic.

Yet there is a line of conduct which is due from him to the country which affords him shelter, and he must see to it that he does not fail to render it. Since *we* are aliens, we must remember to behave ourselves as aliens should, and by no means come short in our duty. We are affected by the position of our temporary country. A person trading in New York or Boston, though a freeman of the city of London, will find himself very much affected by the trade of the Dis-United States. When the merchants of his city suffer, he will find himself suffering with them, the fluctuations of their money market will affect his undertakings, and the stagnation of commerce will slacken his progress.

But if prosperity should happily return, he will find that when the coffers of their merchants are getting full, his will be the better, and the happy development of trade will give buoyancy to his own ventures. He is not of the nation, and yet every trembling of the scale will affect him, he will prosper as that nation prospers, and he will suffer as that nation suffers, that is to say, not as a citizen, but as a trader.

And so we in this country find that though we are strangers and foreigners on earth, yet we share all the inconveniences of the flesh. No exemption is granted to us from the common lot of manhood. We are born to trouble, even as others, and have tribulation like the rest. When famine comes we hunger, and when war rages we are in danger, exposed to the same climate, bearing the same burning heat, or the same freezing cold. We know the whole train of ills, even as the citizens of earth know them.

When God in mercy scatters liberally with both His hands the bounties of His providence, we take our share, though we are aliens, yet we live upon the good of the land, and share the tender mercies of the God of providence. Hence we have to take some interest in it, and the good man, though he is a foreigner, will not live even a week in this foreign land without *seeking to do good* among the neighbors with whom he dwells.

The Good Samaritan sought not only the good of the Samaritan nation, but of the Jews. Though there was no sort of kinship among them (for the Samaritans were not, as we have often heard erroneously said, first cousins or relations to the Jews, not a drop of Jewish blood ever ran in the Samaritans’ veins. They were strangers brought from Assyria, they had no relation to Abraham whatever) yet the Good Samaritan, finding himself traveling between Jericho and Jerusalem, did good to the Jew, since he was in Judea. The Lord charged His people by His servant Jeremiah, “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”

Since we are here, we must seek the good of this world. “To do good and to communicate forget not.” “Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” We must do our utmost while we are here to bring men to Christ, to win them from their evil ways, to bring them to eternal life, and to make them, with us, citizens of another and a better land.

For to tell the truth, we are here as recruiting sergeants for heaven, here to give men the enlisting money, to bind upon them the blood-red colors of the Savior’s service, to win them to King Jesus, that, by and by, they may share His victories after having fought His battles.

Seeking the good of the country as aliens, we must also remember that it behooves aliens to *keep themselves very quiet*. What business have foreigners to plot against the government, or to intermeddle with the politics of a country in which they have no citizenship? An Englishman in New York had best be without a tongue just now, if he should criticize the courage of the generals, the accuracy of their dispatches, or the genius of the President, he might meet with rather rough usage. He will be injudicious, indeed, if he cannot leave America to the Americans.

So, in this land of ours, where you and I are strangers, we must be orderly sojourners, submitting ourselves constantly to those who are in authority, leading orderly and peaceable lives, and according to the command of the Holy Ghost through the apostle, “honouring all men, fearing God, honouring the king,” “submitting ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake.” I cannot say that I delight in political Christians. I fear that party-strife is a serious trial to believers, and I cannot reconcile our heavenly citizenship with the schemes of the hustling and the riot of the polling-booth. You must follow your own judgment here, but for my part, I am a foreigner even in England, and as such I mean to act.

We are simply passing through this earth, and should bless it in our transit, but never yoke ourselves to its affairs. An Englishman may happen to be in Spain—he wishes a thousand things were different from what they are, but he does not trouble himself much about them. He says, “If I were a Spaniard I would see what I could do to alter this government, but being an Englishman, let the Spaniards see to their own matters. I shall be back in my own country by and by, and the sooner the better.”

So with Christians here, they are content very much to let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, their politics concern their own country, they do not care much about any other. As *men* they love liberty, and are not willing to lose it even in the lower sense, but spiritually, their politics are spiritual, and as citizens they look to the interest of that divine republic to which they belong, and they wait for the time when, having patiently borne with the laws of the land of their banishment, they shall come under the more beneficent sway of Him who reigns in glory, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

If it is possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men, and serve your day and generation still, but build not your soul’s dwelling place here, for all this earth must be destroyed at the coming of the fiery day.

Again, let us remember that as aliens *we have privileges as well as duties*. The princes of evil cannot draft us into their regiments—we cannot be compelled to do Satan’s work. The king of this world may make his vassals serve him, but he cannot raise a conscription upon aliens. He may order out his troops to this villainy or to that dastardly service, but the child of God claims an immunity from all the commands of Satan. Let evil maxims bind the men that own their sway, we are free, and own not the prince of the power of the air.

I know that men of this world say we must keep up appearances, we must be respectable, we must do as others do, we must swim with the tide, we must move with the crowd, but not so the upright believer, “No,” says he, “Do not expect me to fall in with your ways and customs, I am in Rome, but I shall not do as Rome does. I will let you see that I am an alien, and that I have rights as an alien, even here in this foreign land. I am not to be bound to fight your battles, nor march at the sound of your drums.”

Brethren, we are soldiers of Christ, we are enlisted in *His* army, and as aliens here, we are not to be constrained into the army of evil. Let lords and lands have what masters they will, let us be free, for Christ is still our Master. The seventy thousand whom God has reserved will not bow the knee to Baal. Be it known unto you, O world, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the image which you have set up. Servants of God we are, and we will not be in bondage unto men.

As we are free from the conscription of the state, we must remember also, that *we are not eligible to its honors*. I know you will say that is not a privilege, but it is a great boon if looked at aright. An Englishman in New York is not eligible for the very prickly throne of the President. I suppose he could not well be made a governor of Massachusetts or any other state, and indeed, he may be well content to renounce the difficulties and the honor too.

So also, the Christian man here is not eligible to this world's honors. It is a very ill omen to hear the world clap its hands and say, "Well done," to the Christian man. He may begin to look to his standing and wonder whether he has not been doing wrong when the unrighteous give him their approbation. "What did I do wrong," said Socrates, "that yonder villain praised me just now?" And so may the Christian say, "What have I done wrong, that So-and-so spoke well of me, for if I had done right he would not, he has not the sense to praise goodness, he could only have applauded that which suited his own taste.

Christian men, you must never covet the world's esteem. The love of this world is not in keeping with the love of God. "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." Treat its smiles as you treat its threats, with quiet contempt. Be willing rather to be sneered at than to be approved, counting the cross of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

O harlot world, it were a sad dishonor to be your favorite. Tire your head and paint your face, you Jezebel, but you are no friend of ours, nor will we desire your hollow love. The men of this world were mad to raise us to their seats of honor, for we are aliens and citizens of another country.

When the Pope sent a noted Protestant statesman a present of some silver goblets, he returned them with this answer—"The citizens of Zurich compel their judges to swear twice in the year that they will receive no presents from foreign princes, therefore take them back." More than twice in the year should the Christian resolve that he will not accept the smiles of this world, and will do no homage to its glory. "We fear the Greeks even when they bear gifts." Like the Trojans of old, we may be beguiled with presents even if unconquered in arms.

Forswear then the grandeur and honor of this fleeting age. Say in life, what a proud cardinal said in death, "Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye." Pass through Vanity Fair without trading in its vanities, crying, in answer to their "What will ye buy?"—"We buy the truth." Take up the pilgrim's song and sing it always—

*"The things eternal I pursue,  
And happiness beyond the view  
Of those who basely pant  
For things by nature felt and seen;  
Their honors, wealth and pleasures mean  
I neither have nor want.*

*"Nothing on earth I call my own:  
A stranger to the world unknown,  
I all their goods despise;  
I trample on their whole delight,  
And seek a country out of sight—  
A country in the skies."*

Furthermore, as aliens, *it is not for us to hoard up this world's treasures*. Gentlemen, you who know the exchange of New York, would you hoard up any extensive amount of Mr. Chase's green backed notes? I think not. Those stamps which officiate in the States in lieu of copper coinage I should hardly desire to accumulate, perhaps the fire might consume them, or if not, the gradual process of wear and tear which they are sure to undergo might leave me penniless ere long.

"No, sir," says the British trader, "I am an alien, I cannot very well accept payment in these bits of paper, they are very well for you, they will pass current in your state, but my riches must be riches in England, for I am going there to live directly. I must have solid gold, old English sovereigns, nothing else but these can make me rich."

Brethren, so it is with us. If we are aliens, the treasures of this world are like those bits of paper, of little value in our esteem, and we should lay up our treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust

doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” The money of this world is not current in paradise, and when we reach its blissful shore, if regret can be known, we shall wish that we had laid up more treasure in the land of our fatherhood, in the dear fatherland beyond the skies. Transport your jewels to a safer country than this world, be you rich toward God rather than before men.

A certain minister collecting for a chapel, called upon a rich merchant, who generously gave him fifty pounds. As the good man was going out with sparkling eye at the generosity of the merchant, the tradesman opened a letter and he said, “Stop a minute, I find by this letter, I have lost this morning a ship worth six thousand pounds.” The poor minister trembled in his shoes, for he thought the next word would be, “Let me have the fifty pound check back.” Instead of it, it was, “Let me have the check back a moment,” and then taking out his pen, he wrote him a check for five hundred pounds. “As my money is going so fast, it is well,” said he, “to make sure of some of it, so I will put some of it in God’s bank.”

The man, you doubt not, went his way astonished at such a way of dealing as this, but indeed that is just what a man should do, who feels he is an alien here, and his treasure is beyond the sky.

*“There is my house and portion fair;  
My treasure and my heart are there,  
And my abiding home:  
For me my elder brethren stay,  
And angels beckon me away,  
And Jesus bids me come.”*

**II.** It is our comfort now to remind you that although aliens *on earth*, WE ARE CITIZENS IN HEAVEN.

What is meant by our being citizens in heaven? Why, first that *we are under heaven’s government*. Christ the King of heaven, reigns in our hearts, the laws of glory are the laws of our consciences. our daily prayer is, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The proclamations issued from the throne of glory are freely received by us, the decrees of the Great King we cheerfully obey. We are not without law to Christ. The Spirit of God rules in our mortal bodies, grace reigns through righteousness, and we wear the easy yoke of Jesus. O that He would sit as King in our hearts, like Solomon upon his throne of gold. Thine are we, Jesus, and all that we have, rule Thou without a rival.

As citizens of the New Jerusalem, *we share heaven’s honors*. The glory which belongs to beatified saints belongs to us, for we are already sons of God, already princes of the blood imperial, already we wear the spotless robe of Jesu’s righteousness, already we have angels for our servitors, saints for our companions, Christ for our Brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward.

We share the honors of citizenship, for we have come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

As citizens, *we have common rights in all the property of heaven*. Those wide extensive plains we sung of just now are ours, ours are yon harps of gold and crowns of glory, ours the gates of pearl and walls of chrysolite, ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun, ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve types of fruit which grow on the trees planted at the side thereof. There is nought in heaven that belongeth not unto us, for our citizenship is there. “Things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.”

And as we are thus under heaven’s government, and share its honors and partake of its possessions, so we today *enjoy its delights*. Do they rejoice over sinners that are born to God—prodigals that have returned? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they cast their crowns at Jesus’ feet? Such honors as we have, we cast there too. Do they rejoice in Him? So also do we. Do they triumph, waiting for His second advent? By faith we triumph in the same. Are they tonight singing, “Worthy the Lamb”? We also have sung the same tune, not to such glorious notes as theirs, but

with as sincere hearts, with minstrelsy not quite as splendid, but we hope as sincere, for the Spirit gave us the music, which we have, and the Spirit gave them the thunders of their acclamations before the throne. "Our citizenship is in heaven."

Brethren, we rejoice to know also that as the result of our being citizens, or rather I ought to have said as the cause of it, our *names are written in the roll* of heaven's freemen.

When, at last, the list shall be read, our names shall be read too, for where Paul and Peter, where David and Jonathan, where Abraham and Jacob shall be found, we shall be found too, numbered with them we were in the divine purpose, reckoned with them we were in the purchase on the cross and with them shall we sit down forever at the tables of the blessed. The small and the great are fellow citizens and of the same household. The babies and the perfect men are recorded in the same great registry, and neither death nor hell can erase a single name.

Our citizenship then is in heaven. We have not time to extend that thought. John Calvin says of this text, "It is a most abundant source of many exhortations, which it were easy for any one to elicit from it." We are not all Calvin, but even to our smaller capacities, the subject appears to be one not readily exhausted, but rich with unfathomable joy.

**III.** We must now come to our third point, which is OUR CONVERSATION IS IN HEAVEN, our walk and acts are such as are consistent with our dignity *as citizens of heaven*.

Among the old Romans, when a dastardly action was proposed it was thought a sufficient refusal to answer, "Romanus sum—I am a Roman." Surely it should be a strong incentive to every good thing if we can claim to be freemen of the Eternal City. Let our lives be conformed to the glory of our citizenship.

In heaven they are holy, so must we be—so are we if our citizenship is not a mere pretense. They are happy, so must we be rejoicing in the Lord always. In heaven they are obedient, so must we be, following the faintest monitions of the divine will. In heaven they are active, so should we be, both day and night praising and serving God. In heaven they are peaceful, so should we find a rest in Christ and be at peace even now.

In heaven they rejoice to behold the face of Christ, so should we be always meditating upon Him, studying His beauties, and desiring to look into the truths which He has taught. In heaven they are full of love, so should we love one another as brethren. In heaven they have sweet communion one with another, so should we, who though many, are one body, be every one members one of the other.

Before the throne they are free from envy and strife, ill-will, jealousy, emulation, falsehood, anger, so should we be, we should, in fact, seek while we are here to keep up the manners and customs of the good old fatherland, so that, as in Paris, the Parisian soon says, "There goes John Bull," so they should be able to say in this land, "there goes a heavenly citizen, one who is with us and among us, but is not of us."

Our very speech should be such that our citizenship should be detected. We should not be able to live long in a house without men finding out what we are. A friend of mine once went across to America, and landing I think at Boston, he knew nobody, but hearing a man say, when somebody had dropped a cask on the wharf, "Look out there, or else you will make a Coggeshall job of it." He said, "You are an Essex man I know, for that is a proverb never used anywhere but in Essex, give me your hand." And they were friends at once!

So there should be a ring of true metal about our speech and citizenship, so that when a brother meets us, he can say, "You are a Christian, I know, for none but Christians speak like that, or act like that." "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrayeth thee." Our holiness should act as a sort of freemasonry by which we know how to give the grip to the stranger, who is not a real stranger, but a fellow citizen with us, and of the household of faith.

Oh! dear friends, wherever we wander, we should never forget our beloved land. In Australia, on the other side the world, or in the Cape of Good Hope, or wherever else we may be exiled, surely every Englishman's eye must turn to this fair island, and with all her faults, we must love her still. And surely

let us be where we may, our eyes must turn to heaven, the happy land unstained by shadow of fault. We love her still, and love her more and more, praying for the time when our banishment shall expire, and we shall enter into our Fatherland to dwell there forever and ever.

Shenstone says, "The proper means of increasing the love we bear our native country, is to reside some time in a foreign land." Sure am I that we who cry, "Woe is me, for I dwell in Mesech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar!" are sure to add, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

**IV.** The text says, "Our conversation is in heaven," and I think we may also read it, as though it said, "OUR COMMERCE IS IN HEAVEN."

We trading on earth, but still the bulk of our trade is with heaven. We trade for trinkets in this land, but our gold and silver are in heaven. We commune with heaven, and how? Our trade is with heaven by *meditation*, we often think of God our Father, and Christ our Brother, and by the Spirit, the Comforter, we are brought in contemplative delight to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

Brethren, do not our *thoughts* sometimes burn within us, when we trade with that blessed land. When I have sent the ships of understanding and consideration to that land of Ophir, which is full of gold, and they have come back again laden with all manner of precious things, my thoughts have been enriched, my soul has longed to journey to that good land. Black and stormy are you, O sea of death, but I would cross you to reach that land of Havilah, which has dust of gold.

I know that he who is a Christian will never have his mind long off that better land. And do you know we sometimes trade with heaven in our *hymns*? They tell us of the Swiss soldiers in foreign countries, that there is a song which the band is forbidden to play because it reminds them of the cowbells of their native hills. If the men hear it, they are sure to desert, for that dear old song revives before their eyes the wooden chalets and the cows, and the pastures of the glorious Alps, and they long to be away.

There are some of our hymns that make us homesick, until we are hardly content to stop, and therefore, well did our poet end his song,

*"Filled with delight, my raptured soul,  
Can here no longer stay.  
Though Jordan's waves around us roll,  
Fearless we launch away."*

I feel the spirit of Wesley, when he said—

*"O that we now might see our guide!  
O that the word were given!  
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,  
And land us all in heaven."*

In times of high, hallowed, heavenly harmony of praise, the songs of angels seem to come astray, and find their way down to us, and then our songs return with them, hand in hand, and go back to God's throne, through Jesus Christ.

We trade with heaven I hope, too, not only thus by meditation, and by thought, and by song, but *by hopes and by loves*. Our love is toward that land. How heartily the Germans sing of the dear old fatherland, but they cannot, with all their Germanic patriotism, they *cannot* beat the genial glow of the Briton's heart when he thinks of his fatherland too.

The Scotchman too, wherever he may be, remembers the land of "brown heath and shaggy wood." And the Irishman too, let him be where he will, still thinks the "Emerald Isle" the first gem of the sea. It

is right that the patriot should love his country. Does not our love fervently flame towards heaven? We think we cannot speak well enough of it, and indeed here we are correct, for no exaggeration is possible.

When we talk of that land of Eschol, our mouths are watering to taste its clusters, already, like David, we thirst to drink of the well that is within the gate, and we hunger after the good corn of the land. Our ears are wanting to have done with the discords of earth, that they may open to the harmonies of heaven, and our tongues are longing to sing the melodious sonnets, sung by flaming ones above. Yes, we do love heaven, and thus it is that we prove that our commerce is with that better land.

Brethren, just as people in a foreign land who love their country always are glad to have plenty of letters from the country, I hope we have much *communication with the old fatherland*. We send our prayers there as letters to our Father, and we get His letters back in this blessed volume of His Word.

You go into an Australian settler's hut, and you find a newspaper. Where from sir? A gazette from the south of France, a journal from America? Oh no, it is a newspaper from England, addressed to him in his old mother's handwriting, bearing the postage stamp with the good Queen's face in the corner, and he likes it, though it be only a newspaper from some little pottering country town with no news in it, yet he likes it better, perhaps, than the "Times" itself, because it talks to him about the village where he lived, and consequently touches a special string in the harp of his soul.

So must it be with heaven. This book, the Bible, is the newspaper of heaven, and therefore we must love it. The sermons which are preached are good news from a far country. The hymns we sing are notes by which we tell our Father of our welfare here, and by which He whispers into our soul His continued love to us. All these are and must be pleasant to us, for our commerce is with heaven.

I hope too, we are sending a good deal home. I like to see our young fellows when they go out to live in the bush, remember their mother at home. They say, "She had a hard struggle to bring us up when our father died, and she scraped her little together to help us to emigrate." John and Tom mutually agree, "The first gold we get at the diggings we will send home to mother." And it goes home. Well, I hope you are sending a great many things home.

Dear friends, I hope as we are aliens here, we are not laying up our treasure here where we may lose it, but packing it off as quickly as we can to our own country. There are many ways of doing it. God has many banks, and they are all safe ones. We have but to serve His church, or serve the souls which Christ has bought with His blood, or help His poor, clothe His naked, and feed His hungry, and we send our treasures beyond sea in a safe ship, and so we keep up our commerce with the skies.

**V.** Time has gone, those clocks will strike when thy ought not. There is a great reason why we should live like aliens and foreigners here, and that is, CHRIST IS COMING SOON.

The early church never forgot this. Did they not pant and thirst after the return of their ascended Lord? Like the twelve tribes, day and night they instantly watched for Messiah. But the church has grown weary of this hope. There have been so many false prophets who tell us that Christ is coming, that the church thinks He never will come, and she begins to deny, or to keep in the background the blessed doctrine of the second advent of her Lord from heaven.

I do not think the fact that there have been many false prophets should make us doubt our Lord's true word. Perhaps the very frequency of these mistakes may show that there is truth at the bottom. You have a friend who is ill, and the doctor says he cannot last long, he must die, you have called a great many times expecting to hear of his departure, but he is still alive. Now the frequent errors of the physicians do not prove that your friend will not die one of these days, and that speedily too. And so, though the false prophets have said, "Lo, here," and "Lo, there," and yet Christ has not come, that does not prove that His glorious appearing will never arrive.

You know I am no prophet. I do not know anything about 1866, I find quite enough to do to attend to 1862. I do not understand the visions of Daniel or Ezekiel. I find I have enough to do to teach the simple word such as I find in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the epistles of Paul. I do not find many souls have been converted to God by exquisite dissertations about the battle of Armageddon, and all those other fine things.



I have no doubt prophesying is very profitable, but I rather question whether they are as profitable to the hearers, as they may be to the preachers and publishers. I conceive that among religious people of a certain sort, the abortive explanations of prophecy issued by certain doctors gratify a craving which in irreligious people finds its food in novels and romances. People have a panting to know the future, and certain divines pander to this depraved taste by prophesying for them, and letting them know what is coming by and by.

I do not know the future, and I shall not pretend to know. But I do preach this because I know it, that *Christ will come*, for He says so in a hundred passages. The epistles of Paul are full of the advent, and Peter's too, and John's letters are crowded with it. The best of saints have always lived on the hope of the advent. There was Enoch, he prophesied of the coming of the Son of Man. So there was another Enoch who was always talking of the coming, and saying, "Come quickly."

I will not divide the house tonight by discussing whether the advent will be premillennial or postmillennial, or anything of that, it is enough for me that *He will come*, and "in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man will come." Tonight He may appear, while here we stand, just when we think that he will not come, the thief shall break into the house. We ought therefore to be always watching.

Since the gold and silver that you have will be worthless at His advent, since your lands and estates will melt to smoke when He appeareth since, *then* the righteous shall be rich, and the godly shall be great, lay not up your treasure here, for it may at any time vanish, at any time disappear, for Christ at any moment may come.

I think the church would do well to be always living as if Christ might come today. I feel persuaded she is doing ill if she works as if He would not come till 1866, because He may come before, and He may come this moment. Let her always be living as if He would come *now*, still acting in her Master's sight, and watching unto prayer.

Never mind about the last vials, fill your own vial with sweet odors and offer it before the Lord. Think what you like about Armageddon, but forgot not to fight the good fight of faith. Guess not at the precise era for the destruction of Antichrist, go and destroy it yourself, fighting against it every day, but be looking forward and hastening unto the coming of the Son of Man, and let this be at once your comfort and excitement to diligence—that the Savior will soon come from heaven.

Now, I think you foreigners here present—and I hope there are a great many true aliens here—ought to feel like a poor stranded mariner on a desolate island, who has saved a few things from the wreck and built himself an old log hut, and has a few comforts round about him, but for all that he long for home.

Every morning he look out to sea, and wonders when he shall see a sail, many times while examining the wide ocean to look for a ship, he has clapped his hands, and then wept to find he was disappointed, every night he lights his fire that there may be a blaze, so that if a ship should go by, they may send relief to the stranded mariner.

Ah! that is just the way we ought to live. We have heard of one saint who used to open his window every morning when he woke, to see if Christ had come, it might be fanaticism, but better to be enthusiastic than to mind earthly things. I would have us look out each night and light the fire of prayer, that it may be burning in case the ships of heaven should go by, that blessings may come to us poor aliens and foreigners who need them so much.

Let us wait patiently till the Lord's convoy shall take us on board, that we may be carried into the glories and splendor of the reign of Christ. Let us always hold the log hut with a loose hand, and long for the time when we shall get to that better land where our possessions are, where our Father lives, where our treasures lie, where all our brethren dwell. Well said our poet —

*“Blest scenes, through rude and stormy seas  
I onward press to You.”*

My beloved friends, I can assure you it is always one of the sweetest thoughts I ever know, that I shall meet with you in heaven. There are so many of you members of this church, that I can hardly get to shake hands with you once in a year, but I shall have plenty of time then in heaven. You will know your pastor in heaven better than you do now. He loves you now, and you love him. We shall then have more time to recount our experience of divine grace, and praise God together, and sing together, and rejoice together concerning Him by whom we were helped to plant and sow, and through whom all the increase came.

*“I hope when days and years are past,  
We all shall meet in heaven,  
We all shall meet in heaven at last,  
We all shall meet in heaven.”*

But we shall not all meet in glory, not all unless you repent. Some of you will certainly perish, unless you believe in Christ. But why must we be divided? Oh! why not all in heaven? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Trust Christ, sinner, and heaven is yours, and mine, and we are safe forever. Amen.

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Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at [www.spurgeongems.org](http://www.spurgeongems.org).