

A LAST LOOK-OUT NO. 989

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“The time of my departure is at hand.”
2 Timothy 4:6*

SO near, so very near the change—his removal from this to another world, and so very conscious of it. Yet Paul looked back with calm satisfaction. He looked forward with sweet assurance and he looked round with deepest interest on the mission that had engaged his life.

As you must have noticed while we were reading the chapter, in his case, “the ruling passion was strong in death.” Writing what he well knows is the last letter he shall ever write, its main topic is care for the church of God—anxiety for the promotion of the truth—zeal for the furtherance of the Gospel. When he is dead and gone from the post of service, the scene of suffering, the field of enterprise, on whom shall his mantle fall?

He desires that in Timothy he may find a worthy successor, strong in the faith, sincere of heart, and having dauntless courage, one who will wield the sword and hold the banner when his hand is palsied in death.

Men have usually shown us what lies at the bottom of their heart when they have come to die. Often their last expiring expressions have been indicative of their entire character. Certainly you have before you in the last sentences of Paul’s pen a fair epitome of his entire life. He is trusting in the Savior. He is anxious to show his love for that Savior.

The welfare of the Christian church and the advancement of the holy cause of the Gospel are uppermost in his mind. May it be yours and mine to live wholly for Christ and to die also for Him. May this ever be foremost in our thoughts, “How can I advance the kingdom of our Lord and Savior? By what means can I bless His church and people?”

It is very beautiful to observe the way in which Paul describes his death in this verse. According to our translation he speaks of it as an offering. “I am now ready,” says he, “to be offered.” If we accept this version he may be supposed to mean that he felt as one standing like a bullock or a lamb, ready to be laid on an altar.

He foresaw he would die a martyr’s death. He knew he could not be crucified as his brother Peter had been, for a Roman citizen was, as a rule, exempt from that ignominious death. He expected to die in some other manner. Probably he guessed it would be by the sword, and so he describes himself as waiting for the sacrificial knife to be used, that he might be presented as a sacrifice.

So I say the words of our translation would lead us to think. But the original is far more instructive. He here likens himself, in the Greek, not to an offering, but to the drink-offering. Every Jew would know what that meant. When there was a burnt-sacrifice offered, the bullock or the victim then slain was the main part of the sacrifice.

But sometimes there was a little, what if I say, an unimportant supplement added to that sacrifice—a little oil and a little wine were poured on the altar or the bullock, and thus a drink-offering was said to be added to the burnt-offering.

Now Paul does not venture to call himself an offering—Christ is his offering. Christ is, so to speak, the sacrifice on the altar. He likens himself only to that little wine and oil poured out as a supplement, not necessarily to its perfection, but tolerated in performing a vow, or allowed in connection with a free-will offering, as you will find if you refer at leisure to the fifteenth chapter of Numbers, from the fourth to the eighth verses.

The drink-offering was thus a kind of addendum, by which the person who gave it showed his thankfulness. So Paul is resolved to show his thankfulness to Christ, the great sacrifice, and he is willing that his blood should be poured as a drink-offering on the altar where his Lord and Master was the great burnt-offering. He rejoices when he can say, "I am ready to be presented as a drink-offering unto God."

We have mainly to do with the second description which he gives of his death. What does he say when the hour that this grim monster must be grappled with is at hand? I do not find him sad. Those who delight in gloomy poetry have often represented death in terrible language. "It is hard," says one—

*"To feel the hand of death arrest one's steps,
Throw a chill blight on all one's budding hopes,
And hurl one's soul untimely to the shades."*

And another exclaims—

*"O God, it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing,
In any shape, in any mood!
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean,
Strive with a swollen convulsive motion."*

Not so the apostle Paul. I do not even hear him speak of flying through the gate as our grand old poet has described death. He does not say, "The hour of my dissolution is at hand"—a very proper word if he had used it. But he is not looking so much at the process as at the result of his dying.

He does not even say, "The hour of my death is at hand," but he adopts a beautiful expression, "The time of my departure"—words which are used sometimes to signify the departure of a vessel from the port, the pulling up of the anchor so that it looses its moorings when about to put out to sea—so he feels himself like a ship lying at the harbor for awhile—but he says, "The time for pulling up the anchor, the time for letting loose the cable, and cutting from the mooring is at hand. I shall soon be launched upon my voyage."

And he knew right well where that voyage would end—in the fair havens of the port of Peace—in the better country, whither his Lord had gone before him.

Now we will proceed very briefly to say a word about *departure* and then a shorter word still about the *time* of our departure. And then a little more about the time of our departure *being at hand*—trying here, especially, to bring forward some lessons which may be of practical usefulness to each one of us.

I. First, then, dear brethren, let us think a little about OUR DEPARTURE.

It is quite certain we shall not dwell here forever. We shall not live here below as long as the first man did, or as those antediluvian fathers, who tarried some eight or nine hundred years. The length of human life then led to greatness of sin. Monstrosities of evil were ripened through the long continuance of physical strength and the accumulating force of eager passions.

All things considered, it is a mercy that life is abridged and not prolonged to a thousand years. Amidst the sharp competition of man with man, and class with class, there is a boundary to every scheme of personal aggrandizement, a limit to all the spoils of individual despotism, a restraint upon the hoardings of any one's avarice.

It is well, I say, that it should be so. The narrow span of life clips the wings of ambition and baulks it of its prey. Death comes in to deprive the mighty of his power, to stay the rapacity of the invader, to scatter abroad the possessions of the rich. The most reprobate men must end their career after they have had their three score years and ten or their four score years of wickedness.

And as for the good and godly, though we mourn their exit, especially when we think that they have been prematurely taken from us, we remember how the triumphs of genius have been for the most part

achieved in youth, and how much the world has been enriched by the heads and hearts of those who have but sown the seeds of faith and left others to reap the fruits.

If into less than the allotted term they have crowded the service of their generation, we may save our tears, for our regrets are needless. The summons will reach each one of us ere long. We cannot stop here as long as the grey fathers of our race—we expect, and it is meet that we should prepare to go. The world itself is to be consumed one day. “The elements shall melt with fervent heat.” The land on which we stand we are wont to call *terra firma*, but beneath it is probably an ocean of fire and it shall itself feel the force of the ocean.

We must not marvel, the house being so frail that the tenants are unsettled and migratory. Certainly, whether we doubt it or not, we shall have to go. There will be a departure for us. Beloved believer in Christ Jesus, to you the soft term, “departure” is not more soft than the truth it represents. To die is to depart out of this world unto the Father.

What say you about your departure? What say you of that from which you go and what do you think of that land to which you go? Well, of the land from which we go, my brethren, we might say many hard things if we would, but I think we had better not. We shall speak more correctly if we say the hard things of ourselves.

This land, my brethren, has been a land of mercy to us—there have been sorrows in it, but in bidding it farewell we will do it justice and speak the truth concerning it. Our sorrows have usually sprung up in our own bosoms, and those that have come from the soil itself would have been very light if it had not been for the plague of our hearts, which made us vex and fret over them.

Oh, the mercy you and I have enjoyed in this life! It has been worthwhile to live for us who are believers. Even had we to die like a dog dies, it has been worthwhile to live for the joy and blessedness which God has made to pass before us. I dare not call that an evil country in which I have met my Savior and received the pardon of my sin. I dare not call that an ill life in which I have seen my Savior, though it be through a glass darkly.

How shall I speak ill of that land where Zion is built, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the place of our solemn assemblies, where we have worshipped God? No, cursed of old as the earth was to bring forth the thorn and the thistle, the existence of the church of God in that land seems to a great degree to have made reparation for the blight to such as know and love the Savior.

Oh, have we not gone up to the house of God in company with songs of ecstatic joy and have we not when we have gathered round the table of the Lord—though nothing was upon it but the type and emblem—have we not felt it a joyous thing to be found in the assembly of the saints and in the courts of the Lord’s house even here?

When we loose our cable and bid farewell to earth, it shall not be with bitterness in the retrospect. There is sin in it and we are called to leave it. There has been trial in it and we are called to be delivered from it. There has been sorrow in it and we are glad that we shall go where we shall sorrow no more. There have been weakness, and pain, and suffering in it, and we are glad that we shall be raised in power.

There has been death in it, and we are glad to bid farewell to shrouds and to knells. But for all that there has been such mercy in it, such loving-kindness of God in it that the wilderness and the solitary place have been made glad, and the desert has rejoiced and blossomed as a rose. We will not bid farewell to the world, execrating it, or leaving behind us a cold shudder and a sad remembrance, but we will depart bidding adieu to the scenes that remain, and to the people of God that tarry therein a little longer—blessing Him whose goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life, and who is now bringing us to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But dear brethren, if I have had to speak in a somewhat apologetic manner of the land from which we depart, I shall need to use many apologies for my own poor talk about the land to which we are bound. Ah, where you go, spirit loosened from your clay—do know? Whither go you? The answer must be, partly, that we know not.

None of us have seen the streets of gold of which we sang just now. Those harpings of the harpers, harping with their harps, have never fallen on these ears. Eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it. It is all unrevealed to the senses. Flesh and blood cannot inherit it, and therefore, flesh and blood cannot imagine it.

Yet it is not unknown, for God has revealed it unto us by His Spirit. Spiritual men know what it is to feel the spirit—their own new-born spirit, living, glowing, burning, triumphing within them. They know, therefore, that if the body should drop off, they would not die. They feel there is a life within them superior to blood and bone, and nerve and sinew.

They feel the life of God within them and none can gainsay it. Their own experience has proven to them that there is an inner life. Well, then, when that inner life is strong and vigorous, the Spirit often reveals to it what the world of spirits will be. We know what holiness is, do we not, brethren? Are we not seeking it? That is heaven—perfect holiness is heaven.

We know what peace means—Christ is our Peace. Rest—He gives us rest. We find *that* when we take His yoke. Rest is heaven. And rest in Jesus tells us what heaven is. We know, even today, what communion with God is. If anyone should say, “I do not know it,” I should reply to him thus, Suppose I said to you, “You know not what it is to eat and drink. The man would tell me that I belied him, for he knew, as he knew his own existence, what it was to eat and drink.

And as surely as I live, I have communion with God. I know it as certainly as you know that I have declared it to you. Well, friends, that is heaven. It has but to be developed from the germ to the produce, and there is heaven in its full development.

Communion with saints in like manner—know we not what that is? Have we not rejoiced in each other’s joys, been made glad with the experience of our brethren? That, too, carried to perfection, will be heaven. Oh, to throw yourself into the bosom of the Savior, and lie there taken up with His mind and His love—yielding all things to His supremacy—beholding your King in Him!

When you have been in that state, you have had an antepast of heaven. Your view may have been but as one seeing a man’s face in the shadows, yet you would know that man again even by the shadow—so know we what heaven is. We shall not be strangers in a strange land when we get there.

Though, like the Queen of Sheba, we shall say, “The half has not been told me,” yet we shall reflect on it thus, “I did surmise there would be something of this sort. I did know from what I felt of its budding in my soul below that the full-blown flower would be somewhat of this kind.”

Whither away, then, spirit that is departing to soar through tracks to yourself unknown? Your answer is, “I am away, away to the throne of Him whose cross first gave me life, and light, and hope. I am away to the very bosom of my Savior, where I hope to rest, and to have fellowship with the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.” This is your departure that you have in near prospect.

Suppose, dear friend, the thought of departing from this world to the glory-world should ever startle you, let me remind you that you are not the first that ever went that way. Your vessel is in the pool, as it were, or in the dock. She is going out on her voyage—oh, but you will not go alone, nor have to track your course through paths not unnavigated or unknown before!

When the Portuguese captain first went by the Cape of Storms, it was a venturous voyage and he called it the Cape of Good Hope when he had rounded it. When Columbus first went in search of the New World, his was a brave spirit that dared cross the unnavigated Atlantic. But oh, there are tens of thousands that have gone whither you go.

The Atlantic that severs us from Canaan is white with the sails of the vessels that are on voyage thither. Fear not, they have not been wrecked. We hear good news of their arrival—there is good hope for you. There are no icebergs on the road, no mists, no counter currents, nor sunken vessels or quicksand. You have but to cut your moorings and with Christ on board you shall be at your desired haven at once.

Remember, too, your Savior went that way. Have you to depart? Christ departed too. Some of my brethren are always so pleased—pleased as some children are with a new toy—at the idea that they shall

never die. That Christ will come, it may be before the time of their decease—for, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Well, let Him come, ay, let Him come, come quickly.

But if I had my choice, were it permitted me to choose, I would prefer to pass through the portals of the grave. Those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord will not prevent, go before or steal a march on them which are asleep. But surely they will lack one point of conformity to their Lord—for He disdained not to sojourn for a while in the tomb, though it were impossible that He should be holden of death.

Let the seal of death, then, be set upon this face of mine, that my fate in the matter may be like His. Enoch and Elijah were exempt from this privilege—privilege, I call it—of conformity to His death. But it is safe to go by the beaten track and desirable to travel by the ordinary route to the heavenly city. Jesus died. Through the valley of shadows, the vale of death-shades, there are the footprints of Immanuel all the way along—go down into it and fear not.

Bethink you, too, dear brethren and sisters, that we may well look forward to our departure and look forward to it comfortably too? Is it not expedient by reason of nature? Is it not desirable by reason of grace? Is it not necessary by reason of glory? I say, is not our departure needful by reason of nature?

Men are not, when they come to hoary age, what they were in the prime of their days. The staff is needed for the foot and the glass is wanted for the eye. And after a certain number of years, even those on whom Time has gently laid his hands, find taste is gone. They might proclaim, like old Barzillai, that they know not what they eat or drink.

The hearing fails, the daughters of music are silent, the whole tenement gets very crazy. Oh, it were a melancholy thing if we had to continue to live! Perhaps there is no more hideous picture than that which the satirist drew of men who lived on to six or seven hundred years of age—that strange satirical man, Swift.

Be thankful that we do not linger on in foolishness. Kind nature says we may depart. She gives us notice and makes it welcome by the decays that come upon us. Besides, grace desires it, for it were a poor experience of His kindness as our best and truest friend that did not make us long to see our Savior’s face.

It is no mere driveling sentiment, I hope, when we join to sing—

*“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Thine abode;
I’d leave Thy earthly courts, and flee
Up to Thy seat, my God!”*

I must confess there was one verse in the hymn we sung just now which I could not quite chime in with. I am not eagerly wishing to go to heaven this night. I have a great deal more to do here. Therefore I do not want to take a hasty leave of all below. To full many of us, I suppose, there are times of quiet contemplation and times of rapt devotion when our thoughts surmount these lower skies, and look within the veil. And then, oh, how we wish to be there!

Yet there are other times. times of strenuous activity when we buckle on the armor and press to the front. And then we see such a battle to be waged, such a victory to be won, such a work to be wrought, that we say, “Well to abide in the flesh, to continue with you all for the joy and furtherance of your faith, seems more loyal to Christ, more needful for you, and more in accord with our present feelings.”

I think it is idle for us to be crying to go home. It is too much like the lazy workman that wants Saturday night to come when it is only Tuesday morning. Oh, no, if God spare us to do a long life’s work, so much the better. At the same time, as a spark flies upward to the sun, the central source of flame, so does the new-born spirit aspire towards heaven, towards Jesus, by whom it was kindled.

And I add, that glory demands it and makes our departure needful. Is not Christ in heaven praying that we may be with Him where He is? Are there not the saints in heaven, of whom it is said, they

without us cannot be perfect? The circle of the skies cannot be completed until all the Redeemed be there. The grand orchestra of glory misses some notes as yet.

What if the bass be full, there are wanting still some trebles and tenors! There are some sopranos that will be requisite to swell the enchanting melodies and consummate the worship of the Eternal! What, therefore, nature prepares for, grace desires, and glory itself demands, we have no just cause to shudder at. Our departure need not make us afraid.

II. Having thus occupied so much time on this first point, I have little or no room to enlarge on the second.

THE TIME OF OUR DEPARTURE, though unknown to us, is fixed by God, unalterably fixed. So rightly, wisely, lovingly settled, and prepared for, that no chance or haphazard can break the spell of destiny. The wisdom of divine love shall be proven by the carefulness of its provision. Perhaps you will say, "It is not easy to discern this. The natural order of things is so often disturbed by casualties of one kind or another."

Let me remind you, then, that it is through faith, only through faith, that we can understand these things. For it is as true now of the providence of God as it was of old of the creation of God, that "*Things* which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Because the *mode* of your departure is beyond your own ken, it does not follow that the *time* of your departure is not foreseen by God.

"Ah! but," say you, "it seems so shocking for any one to die suddenly, unexpectedly, without warning, and so come to an untimely end!" I answer you thus. If you take counsel with death, your flesh will find no comfort. But if you trust in God, your faith will cease to parley with these feverish anxieties and your spirit will enjoy a sweet calm.

Dire calamities befell Job when he was bereaved of his children, and his servants, his herds and his flocks. Yet he took little heed of the different ways in which his troubles were brought about—whether by an onslaught of the Sabeans or by a raid of the Chaldeans, whether the fire fell from heaven or the wind came from the wilderness. It mattered little.

Whatever strange facts broke on his ear, one thought penetrated his heart and one expression broke from his lips, "The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." So, too, beloved, when the time of your departure arrives—be it by disease or decay, be it by accident or assault, that your soul quits its present tenement—rest assured that, "Thy times are in his hand." And know of a surety that, "All his saints are in his hand" likewise.

Besides this, dear friends, since the time of our departure must come, were the manner of it at our own disposal, I think we should most of us say, "What I shall choose, I know not." Fevers and agues, the pangs and tortures of one malady or another, or the delirium incident to sickness, are not so much to be preferred to the shock of a disaster or the terror of a wreck at sea, because one is the prolonging of pain, and the other the dispatch of fate, that we need to covet and desire weeks or months spent in the vestibule of the grave?

Rather should we say, "Let the Lord do with me as seems good to Him." To live in constant communion with God is a sure relief from all these bitter frettings. Those who have walked with Him have often been favored with such presentiments of their departure as no physician could give them. Survivors will tell you that though death seemed to come suddenly to the godly merchant, he had in the last acts of his life appeared to expect and prepare for it, and even to have taken an affecting farewell of his family while in the vigor of health, as though he were aware that he was setting out on his last journey, which a few hours afterwards it proved to be.

So, too, the minister of Christ has sometimes fallen, expiring in his pulpit with a *nunc dimittis*, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace" on his lips. Secretly, but surely, made ready to depart and to be with his Lord. There is a time to depart, and God's time to call me is my time to go.

III. Now, to our third point—THE TIME AT HAND. "The time of my departure is at hand."

In a certain sense, every Christian here may say this, for whatever interval may interpose between us and death, how very short it is! Have you not all a sense that time flows faster than it did? In our

childhood days, we thought a year was quite a period of time, a very epoch in our career. Now as for weeks—one can hardly reckon them! We seem to be traveling in an express train, flying along at such a rate that we can hardly count the months. Why, the past year only seemed to come in at one door and go out at the other, it was over so soon.

We shall soon be at the terminus of life, even if we live for several years. But in the case of some of us, God knows of whom, this year, perhaps this month, will be our last. I think tomorrow night we shall have to report at the church meeting the deaths of nine members of this church within the last eight or nine days.

Since these have gone, some of us may expect to follow them. There are those who will evidently go—disease has set in upon them. Some of those disorders that in this land seem to be always fatal, tell these dear friends that the time of their departure is undoubtedly at hand.

And then old age, which comes so gracefully and graciously to many of our matrons and our veterans, shows, past all dispute, “The time of your departure is at hand.” The lease of your life is almost up. Not, indeed, that I would address myself to such special cases only. I speak to every brother and sister in Christ here, “The time of our departure is at hand.” What then, dear friends?

Is not this a reason for surveying our condition again? If our vessel is just launching, let us see that she is seaworthy. It would be a sad thing for us to be near departing and yet to be just as near discovering that we are lost.

Remember, dear friends, it is possible for anyone to maintain a decent profession of Christ for fifty years, and be a hypocrite, after all. Possible to occupy an office in the church of God, and that of the very highest, and yet to be a Judas. And one may not only serve Christ, but suffer for Him too, and yet like Demas, may not persevere to the end—for all that looks like grace is not grace. Where true grace is, there it will always be. But where the semblance of it is, it will oftentimes suddenly disappear.

Search yourself, good brother. Set your house in order, for you must die and not live. Have you the faith of God’s elect? Are you built on Christ? Is your heart renewed? Are you verily an heir of heaven? I charge every man and woman within this place, since the time of his departure may be far nearer than he thinks, to take stock, and reckon up, and see whether he be Christ’s or no.

But if the time of my departure be at hand, and I am satisfied that it is all right with me, is there not a call for me to do all I can for my household? Father, the time of your departure is at hand—is your wife unsaved? Will you pass another night without lovingly speaking to her of her soul? Are those dear boys unregenerate? Is that girl still thoughtless? The time of your departure is at hand. You can do little more for the lads and lasses. You can do little more for the wife and the brother. Oh! do what you can.

Sister, you are consumptive—you will soon be gone. You are the only Christian in the family. God sent you there to be a missionary. Do not have to say, when you are dying, “The last hope of my family is going out, for I have not cared for their souls.” Masters, you who have servants about you, you must soon be taken away. Will you not do something for their souls?

I know if there were a mother about to go to Australia, and she had to leave some of her children behind, she would fret if she thought, “I have not done all that needs to be done for those poor children. Who will care for them now their mother is gone?” Well, but to have neglected something necessary for their temporal comfort would be little in comparison with not having cared for their souls. Oh, let it not be so! Let it not be a thorn in your dying pillow that you did not fulfill the relations of life while you had the opportunity. “The time of my departure is at hand.”

Then there is a third lesson. Let me try to finish all my work, not only as regards my duty to my family, but in respect to all the world so far as my influence or ability can reach. Rich men, be your own executors. Do what you can with your substance while it is your own. Men of talent, speak for Jesus before your tongue has ceased to articulate and becomes a piece of clay.

George Whitefield may supply us with a fine model of this uniform consistency. He was so orderly and precise in his habits, and so scrupulous and holy in his life, that he used to say he would not like to

go to bed if there were a pair of gloves out of place in the house, much less were his will not made or any part of his duty unfulfilled to the best of his knowledge.

He wished to have all right and to be fully prepared for whatever might happen, so that, if he never woke again from the slumbers of the night, nobody would have cause to reflect upon anything he had left undone, entailing needless trouble on his wife or his children. Such care bestowed on what some account to be trifles is a habit worthy of our imitation.

The main work of life may be sadly spoiled by negligence in little things. This is a striking test of character. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much." Oh, then! time is fleeting, dispatch is urgent. Gather up your thoughts, quicken your hands, speed your pace, for God commands you to make haste.

If you have ought to do, you must do it soon. The wheels of eternity are sounding behind you. Press on! If you are to run a race, you must run it fast, for Death will soon overtake you. You may almost feel the hot breath of the white horse of Death upon your cheeks already. O God, help us to do something ere we go and be no more seen.

It was grand of the apostle that in the same breath, when he said, "The time of my departure is at hand," he could also say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." So may we be able to say when the time of our departure has arrived.

If the time of our departure is at hand, let it cheer us amid our troubles. Sometimes, when our friends go to Liverpool to sail for Canada or any other distant region, on the night before they sail they get into a very poor lodging. I think I hear one of them grumbling, "What a hard bed! What a small room! What a bad look-out!" "Oh," says the other, "never mind, brother, we are not going to live here. We are off tomorrow."

Bethink you in like manner, you children of poverty—this is not your rest. Put up with it—you are away tomorrow. You sons of sorrow, you daughters of weakness, you children of sickness, let this cheer you—

*"The road may be rough,
But it cannot be long,
And I'll smooth it with hope,
And cheer it with song."*

Oftentimes when I have been traveling on the Continent, I have been obliged to put up at a hotel that was full, where the room was so inconvenient that it scarcely furnished any accommodation at all. But we have said, "Oh, never mind—we are off in the morning! What does it matter for one night?" So, as we are soon to be gone and the time of our departure is at hand, let us not be ruffling our tempers about trifles, nor raise evil spirits around us by caviling and finding fault. Take things as you find them, for we shall soon be up and away.

And if the time of my departure is at hand, I should like to be on good terms with all my friends on earth. Were you going to stop here always, when a man treated you badly, apart from a Christian spirit, you might as well have it out with him. But as we are going to stop such a little while, we may well put up with it.

It is not desirable to be too ready at taking an offense. What if my neighbor has an ugly temper, the Lord has to put up with him, and so I may. There are some people with whom I would rather dwell in heaven forever than abide with them half an hour on earth. Nevertheless, for the love of the brethren and for the peace of the church, we may tolerate much during the short time we have to brook with peevish moods and perverse humors.

Does Christ love them and shall not we? He covers their offenses. Why, then, should we expose them or publish them abroad? If any of you have any grievances with one another—if there is any

bickering or jealousy between you, I should like you to make up tonight, because the time of your departure is at hand.

Suppose there is someone you spoke harshly to, you would not like to hear tomorrow that he was dead. You would not have minded what you said to him if he had lived, but now that the seal is set upon all your communications one with another, you could wish that the last impress had been more friendly.

There has been a little difference between two brothers—a little coldness between two sisters. Oh, since one or other of you will soon be gone, make up! Live in love, as Christ loved you and gave Himself for you. If one of you were going to Australia tomorrow, never to come back, and you had had a little tiff with your brother, why I know before you started you would say, “Come, brother, let us part good friends.” So now, since you are so soon to depart, end all strife and dwell together in blessed harmony till the departure actually occurs.

If the time of my departure is at hand, then let me guard against being elated by any temporal prosperity. Possessions, estates, creature comforts dwindle into insignificance before this out-look. Yes, you may have procured a comfortable house and a delightful garden, but it is not your rest—your tenure is about to expire.

Yes, you may say, “God did prosper me last year, the bank account did swell, the premises were enlarged, and the business thrived beyond all expectation.” Ah! hold them loosely. Do not think that they are to be your heaven. Be very jealous lest you should get your good things here, for if you do, you will not have them hereafter.

Be not lifted up too much when you grasp the gain of which you must so soon quit your hold. As I said of the discomfort of the hotel, we did not think much of it, because we were going away. So, if it happens to be very luxurious, do not be enamored of it, for you must go tomorrow. “These are the things,” said one, when he looked at a rich man’s treasures, “that make it hard to die.”

But it need not be so, if you hold them as gifts of God’s kindness, and not as gods to be worshipped with self-indulgence—you may take leave of them with composure, “Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

Lastly, if the time of our departure is at hand, let us be prepared to bear our testimony. We are witnesses for Christ. Let us bear our testimony before we are taken up and mingle with the cloud of witnesses who have finished their course and rested from their labors.

Do you say, “I hope to do that on my dying bed”? Brother, do it now—do it now, for you may never have opportunity to do it then. Mr. Whitefield was always desirous that he might bear a testimony for Christ in the hour of death, but he could not do so at that momentous crisis, for as you well know, he was suddenly taken ill after preaching and very soon expired.

Was this to be grievously deplored? Ah, no. Why, dear friends, he had borne so many testimonies for his Lord and Master while he was alive, there was no need to add anything in the last few moments before his death or to supply the deficiencies of a life devoted to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Oh, let you and I bear our testimony now! Let us tell to others wherever we can what Christ has done for us. Let us help Christ’s cause with all our might while it is called today. Let us work for Jesus while we can work for Him. As to thinking we can undo the effect of our idleness by the spasmodic effort of our dying breath, that were a vain hope indeed compared with living for Jesus Christ. Your dying testimony, if you are able to bear it, will have the greater force if it is not a sickly regret, but a healthy confirmation of your whole career.

I only wish these words about departure were applicable to all here. “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” But, “As I live, saith the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways, and live.”

O unconverted man, the time for letting loose your cable draws nigh. It is even at the door. You must shortly set sail for a far country. Alas! then yours is not the voyage of a passenger with a sweeter clime, a happier home, a brighter prospect in view. Your departure is the banishment of a convict, with a penal

settlement looming in the distance—fear all rife, and hope all blank, for the term of your banishment is interminable.

I fear there are some of you who may depart ere long full of gloom, with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. I seem to see the angel of death hovering over my audience. He may, perhaps, select for his victim an unconverted soul. If so, behind that death-angel attends there something far more grim. Hell follows death to souls that love not Christ.

Oh, make haste, make haste! Seek Christ. Lay hold on eternal life, and may infinite mercy save you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen and Amen.

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.