

452 2833
72 40

THE PESTILENCE,

A DIVINE VISITATION.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AUGUST THE THIRD, 1849.

THE DAY OF

THE NATIONAL FAST.

BY SYMMES C. HENRY,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CRANBURY.

PRINCETON, N. J.:

PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

.....

1849.

THE RESISTANCE

A DIALOGUE

BY

JOHN RUSKIN

AND

THE

RESISTANCE

BY

JOHN RUSKIN

AND

THE

SERMON.

“Before Him went the Pestilence.”—HABAKKUK III. 5.

A mind properly impressed with a sense of God's over-ruling providence, will consider all things, as so many *instruments* to do his pleasure. And, indeed, the Bible does teach us, that every thing is subservient to the accomplishment of his sovereign purposes. Even what we call the *evils of life*—its various calamities, such as War, Famine and Pestilence are the ministers of his vengeance to do his bidding. Hence the remarkable language of the text—“Before Him, went the Pestilence.”

There now exists a most impressive reason, for drawing your attention to these views. The Pestilence has gone forth throughout our land, in the form of a disease comparatively of recent origin, and almost unknown among us. Before its first visit to this Western world seventeen years ago, we heard of its ravages, but we felt no fear and regarded it as peculiar to an Eastern clime. But, it is not confined, like the deadly Simoom, to the regions where it seems to originate. It makes its way into all climates—the temperate as well as the torrid, still retaining all its malignity. It is circumscribed by no limits. It passes over land and ocean, with a movement as rapid, as it is terrible, spreading dismay and desolation, wherever it goes. Truly, it may well be called a new arrow in the quiver of the Almighty.

Recognizing then, as we do, or should do, in this grievous scourge, a *visitation of Divine Providence*, we are called upon to consider what effect it should have on our minds.

J252
H5246
VAULT

1. In the First place, we should settle it with ourselves, as our most unwavering conviction—that *this Pestilence is from God*—that it is one of the ways in which it has pleased him to go forth in his chastening displeasure throughout our country. ‘Before him goes the Pestilence,’ like the harbinger of his wrath, proclaiming that he has a controversy with us. The judgments of the Lord, I mean especially to communities, will ordinarily manifest themselves in such a way as to make it clear, that his hand is in them. Who cannot trace his anger, in famine and pestilence, especially when these evils are general and greatly aggravated? When Pestilence arises unexpectedly—when it spreads in all directions—when it overleaps boundaries, and defies all precautions—when it cannot be anticipated in its approach, or arrested in its career—when it proves itself the most frightful, and the most fatal of all maladies—then it seems peculiarly fitting, that we should exclaim—“This is, indeed, the finger of the Lord.”

But how many fail to trace up this calamity to its proper source, and thus stop short of the divine agency in it. It is sad to think, in how many ways our deceitful hearts continue to evade the most salutary impressions under such a visitation. Every where there is a readiness to speculate about the causes of the disease and of its progress, and what should be done to arrest its ravages (which is all well enough, and which we would be very loath to censure)—but at the same time the interposition of the Almighty, is not readily and devoutly regarded. Now, how unwise is it, thus to confine our views. If there be a God, who governs the earth, then he must have the direction of all the operations of nature, and especially of those things which affect most deeply our comfort, our health, and our lives.

But so it has been with men, in every age. Israel of old, amidst the most fearful calamities inflicted on them, said, “the Lord seeth us not: the Lord has forsaken the earth.” And again, “I, saith the Lord, will punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.” And in a message by the prophet

Amos, which seems as though it were addressed to us—we read this declaration—“Shall the trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” We might then think it almost impossible, when the judgment of the Lord is sweeping through the land not to perceive his hand. But it is even so. There are thousands who have no ears to hear these loud calls of the Almighty’s voice—no eyes to see what the prophet aptly calls “*his glittering spear.*” We find them talking with anxiety of the disease, tracing its symptoms and its progress, but seldom or never adverting to the hand that inflicted it: invoking every human aid, but forgetting Jehovah: looking as one of old did, “to the Physicians and not to the Lord.” This, we repeat, is not the Spirit with which such a visitation should be contemplated.

We are glad therefore, that the *Nation is called this day, to acknowledge the hand of God in the calamity.* We are yearly called to acknowledge by our *Thanksgiving* days the distinguishing goodness of God to us as a nation. And more than any nation under heaven, have we reason to do so; for with our progress in prosperity and greatness, thus far, the history of all other nations can show no parallel. Within the memory of many yet living, “he hath made us a people, who were not a people.” If then, it is incumbent upon us to praise him for national blessings, it would ill-become us not to deprecate his wrath, and humble ourselves when he sees it needful to chasten us. It is, then, we think, a token for good, that the President of our great and growing country has called upon its millions to pause amidst the busy scenes of life, that they might lift up their hearts, and turn their imploring eyes to the hills from whence alone cometh help. And we doubt not, that it is a call, which will command the attention of the American people, without being echoed by the Governors of States, or the Heads of Ecclesiastical bodies. Ten thousand hearts, in a thousand temples will respond to the call, and will unite in imploring the blessed and only Potentate, who is King of kings,

and Lord of lords, the Governor among the nations, to arrest the pestilence, which like a desolating scourge has carried death, and mourning, and lamentation and woe, into so many houses throughout this land.

It is in this way we are required to acknowledge our dependence on God, and to give him the glory that is due to his name. And he will "be known by the judgments which he executeth." He will be known as Judge among the nations, and the punisher of wickedness. This is the very lesson the Scriptures would have us learn—that it is for this purpose that he often visits nations with his chastening rod—that *they might know that he is the Lord*, and stand in awe of his judgments. The plagues were sent upon Egypt, that the Egyptians might know that God is the Lord. The history of the Israelites, is full of instruction on this point; and shows again, and again, that strange punishments were sent upon the disobedient, that the people might see, and acknowledge the hand of the Lord. And when Sennacherib, was invading Judah, and wickedly railing against the God of Israel, an angel of the Lord slew in one night an hundred and four score and five thousand men! And why? It was "that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that he is the Lord God—even he alone." And in terms most express, it is asserted that "God maketh himself known, by the judgments which he executeth."

If then, my brethren, the judgments of God are both fitted and designed to awaken us to see *his frowning face*, and *his uplifted hand*, how should we regard the present visitation of pestilence when we view it in this light—as *a judgment which he has sent upon our land*? This leads me now to observe,

II. In the second place, that we should at once acknowledge it to be *a visitation for our sins*. Such is the testimony of unerring truth—"it is for our sins we are visited, and for our iniquities that we are troubled." Sin is the common source of all suffering and misery: the grand cause, and the only cause of all the calamities that have ever desolated our world, and destroyed our race from age to age. Let it therefore, be borne in

mind that no other reason can be assigned why God sends down his judgments upon men, as individuals or communities. They are the manifestations of his displeasure on account of sin. And when they become general and severe, it is on account of prevailing iniquity—because it abounds, and goes on to increase. If any conclusion is a scriptural one, it is, that men when they suffer, suffer for their sins. When they are punished by the righteous Governor of the universe, they are punished for their sins; for a God of infinite goodness cannot inflict pain and distress, unnecessarily, unjustly. He does not willingly grieve the children of men by the terrible scourges of his hand; for “he delighteth in mercy,” and “Judgment is his strange work;” it is a work to which the benignity of his nature, renders him averse—which he comparatively seldom executes—but which is (as it were) wrested from him, by the crimes of men. And even then, there is often much mercy mingled with the judgment to alleviate and to encourage.

Let then, the present visitation of divine judgment, drive every open transgressor of God's law from his sins and criminal indulgences. And I feel sorry to say, that notwithstanding all the high and distinguishing privileges, we enjoy in this land, and all the mercies, and warnings of a kind and indulgent providence which as a people we have received, that there is scarcely a form in which human depravity can manifest itself, that is not to be seen, especially in our cities and larger towns. Now at such a time of threatening aspect, we might naturally expect, that sinners would pause in their career of wickedness, and that men generally would be brought to break off from their iniquities, and to think seriously, who never thought seriously before. And I trust that such is the case in regard to some, and I would hope to a considerable extent. But I fear that there is little room to believe that any very extensive reformation—even though it be but an outward reformation—has as yet, manifested itself. Profane swearers still utter their oaths and curses—sabbath breakers are still regardless of the day of God—the intemperate are as frequent at the intoxicating cup

as ever—gamblers and debauchees still hold on to their deeds of darkness and of daring crime—the duellist and the murderer defile the land with blood—the oppressors of the poor and the needy, the widow and the fatherless—and the defrauder of the hireling of his wages, have not yet relinquished their unjust and ill-gotten gain. The spirit of covetousness has not lost its power over the worshippers of mammon; and then, too, the thousands who in this land of gospel mercy condemn the gospel, and live neglectful of its inestimable blessings, live neglectful of them still. Can we wonder then, that we hear God in the pestilence, saying to us, as he did to his people of old, “Shall I not visit you for these things, saith the Lord?” And are we not told, that “for these things, the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience?” not only his “wrath to come” but his wrath now.

But how slow of heart are men to believe, that *public calamities*, ought to be regarded, as the judgment of God, against sin! Such a recognition brings God so near to their consciences, that they strive to conceal his agency, and endeavor to account for their sufferings in some other way. Though every affliction, and especially every public and prevailing distress has a voice that says—“it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord;” yet, it is not until the Almighty makes bare his arm, and draws out from the scabbard, his glittering sword, and forces himself on their attention, by the judgments which he executeth that his agency, is reluctantly acknowledged. The average amount of human wretchedness and misery is not enough to bring them to confess, that “verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” And therefore, to vindicate his authority, and to demonstrate his hatred of sin, and his determination to punish it—he allows the profligacy of cities and states and nations, to bring down some of the drops of those heavier showers of his indignation, which will in the end utterly consume them, if they go on to the filling up of the cup of their iniquity.

I wish to observe here, to prevent any misconstruction of the remarks which have been made respecting the judgments of

God against sin, that they are not intended to refer to *individuals* but to *communities*. It is doubtless true, that the trials and afflictions which befall individuals, are in a certain sense, visitations for sin. But when the immediate causes of such visitations are unknown—when the day of grace is not yet closed—when the call of the gospel is addressed to men generally—there is every reason to hesitate, in ascribing any personal infliction, to the vengeance of God, and considering it as a judgment of heaven upon the individual, for any prominence in guilt and wickedness. The Divine Redeemer cautions us against such an interpretation of the divine judgments. “Think you,” said he, “that the eighteen men, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay—but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” And there too was the case of Lazarus and the rich man—Lazarus a poor beggar, loathsome and diseased, and without a place to lay his head—the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. Who would not if he had judged merely by appearances, and had not known the characters of these individuals, nor the designs of the Almighty sovereign, have at once entertained the conclusion, that the former was receiving the punishment due to his evil deeds, and that the latter was the object of the divine favour? Yet the reverse was the truth. This too, was the very error into which the friends of Job fell. Viewing the sore and successive calamities which befel this man of God—wasted his substance, and oppressed his spirits; seeing him covered with sores, and his mind perplexed with troubles, they rashly reproved him, and argued that he was a very wicked man, and that these were the infallible tokens of the anger of God towards him.

Let us not then put such a construction upon the deaths of those individuals, who have been taken away by the pestilence. No doubt, God sees fit, in seasons of public calamity, to remove many who are his dear children,—but in doing so, he takes them “from the evil to come”—and their very removal is an ag-

gravation of such a calamity, and is also, itself, a judgment upon the land, and a punishment for its wickedness.

Let us then come to the point, and be ready to acknowledge, what we should not for a moment doubt,—*that it is the sin of our people* that has provoked the Lord to visit us with the desolating pestilence. Truly it becomes us to confess that “we, and our fathers, and our rulers, and the children of our people have sinned and provoked the Lord greatly to anger.” Is there one among us who dare declare himself innocent? No; all—of all classes, and ages, have had a deep hand in the provocation. Let us then humble ourselves before the Lord, and repent, and turn from all our iniquities.

III. This leads me to observe in the third place—that it is proper for us, in the day of adversity to consider, not only, *why* God has a controversy with us, but *what it becomes us to do, what improvement we may make of his judgments, and how we may hope to avert his displeasure from us.* I need scarcely say to you, that our first duty, is to *humble ourselves* under his mighty hand; to confess our unworthiness; to abase ourselves in the spirit of penitence before his mercy-seat—acknowledging our own ill-desert, and his righteous sovereignty. Now, this day, is appointed *for a season of humiliation*, and it is such a disposition of mind that we should endeavour to cherish under the circumstances, that have assembled us in the house of God. Such passages as these will indicate to us the general tone of feeling we should strive to maintain. “In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, would we wait for thee.” “When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” “My flesh trembleth for thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.” “I will tell you whom you ought to fear; fear not them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do; but fear him who after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast both soul and body into hell—yea, I say unto you, fear Him.” “Let sinners in Zion be afraid—let fearfulness seize upon hypocrites.” “Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men—because it is a fearful thing to fall into

the hands of the living God." "Thou hast not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities: if thou Lord shouldst mark iniquity—O Lord who could stand?"

Let the considerations suggested by such passages, have their immediate and practical result upon our lives. Let them lead us to repentance for sin, and to faith in the great Mediator, and to a life of holy obedience to all God's commandments—that we "may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." This chastisement, which God has sent upon our towns and cities—and the country at large—contains a gracious admonition to accept the terms of mercy which he has so freely offered; no longer to live in neglect of the grace of the gospel, but "to turn to him that smiteth us," and embrace the salvation and the service of his dear son. Thus will the evil be converted into good—the calamity into blessing—the darkness into light. In the language of an apostle, let me say to you, "submit yourselves unto God,"—"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,"—"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." And seeing that we have a great High Priest who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the son of God—and who standeth there "between the living and the dead"—presenting as a sweet smelling savour to offended justice, the incense of his divine merits—"let us come boldly to his throne, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in a time of need." But, if instead of this abasement of ourselves before God—and this reliance upon the mediation of the only Saviour—we should indulge in a temper of mind the opposite of this, and of that, to which God in his providence calls us, then let us fear, that the prophetic message, burdened as it was with denunciation and doom, may be applicable to our land: "And in that day did the Lord God of Hosts call to weeping and to mourning and to girding with sackcloth, and behold joy and gladness,—and it was revealed unto me, surely, this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of Hosts." Until, therefore, the fruits of a sincere reformation begin to appear, we cannot expect the scourge to be withdrawn.

The two most striking, and I may add scriptural ways of expressing our humiliation before God, in consequence of his judgments, are *Fasting* and *Prayer*; and accordingly these have always been united on all those occasions when a people have been called on to humble themselves for their sins, to avert some calamity, or to obtain some signal favour. To see then, a whole nation abstaining for one day from all worldly business, for the purpose of acknowledging its sins, and imploring the divine blessing in withdrawing his correcting hand, is a spectacle which might well fill the heart of every true patriot with hope and joy. And it is a sublime spectacle. Angels must witness it with interest; the very thought of it is thrilling and cannot be contemplated by the pious heart without emotion. Surely such a service cannot be in vain. We have many remarkable instances of the efficacy of fasting, when united with prayer, on record. I speak now of the benefits of *public, national fasts*. Of the readiness of God to regard such demonstrations of national humiliation, we have several examples in scripture. I would refer to two that stand out with some degree of prominence. The one was a fast kept by his own Peculiar People, and proclaimed by Jehoshaphat their king throughout all Judah. He heard of a great multitude who were about to invade the land, and who sought to destroy him. In this exigency he set himself to seek the Lord, and ordered a fast. The people with one heart joined their pious king, and assembled themselves at the temple in Jerusalem, to ask help of the Lord. Here they fasted and humbled themselves, and the king committed their cause to the Lord, in a very devout and fervent prayer. And on the very day of the fast the spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, proclaiming that the Lord himself would fight for Judah, and destroy their enemies. Accordingly, the army of Jehoshaphat stood still, and saw the invaders perish by their own hands.—The other example was that of a fast proclaimed by a heathen king. I refer to the case of the Ninevites. God had declared by his prophet Jonah, that he would destroy Nineveh. But they repented at the preach-

ing of the prophet. A fast was proclaimed and kept—one of the most astonishing fasts in the history of the world. The king and his nobles took the lead,—covered themselves with sackcloth and fasted, and so did all the people from the greatest of them even unto the least of them. Nay, the very beasts were clothed with sackcloth, and were neither to feed nor drink water. The result was, as the king hoped it would be, that “the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger, that they perished not.” These examples, my brethren, are like monuments, erected for the instruction and the encouragement of after-ages, and they teach most impressively the truth, that “righteousness exalteth a nation,” and that “happy is the people, whose God is the Lord.”

It would seem from the examples given in the Bible, that an *entire abstinence* from food and drink was generally necessary in fasting. The only rule, perhaps, which can safely be laid down, is to abridge ourselves of all food which we can without injury spare, and if any refreshment is necessary to use only that which is least gratifying to the palate. Some self-denial ought to be exercised. This is essential to the nature of a fast; but the degree of it must be measured by every man’s conscience and constitution. In general it would appear that one or more entire meals might be spared. The very design of a fast is *to mortify the body* as well as *afflict the soul*. That, therefore, is no fast where the appetite is satisfied to the full. Joshua with the Elders of Israel, and Samuel with the people gathered at Mizpeh fasted from morning until evening,—from sunrise until sunset. And by the decree of the king of Nineveh neither man nor beast, herd nor flock were to taste any thing—they were neither to eat food, nor to drink water.

We hope the day will be extensively observed; and we feel that it would be a great dereliction of duty to neglect to do so, especially on the part of those who wear the Christian name; because “the powers that be are ordained of God.” It is highly proper, when the judgments of God visit a nation, that its Chief Magistrate, should call upon the people to humble them-

selves for their sins, and to seek the divine interposition. It is proper also, that this humiliation should be general,—and as solemn as possible. When, therefore, such a day is set apart by Authority, and it is rendered practicable and convenient to observe it, by a general suspension of business, persons of all classes, should avail themselves of the opportunity of expressing their humiliation; and not to do so renders them responsible to God, and therefore the reasons for a refusal should be well weighed. *Prayer and fasting are duties*, and that they have an influence in securing the blessings, and averting the judgments of heaven, the whole history of the world proves. In view of the fearful calamity now spreading throughout our country, the people of the United States are called upon to offer on this day, a special act of penitence and submission, which, in connection with the avoidance of all worldly pursuits, shall embrace not abstinence, to a degree that would endanger health, but abstinence from all needless indulgence of appetite, and thus be fitted for that attitude of humble supplication, which expressly becomes them as a nation chastened of the Almighty. In this view of the subject, we cannot but hope that men of all *Creeds* and of all *Politics* will heartily concur; and that the people generally, in the appropriate language of the President's recommendation, will humble themselves before Almighty God their heavenly father, and with "lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts," make confession of the sins which have provoked his displeasure.

Whether it will please Him who sitteth on the throne of the Universe, and ordereth all events, according to the counsel of his own will, to stay his hand in the calamity which has come upon us, and to say to the Destroying Angel, "it is enough;" or whether he shall see fit still longer to smite us with his chastening rod, must be left to his infinite wisdom, which doeth all things well. "Duty is ours—events are his." And it is our duty, seeing that we are but dust—that we are crushed as the moth is crushed, and that "our times are in his hand,"—to bow with every inward feeling, and every outward token of humili-

ation, at his footstool, and to say, "The Lord reigneth." Such a recognition of the Divine Sovereignty by the nation at large, will have connected with it an indescribable importance, and can be attended with no ordinary results. A national humiliation is an event of commanding magnitude, viewed in all its relations. It cannot fail—whatever may be the purposes of Jehovah, in regard to *this particular visitation*—yet, it cannot, eventually, fail to bring down the blessing of heaven upon this country, and to produce most salutary influences upon all classes of the community. This day then, under all the circumstances of its appointment, will, we doubt not, be long remembered as one of solemn and permanent interest, and will stand forth before the world as the testimony of a great and prosperous nation, to the over-ruling and righteous providence of God.

And along with the outward tokens of Humiliation, let us not forget above all, to cultivate *a spirit of supplication, and earnest prayer, to God for his delivering mercy*. It is his command, "call on me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." All good men feel it to be a very great relief, in the season of distress, to be permitted to cast their burden upon the Lord. With unobstructed access to the throne of grace, they feel as if nothing could hurt them. "God is their refuge and their strength, a very present help in the time of trouble."

But while we seek relief for ourselves, we should not be forgetful of *the sorrows of others*. Indeed, a great part of the business of this day, is to make supplication for others—for the thousands of bereaved families, the light of whose homes has been extinguished by the dread destroyer, and the ten thousand mourners whose hearts have been smitten with anguish for the loss of loved ones snatched away from their embrace, by "the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." And while thus remembering the suffering—to remember, also, those who have not yet been visited in their persons and families by the Angel of death, as he passes through the land, and to pray that they may still be spared, and that he who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, may spread the

wing of his protection to shield them. And for our encouragement, we are told that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Many an evil has been averted from a nation and a people for the sake of the intercessions of the faithful. At the prayer of Moses, the fire of the divine vengeance, which was raging through the camp of the Israelites, and consuming them for their rebelliousness, was stayed. In answer to his entreaties, also, a remedy was provided for the deadly bite of the fiery flying serpent. Not to multiply examples, the apostle tells us that Elias, "though subject to like passions with us, prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Here then, the prayer of the prophet was the means of removing a great public calamity and relieving the land of a grievous famine. All these instances, and many more, of answered prayer, powerfully enforce the duty of making supplication for our people in the time of their distress. I know not a more dreadful prohibition in the Bible than the repeated injunction given to the prophet Jeremiah,—not to pray for his impenitent countrymen. Such a command sounds like the sentence of death, and as the signal for total destruction.

But guilty as is our land, and numerous as are its impieties, and awful as it has abused its mercies, and daringly as it has insulted the long-suffering patience of God, no such command has been issued against it. Its praying inhabitants are still permitted to spread out their hands before the Lord, and to beseech him to have mercy on its sinful people, in the hope that he will hear and be entreated. And, therefore, those who make mention of the name of the Lord should not keep silence. While we confess our own sins, and the sins of our land, and implore forgiveness through the Mediator—let us also, supplicate that his judgments may be sanctified and speedily removed. He is the best *Patriot* who is the best *Christian*. Believing prayer is more valuable at the present crisis, than medicine or skill.

The prayer of faith brings to our relief the aid of him who is able to save or destroy. I do not mean to disparage the healing art, or to say that human aid is utterly unavailing. But how little has it hitherto done, in arresting the march of the malignant disease, which seems to mock and defy all efforts and prescriptions to cut short its power. Let then, prayer be made to him who rules the world and has all the agencies of nature under his control.

And now, to conclude, my brethren,—among the many reflections we might derive from this subject, and the solemn circumstances under which we have assembled in the house of God to day—I will advert to only one, and that is, *the precariousness of human life*. This is a thought which should come with direct and impressive effect upon our minds, as we contemplate the frightful rapidity with which the appalling destroyer hurries its victims to the grave. That mysterious pestilence, which has more than once made the circuit of the globe, and is now on its third visit among us, is again doing its desolating work, in many places. It is indeed, the terrible character of this disease, that while it strikes suddenly, and unexpectedly, it strikes a blow which is *soon fatal*. And thus in its march through the land it is everywhere re-echoing the momentous truth, “Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.” No judgment ever pressed home to our hearts with such emphasis the similitude of the psalmist, “Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest return ye children of men: Thou carriest them away as with a *flood*: they are as a *sleep*: in the morning they are like *grass* which groweth up: in the *evening* it is cut down and withereth.” Let us think of these things. When to-morrow comes, how changed may be our condition! Our connection with present scenes dissolved forever: our bodies shrouded for the tomb, and our souls in the eternal world. “O that men were wise, that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end.” Let us then learn lessons of righteousness from God’s judgments. “Let us

lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven," and then, when our Lord comes—whether he come in the first watch or the second—whether at midnight, or the morning dawn—whether this day or to-morrow—whether in the house of God, or amidst the walks of busy life—whether when we are asleep or awake—at home or abroad, he will find us—*Ready*.