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A Sermon on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Mary Chapman
Halsey

Kavanaugh, B.T.

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Boston University
A SERMON

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF MRS.
MARY CHAPMAN HALSEY.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the
dead which die in the Lord from now and henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit,
that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."—
Rev. xiv., 13.

The book of Revelation, by St. John, the divine, mostly
consists of prophecies concerning "things which must shortly
come to pass." The relation the text sustains to the prophetic
visions of Apocalypse, may be found in what is said in the
preceding part of this chapter. The scene is laid in connec-
tion with the fall of spiritual Babylon, and the flight of the
angel having the everlasting gospel to preach. Bishop New-
ton is of the opinion that it has a special reference to the
reformation under Luther. He says: "What first provoked
Luther's spirit was the scandalous sale of indulgences; and
the doctrine of indulgences having a close connection with
the doctrine of purgatory, the refutation of the one naturally
leads to the refutation of the other; and his first work of
reformation was his ninety-fifth thesis, or position, against in-
dulgences, purgatory and the dependent doctrines. So that
he may be said literally to have fulfilled the command from
heaven of writing “Blessed (or happy) are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth.” From that time to this, this truth has been so clearly asserted, and so solemnly established, that it is likely to prevail forever.

We are not to suppose that Bishop Newton, or any other Evangelical minister, would intimate that the doctrine asserted in the text was not fully recognized in the Scriptures until the reformation; but the prophecy points out the time when the Church should throw off the corrupt and shameful doctrines of purgatory and its kindred dogmas, and assert the truth as set forth in the text as a triumph over the teachings of the beast, which the eye of prophecy had seen in the picture.

I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, &c. The doctrine of the future blessedness of the Saints, and of their being permitted to enter immediately into a peaceful rest in Paradise, is of too much importance to be left to conjecture or inference; hence, the most solemn and authoritative form in which God has chosen to declare his will, is here employed to put this question forever at rest. The voice that spake to Moses on Sinai—the voice that attested the divinity of Christ at his baptism—the voice that was heard on the mount of transfiguration from heaven—is now heard in the Isle of Patmos by John the beloved, and he is commanded to write “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” And to give a double impress of the seal of the divine authority, it is added, “Yea, saith the Spirit,” the Holy Ghost, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

Death, to the men of the world, is regarded as “the king of terrors,” and the fear of death is deeply implanted in every living creature. Fear is the legitimate offspring of conscious guilt in all moral agents. The fear of death, to the natural man, is greatly augmented by a consciousness of accountability to God for the deeds done in the body. As death terminates our probationary state on earth, and ushers us into the presence of the Judge of the quick and the dead, it is a terrible thought to those who have rejected the gospel, done despite to the spirit of divine grace, and dishonored God by a life of disobedience to His will and government. Death is an awful reality to a Godless sinner!

It is far otherwise with those who are in Christ Jesus—those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice—the sacrifice or consecration of their lives to his service. To all such death is but a welcome messenger sent, in love, to release the suffering saint from the toils and afflictions of mortality, and open to them the gates of Paradise. Though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil for God is with them; His rod and staff will defend and comfort them.

The sting of death is sin; but when that sting is removed, when by the pardoning mercy of God our sins have been forgiven, through the atoning merits of the cross, and the soul cleansed from all unrighteousness, death has lost its power and the soul finds a refuge in God, for they that dwell in love dwell in God, and God in them.

Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. To die in the Lord, we must live in Him. We must pass from a state of spiritual death, by regeneration, into a newness of life in Christ Jesus. We must be born again—born of God and adopted into His family, and become partakers of Divine nature. This new birth wholly changes our relations to God by
constituting us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and
entitles us to a glorious inheritance, "a kingdom prepared for
us from the foundation of the world."

Sister Halsey, whose memory we desire to honor by this
discourse, was an eminent Christian woman—a child of God.
She made an entire consecration of her life to God in her ear-
ly youth. She was a native of Saybrook, Connecticut; was
born of religious parents in 1806. Though her parents were
Presbyterians, and entertained prejudices against the Method-
dists, as was common in New England at that early day, yet
Mary Chapman, as her name then was, had independ-
ence enough to attend upon the ministry of the Methodist
preachers, and was happily converted in her eighteenth year
and became a Methodist.

She was educated at the Wilbraham academy, under the
presidency of Dr. Wilber Fisk, and completed her full course
and graduated with distinguished honor in her twenty-fifth
year. As it was the settled purpose of Miss Chapman to de-
vote her whole life to teaching as a profession, she not only
made herself a thorough scholar in the sciences she studied at
school, but having formed the habit of close and diligent
study, she kept it up faithfully through her whole life, thereby
qualifying herself for the many responsible positions to which
she was called in her professional labors.

Miss Chapman chose the South as the field of her labors as
a teacher and entered her chosen field in 1835. In 1838 she
was employed as teacher in a Methodist academy at Woodville,
Mississippi, where she met with her late husband, Professor
William Halsey, and they were married in that year. This
marriage was not to interfere with the settled purpose of her

life as a teacher, but in a greater degree to enable her to pur-
sue it on a more enduring basis.

Prof. Halsey and his wife removed to Texas in 1845, and
first settled in Galveston, where they were both engaged in
teaching a high school. They were afterwards called to take
charge of Ruterville College, where they remained several
years. While laboring at this place they educated several
young men who are now itinerant ministers in Texas. They
were next called to Chappell Hill, where Prof. Halsey took
charge of Soule University, and Mrs. Halsey took charge of
the Female College, and successfully conducted it until the
schools and country were disturbed by the civil war in 1862.
Since that time Mrs. Halsey has devoted herself to her labors
in teaching private schools in several places. The last eleven
years of her life have been spent in Harrisburg, where she had
a large school room of her own, and still adhered to her life-
long profession.

By inquiry, from her late husband I learned that sister
Halsey, in the fifty years she had spent in educating the young,
she had educated about 2,000 young ladies, more or less com-
plete, and that many of her former pupils have sent their chil-
dren to her schools. She regarded her office as teacher a
very sacred one, and embarked in its labors more for the glory
of God and the good of our country, than for the incidental
emolument that might arise from it. Her schools were con-
ducted upon strictly religious principles. She had no faith in
that form of education which only contemplated the develop-
ment of the intellect, while the heart, the moral and spiritual
elements, were neglected. Her great aim was, by education,
to qualify every pupil committed to her care, for all the duties
and relations of life, and especially for the duties and obligations we owe to God and His Kingdom on earth and in heaven. Keeping a constant eye to these great objects, and diligently laboring, with much faith and prayer for their accomplishment, who can estimate the vast amount of good that has been accomplished by the godly example, life and labors of one devoted Christian teacher in fifty years toil in so great a cause? Eternity alone can properly reveal the wondrous achievement.

As an exemplary and devoted Christian, Mrs. Halsey had but few superiors. With all her culture as a scholar, and her accomplishments in all that tends to give her a high position in society, her social intercourse with her friends was as natural and simple as a child. In every circle in which I have met her, her object seemed to be to adapt her manner to the understanding and capacity of her company. She was a model in the meek and humble attitudes she would assume among strangers, yet always kind and attentive to the poor and ignorant. Her unostentatious manner was a marked feature of her character.

Sister Halsey was a woman of great faith in God and in the power of prayer. She fully believed that God delighted to hear and answer the prayer of His children, even to the smaller matters of this life, as well as those which pertain to the greater interests of the soul. Her views of the Divine government, and of the character of God, were peculiarly large and liberal. Her religion had a controlling influence over her in all that she did in the every day business of life. Though for the last six years of her life she suffered much from the dislocation of the hip joint, and found it quite difficult to walk, even with the aid of a crutch, yet she was always cheer-

ful and sought to make others happy about her. Her decrepid condition scarcely ever prevented her from attending church or the Sabbath school. She was the chief support of both in Harrisburg for many years. Her presence always gave aid and comfort to the preacher in the performance of his duty, for she gave a constant and prayerful attention to all that was said.

Her strong and unwavering faith in the presence and power of God, gave her mind and spirit an ardor and freshness which was truly animating. I never saw her dejected or despondent under the most trying circumstances. She was not only the centre of attraction in her own family, but in every circle of friends she visited.

"Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their toils.

Sister Halsey was a Christian worker of unceasing toil. Not only was she industrious and diligent as a teacher, but in every good work her head, heart and hands were busy. Not a moment was to be lost with her, while she saw so much to do and so short a time in which to accomplish it. Indeed her ceaseless efforts, in the mind of her husband, amounted to a fault. She overtasked her strength; but her objects of pursuit were worthy of her efforts. Her plans were wisely conceived and faithfully executed. She labored on until she was stricken down and overshadowed by a most malignant disease (apoplexy). Within the last three or four months of her life, in a most mysterious way, her dislocated hip joint had been adjusted to its proper position, and her health had so much improved that she was growing more fleshy than she had ever been, and was enjoying herself unusually well. It is likely this rapid increase of plethora, superinduced the attack by which she was carried off. In a few moments after the
attack she became unconscious and never recovered again. Her work was done, and well done, and she has doubtless entered into the enjoyment of the reward of the faithful.

"And their works do follow them." Dr. A. Clarke, and many other commentators, agree in saying this passage should read, "follow with them," or "their works do accompany them." They do not go before the dying saint, to plead for them, or in any sense appear as meritorious, but they do appear with the "blessed," as witnesses of faithful obedience rendered to God, in the honest discharge of Christian duties while working out their salvation here on earth. We find this principle fully recognized in the descriptive scenes of the last great day, where to the saints it said, "Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was a hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me." When the blessed heard the affectionate welcome, and the causes for it, they expressed surprise; they were unconscious of their own good works. But then "the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren ye have done it unto me!" Truly here is the testimony of good works, and the great reward of the "blessed" workers.

On the same great day, the same principle is applied to those on the "left hand." They are commanded to "depart" under a curse into everlasting fire, &c., and the reason given is as follows: "I was a hungry and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink," &c. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The same test and standard of fidelity is laid down in the parable of the man "taking his journey into a far country," who gave to his servants the five, two and one talents. On his return they were rewarded according to their fidelity, or good works.

Faith has much to do, in this life, in stimulating Christians to an honest and devoted life of toil, self denial and sacrifice, in the service of God, for they have "respect unto the recom pense of the reward," but in the final reckoning, in the last day, faith is no longer the test, but the fruits of faith will be then required. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. I have no doubt but that Sister Halsey was greatly delighted and surprised, upon entering into the blessed world above, to find a whole train of good works following her before God, and bearing their voluntary testimony to her fidelity to God and His cause, through a long pilgrimage on earth. She will doubtless meet with a whole multitude that she had forgotten long years ago! They will meet her there like treasurers laid up where moth and rust do not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

If there was one theme on which Mrs. Halsey delighted to dwell, more than another, according to my observation, it was as to the nature and character of the heavenly worlds, and the kinds and variety of the employments and pleasures of the blessed. She had given these subjects long and patient investigation, and grew animated and happy while she contemplated them. If it is true, that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, then indeed she lived in heaven while here on earth. Where our treasure is there will our hearts be also.
Her treasure was in heaven, and hence her heart delighted to dwell on heavenly contemplations.

It was a cherished and favorite theory with our ascended sister, that there were degrees of exaltation among the blessed, to which each would arise according to the attainments made in the divine life, in this world, and that each would find its proper sphere, or equilibrium by spiritual affinities. That in each sphere there would be mutual attractions among kindred spirits, as “birds of a feather,” and these kindred spirits would naturally form themselves into groups, and pursue those pleasures together which were most congenial to their taste and capacity. That the pursuit of spiritual knowledge—God as seen in the works of His hand, and the revelation of His love towards our fallen race—would engage the thoughts of a large portion of the spirits of the just made perfect. That others, again, would find most pleasure in the social circle, employing their powers in songs and anthems of praise before the throne. That generally, there would be an infinite variety of employments and each would seek such forms and pursuits as were most in harmony with their state of spiritual progress in the knowledge of divine science.

Mrs. Halsey entertained the opinion, that in the future state of blessedness, there would be a perpetual growth in knowledge, and that those who were most devoted to the investigation in divine truth, would rise higher and higher in the scale of bliss, and become more and more like God. That to promote this growth in knowledge, and thereby increase in love, teachers will be employed to deliver lectures on the various topics of instruction. For example, Moses may have a class studying the deep things of the law—Adam may give us a lecture on the primitive earth and creation—the Prophets may unfold to us the mysteries of the deep things of God, dimly given in their times. The Apostles, too, may give us heavenly views of the work of Christ, and the glories of the schemes of redemption. On these great subjects, she thought a large portion of eternity might be profitably spent; for such was her working propensity, that she could not conceive of happiness without useful employment.

Such were some of many views entertained by our sainted Sister Halsey, on her favorite theme of conversation. She has talked and meditated much on heaven; she has labored for a mansion there for half a century; she has suffered out her three score years and ten, in the service of her Heavenly Father, and now by His blessed will, she has been called to cease her toils on earth and to enter into her peaceful rest in heaven. She is not dead, but sleepeth. They that live and believe in Christ shall never die. This was her faith, and she now reigns with Christ in heaven, and now knows what heaven is.

Mrs. Halsey leaves a bereaved husband, a son and daughter to mourn her absence. May all meet her in heaven at last.