

CHRIST OUR LIFE—SOON TO APPEAR

NO. 617

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“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.”
Colossians 3:4.

MY discourse on Sunday mornings is very frequently the gathering up of the thoughts and experiences of the week—a handful of barley which I have gleaned among the sheaves; but I could not thrust upon you, this morning, the poverty-stricken productions of my own insufferable dullness of brain, weariness of heart, and sickness of spirit during this week, for this were a sure method of making you partakers of my misery. I have wandered through a wilderness, but I will not scatter handfuls of the hot sand among you. I have traversed the Valley of the Shadow of Death, but I will not repeat the howling of Apollyon. This day of rest is appointed for a far better purpose.

Scarcely knowing how to fulfill the appointed service of this morning, I sit down and remember the ancient minstrel, who, when the genius of song had for a time departed from him, was nevertheless called upon to discourse sweet music. What could he do but play his fingers among the strings of his harp, and begin some old accustomed strain? His fingers and his lips moved at first mechanically; the first few stanzas dropped from him from mere force of habit, and fell like stones without life or power, but by and by, he struck a string which woke the echoes of his soul, a note fell on his heart like a blazing torch, and the smoldering fire within his soul suddenly flamed up—the Heaven-born muse was with him, and he sang as in his better times. So may it be my happy lot this morning—to place my fingers on the strings which know so well the name of Jesus, and begin to discourse upon a theme which so constantly has made these walls ring, although at first insipid periods may try your patient ears, yet shall they nevertheless lead to something that may kindle in you hope, and joy, and love, if not rapture and delight. O for the wings of eagles to bear our souls upward towards the Throne of our God! Already my heart warms with the expectation of a blessing!

Does the earth feel the rising of the sun before the first bright beams gild the East? Are there not sharp-witted birds which know within themselves that the sunbeams are on the road, and therefore begin right joyously to wake up their fellows to tell them that the morning comes leaping over the hills? Certain hopeful, joyful thoughts have entered within our heart, prophetic of the Comforter’s Divine Appearing, to make glad our souls. Does not the whole earth prophecy the coming of the happy days of Spring? There are certain little bulbs that swell, and flowers that peep from under the black mold, and say, “We know what others do not know, that the summer’s coming, coming very soon.” And surely there are rising hopes within us this morning which show their golden flowers above our heaviness, and assure us with joyful accents that Christ is coming to cheer our hearts yet again! Believer, you shall once again behold His comfortable Presence; you shall no longer cry unto Him out of the depths, but your soul shall lean upon His arm, and drink deep of His Love! Beloved, I proceed in the hope that the gracious Lord will favor His most unworthy servant, and in His mercy fulfill our best expectations.

Our text is a very simple one, and bears upon its surface four thoughts; first, *that Christ is our life*; that, secondly, *Christ is hidden, and so is our life*; that, thirdly, *Christ will one day appear*; and, fourthly, that *when He appears we also, shall appear with Him in glory*.

I. The first most precious and experimental Doctrine lies in these words, “CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE.”

We hardly realize that we are reading in Colossians when we meet with this marvelously rich expression. It is so like John’s way of talking. See his opening words in his Gospel, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Remember how he reports the words at Lazarus’ tomb, “I am the resurrection and the life.” How familiarly he speaks of the Lord Jesus under the same Character in his first Epistle—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father,

and was manifested unto us.” How closely John cleaves to Jesus! He does not say, as the preacher of this morning will—Christ is the food of our life, and the joy of our life, and the object of our life, and so on, no, but “Christ *is* our life.” I think that Peter or James would have said, “He is the *strength* or guide of our life,” but John must put his head right on the Savior’s bosom, he cannot talk at a distance, or whisper from a second seat, but his head must go sweetly down upon the Savior’s heaving bosom; he must feel himself in the closest, nearest possible contact with his Lord; and so he puts it, “The life was manifested,” getting to the very pith and marrow of it at once.

Paul has somewhat of the same loving spirit, and if not entitled to be called, “that disciple whom Jesus loved,” the angel might well have addressed him as he did Daniel, “O man, greatly beloved.” Therefore, you see, he leaps at once into the depths of the Truth of God, and delights to dive in it. Whereas others, like the Israelites, stand outside the bound which surrounds the mount, he, like Moses, enters into the place where God is, and beholds the excellent Glory. We, I fear, must compass this holy Truth round about before we can fully enter into it. Blessed is it to wait at the doors of such a Truth, though far better to enter in. Let it be understood that it is not natural but *spiritual* life of which the text treats, and then we shall not mislead the ignorant.

1. *Christ is the source of our life.* “For as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even so the Son quickens whom He will.” Our Lord’s own words are—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he who hears My Word, and believes on Him who sent Me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they who hear shall live.” Four *verilies*, as if to show the importance of the Truth here taught to us. We are dead in sin. That same Voice which brought Lazarus out of the tomb brings us out of our grave of sin. We hear the Word of God, and we live according to the promise—“Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph 5:14). Jesus is our Alpha, as well as our Omega—He is the Author of our faith, as well as its Finisher. We would have been to this day dead in trespasses and sins, if it had not been said, “And you has He quickened.” It is by *His* life that we live; He gives us the living water, which is in us a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

2. *Christ is the Substance of our spiritual life.*

What is life? The physician cannot discover it; the anatomist hunts in vain for it, through flesh, and nerves, and brain. Be quick, Sir, with that scalpel of yours! “Life’s just departed,” men say; cut quick to the heart, and see if you cannot find, at least, some lingering footprint of the departed thing called life. Subtle anatomist, what have you found? Look at that brain—what can you see there but a certain quantity of matter strangely fashioned? Can you discover what is life? It is true that somewhere in that brain and in that spinal cord it dwells, and that heart with its perpetual pumping and heaving has something or other to do with it, but where is the substance, the real substance of the thing called life? Ariel’s wings cannot pursue it—it is too subtle. Thought knows it, but cannot grasp it—knows it from its being like itself, but cannot give a picture of it, nor represent what it is. In the new nature of the Christian there is much mystery, but there is none as to what is its life; if you could cut into the center of the renewed heart, you would find sure footprints of Divine Life, for you would find love to Jesus, no, you would find Christ Himself there! If you walk in search of the springs of the sea of the new nature, you will find the Lord Jesus at the fount of all. “All my springs are in You,” said David. Christ creates the life-throbs of the Believer’s soul, He sends the life-floods through the man according to His own will. If you could penetrate the brain of the Believer, you would find Christ to be the central thought moving every other thought, and causing every other thought to take root and grow out of itself; you would find Christ to be the true Substance of the inner life of the spiritual nature of every soul quickened by the breath of Heaven’s life.

3. *Christ is the Sustenance of our life.* What can the Christian feed upon but Jesus’ flesh and blood? As to his natural life, he needs bread, but as to his spiritual life, of which, alone, we are now speaking, he has learned that, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” “This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven; if any man eats of this bread, he shall live forever—and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” We cannot live on the sand of the wilderness, we want the manna which drops from on high; our skin bottles of creature confidence cannot yield us a drop of moisture, but we drink of the Rock which follows us, and that rock is Christ. O wayworn Pilgrims in this wilderness of sin, you never get a morsel, much less a meal, to satisfy the craving hunger of your spirits unless you find it in Christ Jesus! When you feed on Him, your soul can sing, “He has satisfied my

mouth with good things, so that my youth is renewed like the eagle's." But if you have Him not, your bursting wine vat, and your well-filled barn can give you no sort of satisfaction; rather you will lament over them in the words of Wisdom—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" O how true are Jesus' own Words, "For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed. He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he who eats Me, even he shall live by Me."

Christ is the solace of our life. Noah's Ark had but one window, and we must not expect more. Jesus is the only window which lets light into the Christian's spirit when he is under sharp affliction. Kirke White's picture of his midnight voyage, when one star alone of all the train could guide the mariner's foundering boat to the port of peace, is a faint but truthful representation of the Christian's life in its hour of peril. Paul says that during his disastrous voyage, "neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on them, and all hope that they should be saved was taken away, but then, just then, the Angel of God stood at his side." And even so will the Lord Jesus appear to His saints in their extremities, and be their joy and safety. And, Brothers and Sisters, if Christ appears, what does it matter where we are?—

*"Midst darkest shades if He appears
My dawning is begun!
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun!"*

Do not talk of poverty! Our tents are the curtains of Solomon, and not the smoke-dried skins of Kedar when Christ is present! Speak not of need! There are all manner of precious fruits laid up for my Beloved when He comes into my cot. Speak not of sickness! My soul is no longer sick except it is of love, but full of holy health when once the Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing beneath His wings! Christ is the very soul of my soul's life; His loving kindness is better than life! There is nothing in life worth living for but Christ. "Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You!" The rest is mere skim milk and curds fit to be given to the swine, but Christ is the cream; all else is but the husk, and bran, and coarse gritty meal, the Lord Jesus is the pure flour. All that remains is the chaff; fan it and the wind shall carry it away, or the fire shall burn it, and little shall be the loss! Christ is the golden grain, the only thing worth having. Life's true life, the true heart's blood, the innermost fount of life is in Jesus.

To the true Christian, *Christ is the objective of his life.* As speeds the ship towards the port, so hastens the Believer towards the haven of his Savior's bosom. As flies the arrow to its goal, so flies the Christian towards the perfecting of his fellowship with Christ Jesus. As the soldier fights for his captain, and is crowned in his captain's victory, so the Believer contends for Christ, and gets his triumph out of the triumphs of his Master. "For him to live is Christ"—at least, it is this he seeks after, and counts that all life apart from this is merely death in another form. That wicked flesh of his, that cumbrous clay, those many temptations, that Satanic trinity of the world, the flesh, and the devil—all these mar his outward actions; but if he could be what he would be, he would stand like the bullock at Christ's Altar to be slaughtered, or march forward like a bullock in Christ's furrow to plough the blood-bought field. He desires that he may not have a hair of his head unconsecrated, nor heave one breath which is not for his Savior, nor speak one word which is not for the glory of his Lord! His heart's ambition is to live as long as he can better glorify Christ on earth than in Heaven, and to be taken up when it shall be better for him and more honorable for his Master that he should be with Jesus where He is. As the river seeks the sea, so, Jesus, I seek You! O let me find You, and melt my life into Yours forever!

It follows from all this that Christ *is the Exemplar of our life.* A Christian lays the life of Christ before him as the schoolboy puts his copy at the top of the page, and he tries to draw each line, down-stroke and up-stroke, according to the handwriting of Christ Jesus. He has the portrait of Christ before him as the artist has in his studio his Greek sculptures, busts and torsos; he knows that there is all the true anatomy of virtue in Christ. If he wants to study life, he studies from Christ, or, if he would closely learn the beauties of the antique, he studies from the Savior, for Christ is ancient, and modern, antique and living, too, and therefore God's artists in their life-sculpture keep to the Savior, and count that if they imitate every vein, and fetch out every muscle of their great Copy, they shall then have produced the perfection of manhood. I would give nothing for your religion if you do not seek to be like Christ; where there is the same life within, there will, there *must* be, to a great extent, the same developments without. I have heard it said, and I think I have sometimes noticed it, that husbands and wives who are truly knit together in near and dear conjugal affection, grow somewhat like each other in expression, if not in feature. This I well know, that if the heart is truly wedded to the Lord Jesus,

and lives in near fellowship with Him, it must grow like He is. Grace is the light, our loving heart is the sensitive plate, Jesus is the Person who fills the lens of our soul, and soon a heavenly photograph of His Character is produced. There will be a similarity of spirit, temper, motive and action; it will not be manifest merely in great things, but in little matters, too, for even our speech will betray us.

Thus you see I have only been wading along the banks, or at best conducting you up to the knees in the gently flowing stream of my text. Experience must lead you further, for there is a great deep here; Paul could perceive it, for *he* does not say as I have been saying, “Jesus is the Source of our life, the Substance of our life, the Solace of our life, the Objective of our life, the Exemplar of our life,” but he says, “Christ is our life,” and so He is, indeed. Just as we have a natural life of which we know so little, so we have a spiritual life which is more mysterious by far, and of that we know beyond its effects and operations little more than this—that Christ *is* that life, that when we get Christ we have Eternal Life, that if we have life it is only because we have Christ in us, the hope of Glory.

I must pause a minute here to say that what is true concerning our spiritual life, *now, is equally true of our spiritual life in Heaven*. Different as are the circumstances of the life in Heaven, and the life on earth, yet as to real essence there is only one life in both places. Saints in Heaven live by precisely the same life which makes them live here. Spiritual life in the Kingdom of Grace and in the Kingdom of Glory is the same—only here it is uneducated spiritual life—there it is educated and trained; here it is undeveloped, it is the babe, the child, there it is developed, manifested, perfected; but in very deed the life is precisely the same. Saints need not to be born-again after once being regenerate. You who have been born-again have now within you the life which will last on throughout eternity! You have the very same vital spark of heavenly flame which will burn in Glory, world without end.

It will be no digression if we here remark that as we have Eternal Life in having Christ, *this marks our dignity*. “Christ our life!” Why, this cannot be said of princes or kings! What is their life? Talk of blue blood and pedigree, and so on—here is something more, *here is God’s own Son—our life!* You cannot say this of angels. Bright spirits, your songs are sweet, and your lives are happy, but Christ is not your life! No, this cannot be asserted of archangels. Gabriel! You may bend yourself before God’s Throne, and worship Him in praises too high for me, but you cannot boast what I can surely claim—that Christ is my life! Even those mysterious presence-angels of whom we read in Ezekiel and Revelation, called the four living creatures, though they seem to bear up the moving Throne of Deity, creatures who appear to be an embodiment of Divine Power and Glory—yet even of these it is not written that Christ is their life! Herein men, redeemed, elect, favored men rise to a supernatural light, for they can say what no spirits but those redeemed by blood may venture to assert—“Christ is our life.” Does not this account for *Christian holiness*? How can a man live in sin if Christ is his life? Jesus dwells in him and he continues in sin? Impossible! Can he sin without his life? He *must* do so if he sins, because Christ cannot sin, and Christ is his life. Why, if I see the saint ever so self-denying, ever so zealous, ever so earnest, ever so like his Lord, it is no wonder now, when I understand that Christ is his life!

See *how secure* the Christian is. No dagger can reach his life, for it is hidden beyond the skies. No temptation, no hellish blast, no exhalation from the Stygian pits of temptation can ever with burning fever or chill consumption waste the life of the Christian spiritually. No, it is hid with Christ, it *is* Christ, and unless Christ dies, the Christian’s life dies not. Oh how safe, how honored, how happy is the Christian!

But we may not linger longer, time warns us to proceed. There is much more than ever we shall be able to bring out. Let down your buckets, here is a deep well; I hope you have something to draw with—and you who have life within have. You who have not may look down the well and see the darkness, or the reflection of the water—but you cannot reach the cooling flood. It is only you who can draw, who can know the excellence of this Living Water. I pray the Lord help you to drink to the full and draw again, for there is no fear of ever draining the inexhaustible fullness of this deep Truth of God.

II. Now, as our Lord Jesus has not yet appeared in His Glory, OUR LIFE IS THEREFORE HIDDEN.

“The earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God,” but as yet they are unknown and not manifested. The major part of the Believer’s life is not seen at all, and never can be by the unspiritual eye. Where is Christ? To the worldling at the present moment there is no such Person as Christ; he says, “I cannot see Him, touch Him, hear Him; He is beyond all cognizance of my senses; I do not believe in Him.” Just such is spiritual life to the unbeliever. You must not expect, because you are a Christian, that unbelievers will begin to admire you, and say, “What a

mystery; this man has a new life in him! What an admirable thing, what a desirable possession! We wish we partook of the same.” Nothing of the kind! They do not know that you have such a life at all; they can see your outward actions, but your inward life is quite out of reach of their observation. Christ is in Heaven today, He is full of joy; but the world does not know His joy; no worldly heart is boasting and rejoicing because Christ is glad in Heaven. Christ today is pleading before the Father’s Throne, but the world does not see Christ’s engagements; Christ’s occupations are all hidden from carnal eyes. Christ at this present moment reigns, and has power in Heaven, and earth, and Hell—but what does the worldly man see of it? Jesus has fellowship with all His saints everywhere, but what does the ungodly discern? I might stand and preach until midnight concerning my Lord, but all that men who are unconverted would gain would be to hear what I have to say, and then to say, “Perhaps it is true,” but they could not possibly discern it—the thing is beyond the cognizance of sense. So is our spiritual life.

Beloved, you may reign over sin, but the sinner does not comprehend your being a king. You may officiate as a priest before God, but the ungodly man does not perceive your priesthood and your worship. Do not expect him to do so; your labor is lost if you try by any way to introduce him to these mysteries except by the same door through which you came yourself. I never try to teach a horse astronomy; and to teach an unconverted man spiritual experience would be a folly of the same sort. The man who knows nothing of our inner life takes up *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and he says, “Yes, it is a very wonderful allegory.” It is, Sir, but unrenewed minds know nothing about it. When we have sometimes read explanations of the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, we could not but detect that the writer of the explanation had need to have had it explained to himself; he could describe the shell, but the kernel of the nut was far beyond his reach; he had not learned to crack the shell, and to feed upon the meat. Now it must be so, it must be so, if Christ is our life; Christ has gone away and cannot be seen; it must be so that the greater proportion of the spiritual life must be forever a secret to all but spiritual men. But there is a part which men *do* see, and that I may liken to Christ when He was on earth—Christ seen of men and angels. What did the world do with Christ as soon as they saw Him? Did they sit Him in the chair of State, and fall down, and worship His absolute perfection? No, not they—“He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Outside of the camp was His place! Cross-bearing was for Him; His occupation, not of one day, but of every day. Did the world yield Him solace and rest? Foxes, you have your holes, you birds of the air, you have your nests, but the Son of Man had no where to lay His head. Earth could afford Him no bed, no house, no shelter; and at last it cast Him out for death, and crucified Him, and then would have denied Him a tomb if one of His disciples had not begged for His body! Such you must expect to be the lot of the part of your spiritual life which men can see; as soon as they see it to be spiritual life, they will treat it as they treated the Savior. They will despise it.

“Sure!” they say, “pretty fancies, fine airs, nice ideas.” You expect them to give you comfort, do you? Worldlings to give you comfort? Do you think that Christ will have anywhere to lay His head in this world today any more than He had 1800 years ago? You go about to find what God gives the foxes and the birds—but what He never meant to give to you in this world—a place to lay your head. Your place to lay your head is up yonder on your Savior’s bosom, but not here. You dream that men will admire you, that the more holy you are, and the more Christ-like you are, the more peaceable people will be towards you. My dear Friends, you do not know what you are thinking! “It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” I believe if we were more like Christ, we would be much more loved by His friends, and much more hated by His enemies. I do not believe the world would be half so lenient to the Church, today, if it were not that the Church has grown complacent to the world. When any of us speak up boldly, mercenary motives are imputed to us, our language is turned upside down, and we are abhorred of men. We get smooth things, Brothers and Sisters, because I am afraid we are too much like the false prophets who prophesied peace, peace, where there was no peace. Let us be true to our Master, stand out and come out and be like He, and we must expect the same treatment which He had. And if we receive it, we can only say, “This is what I expected.”—

*“Tis, no surprising thing
That we should be unknown;
The Jewish world knew not their king,
God’s everlasting Son.”*

III. CHRIST WILL APPEAR. The text speaks of it as a fact to be taken for granted. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear.” It is not a matter of question in the Christian Church whether Christ will appear or not. Has not Christ

appeared once? Yes, after a certain sort. I remember reading a quaint expression of some old Divine that the book of Revelation might quite as well be called an Obvelation, for it was rather a hiding than a revealing of things to come. So, when Jesus came it was hardly a revealing, it was a hiding of our Lord. It is true that He was “manifest in the flesh,” but it is equally true that the flesh shrouded and concealed His Glory. The first manifestation was very partial; it was Christ seen through a glass; Christ in the mist of grief, and the cloud of humiliation. Christ is yet to appear in the strong sense of the word “appearing.” He is to come out and shine forth. He is to leave the robes of scorn and shame behind, and to come in the Glory of the Father, and all His holy angels with Him. This is the constant teaching of the Word of God, and the constant hope of the Church, that *Christ will appear*. A thousand questions at once suggest themselves—How will Christ appear? When will Christ appear? Where will Christ appear? And so on. What God answers we may inquire, but some of our questions are mere impertinence. How will Christ appear? I believe Christ will appear in Person. Whenever I think of the Second Coming, I never can tolerate the idea of a spiritual coming. That always seems to me to be the most transparent folly that can possibly be put together, because Christ cannot come spiritually—He is always here! “Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Christ’s spiritual coming can never be that which is spoken of in Scripture, as the day of our release. I sometimes say to Brethren, “Do you think if Christ were to come spiritually now, we would observe the ordinances better?” “Yes, certainly.” Do you think, for instance, the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper would be better attended to? “Yes, no doubt it would.” Yes, but then this proves that this is not the coming which the Bible speaks of, because it is expressly said of the Lord’s Supper that we are to do it in remembrance of Him, *till He comes*. A *spiritual* coming would make us do it more zealously; there must be another form of coming which would justify our giving up the Supper altogether, and that must be of a *personal* character—for then, and then only, might the Supper properly cease. We shall not need to have a supper to remind us of the Person, when the Person Himself shall be present in our midst reigning and triumphant in His Church! We believe in a personal *reign* and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But how will He come? He will doubtless come with great splendor; the angels of God shall be His attendants. We gather from Scripture that He will come to reign in the midst of His people, that the house of Israel will acknowledge Him as King, yes, that all nations shall bow down before Him, and kings shall pay Him homage. None shall be able to stand against Him. “Those who pierced Him shall wail because of Him.” He will come to discern between the righteous and the wicked, to separate the goats from the sheep. He will come graciously to adjudge His people their reward according to their works. He will give to those who have been faithful over a few things to be rulers over many things; and those who have been faithful over many things shall be rulers over many cities. He will come to discern between the works of His people—such as are only wood, hay, and stubble will be consumed—such as are gold, and silver, and precious stones will stand the fire. He will come to condemn the wicked to eternal punishment, and to take His people up to their everlasting mansions in the skies. We look for such a coming, and without entering into minute details, drawing charts, and painting pictures, we are content to believe that He is coming in His Glory to show Himself to be what He always was—King of kings and Lord of lords, God Over All, Blessed Forever; to be adored and worshipped, and no more to be despised and rejected of men.

When will He come? That is a question which Unbelief asks with a start. Faith replies, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons, of that day and of that hour no man knows.” Some simpleton says, “But we may know the week, month, or year.” Do not trifle with God’s Word, and make a fool of yourself because you must know that the expression means that you do not know anything about the time at all, and never will. Christ will come in a time when we look not for Him, perhaps when the world and the Church are most asleep, when the wise and the foolish virgins have, alike, fallen into a deep slumber; when the stewards shall begin to beat their fellow servants, and to drink, and to be drunk; at midnight, or perhaps not till cock-crowing, He will come like a thief, and the house shall be suddenly broken up. But come He will, and that is enough for you and for me to know; and when He comes we shall appear, for as *He* shall appear, *we* shall also appear with Him in glory.

IV. The fourth thought is THAT WHEN CHRIST SHALL APPEAR, WE ALSO SHALL APPEAR.

Do you ever feel like those lions in the Zoological Gardens, restlessly walking up and down before the bars of their cage, and seeming to feel that they were never meant to be confined within those narrow limits? Sometimes they are for thrusting their heads through the bars, and then for dashing back and tearing the back of their dungeon, or for tearing

up the pavement beneath them as if they yearned for liberty. Do you ever feel like that? Does your soul ever want to get free from her cage? Here is an iron bar of sin, of doubt, and there is another iron bar of mistrust and infirmity. Oh, if you could tear them away, could get rid of them all, you would do something for Christ—you would be like Christ! Oh, if you could but by some means or other burst the bands of this captivity! But you cannot, and therefore you feel uneasy. You may have seen an eagle with a chain upon its foot, standing on a rock—poor unhappy thing! It flaps its wings—looks up to the sun—wants to fly right straight ahead at it, and stare the sun out of countenance—looks to the blue sky, and seems as if it could sniff the blue beyond the dusky clouds and wants to be away; and so it tries its wings and dreams of mounting—but that *chain, that cruel chain*, remorselessly holds it down! Has not it often been so with you? You feel, “I am not meant to be what I am, I am sure I am not; I have a something in me which is adapted for something better, and higher, and I want to mount and soar—but that chain—that dragging chain of the body of sin and death keeps me down.”

Now it is to such as you that this text comes and says to you, “Yes, your present state is not your soul’s true condition, you have a hidden life in you; that life of yours pants to get out of the bonds and fetters which control it, and it shall be delivered soon, for Christ is coming, and when Christ shall appear you shall appear—the same appearance that belongs to Him belongs to you! He shall come and then your day of true happiness, and joy, and peace, and everything that you are panting for, and longing for, shall certainly come.” I wonder whether the little oak inside the acorn—for there is a whole oak there, and there are all the roots and, all the boughs, and everything inside that acorn—I wonder whether that little oak inside the acorn ever has any premonition of the summer weather that will float over it a hundred years from now, and of the mists that will hang in autumn on its withered leaves, and of the hundreds of acorns which itself will cast, every autumn, upon the earth, when it shall become in the forest a great tree? You and I are like that acorn; inside of each of us are the germs of great things. There is the tree that we are to be—I mean there is the *spiritual* thing we are to be, both in body and soul even now within us, and sometimes here below, in happy moments, we get some inklings of what we are to be; and then how we want to burst the shell, to get out of the acorn, and to be the oak! Yes, but stop. Christ has not come, Christian, and you cannot get out of that till the time shall come for Jesus to appear, and then shall you appear with Him in Glory. You will very soon perceive in your rainwater, certain ugly little things which swim and twist about in it, always trying, if they can, to reach the surface and breathe through one end of their bodies. What makes these little things so lively, those innumerable little things like very small tadpoles? Why are they so lively? Possibly they have an idea of what they are going to be. The day will come when all of a sudden there will come out of the case of the creature that you have had swimming about in your water, a long-legged thing with two bright gauze-like wings which will mount into the air, and on a summer’s evening will dance in the sunlight! It is nothing more nor less than a gnat; you have swimming there a gnat in one of its earliest stages. You are just like that; you are an undeveloped being; you have not your wings yet, and yet sometimes, in your activity for Christ, when the strong desires for something better are upon you, you leap in foretaste of the bliss to come!

I do not know what I am to be, but I feel that there is a heart within me too big for these ribs to hold! I have an immortal spark which cannot have been intended to burn on this poor earth, and then to go out; it must have been meant to burn on Heaven’s altar. Wait a bit, and when Christ comes you will know what you are. We are in the chrysalis state now, and those who are the liveliest worms among us grow more and more uneasy in that chrysalis state. Some are so frozen up in it that they forget the hereafter, and appear content to remain a chrysalis forever. But others of us feel we would sooner not be than be what we now are forever, we feel as if we must burst our bonds, and when that time of bursting shall come, when the chrysalis shall get its painted wings and mount to the land of flowers, then shall we be satisfied. The text tells us—“When Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*”—when He comes out in all His Glory—“we also shall appear with Him in glory.” If you would like these gracious promises drawn out into detail with regard to the body, you may listen to just such words as these. “It is sown a soulish body, it is raised a Spiritual body. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As is the earthy such are they, also, who are earthy; as is the heavenly such are they, also, who are heavenly.” Whatever Christ’s body is in Heaven, our body is to be like it; whatever its glory, and strength, and power, our vile body is to be fashioned like unto His glorious body! As for our soul, whatever of absolute perfection—whatever of immortal joy Christ possesses, we are to possess that; and as for honor—whatever of esteem and love Christ may have from intelligent beings, we are to share in the same; and as for position before God—whatever

Christ has—we are to stand where He stands. Are His enemies put to confusion? So are ours. Do all worlds discern His Glory? They shall discern ours, too. Is all dishonor wiped away from Him? So shall it be from us. Do they forget forever the shame and spitting, the Cross and the nails? So shall they in our case. Is it forever, “Glory! And honor! And power! And dominion! And bliss without end!”? So shall it be in our case! Let us comfort one another, therefore, with these words, and look up out of our wormwood, and our chrysalis state, to that happier and better day when we shall be like Christ, for we shall see Him as He is.

All this has nothing to do with a great many of you. You will die but you will never rise like Christ. You will die, *and you will die*—why did I say “and you will die”? Why, because you will have to feel the Second Death, and that Second Death, mark you, is as much more horrifying than the first as the trumpet of the angel is more terrible than the voice of the preacher can be this morning! Oh, I wish that Christ were your life, but you are dead, and God will say of you one of these days as Abraham said of Sarah, “Bury the dead out of My sight,” and you must be put out of His sight as an obnoxious putrid thing! Oh that He would quicken you this day! “There is life,” says the hymn, “in a look at the Crucified One.” God help you to exercise one look at that Christ of whom I spoke, and then you shall join with the rest of His people in saying, “Christ is our life.”

May God bless these feeble words of mine, and acknowledge them because of their weakness—the more to illustrate His own Grace and Power, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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