



### FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

NOTES OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. HULL, AT EBENEZER CHAPEL, HASTINGS, WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 7TH, 1894.

*"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."*—  
1 JOHN iii. 13, 14.

HERE are two marks of those who have passed from death unto life. First, they are not of the world, not in friendship with it, but are looked upon with contempt, and discarded by it. The second is, love to the brethren—those whom the Lord Jesus Christ calls brethren; and He declares those who love Him and keep His commandments to be His companions, yea, His brethren. I understand this to imply that they have His spirit, and therefore they are one spirit with Him, yea, one with Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). These two marks make a separation between those of the world and those who are Christ's. There is no middle way; we either have the spirit of the world, or the spirit of Christ, which overcomes the world. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John iv. 4). Those who are of the Wicked One are his servants, led captive by him at his will; and "Such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c. (1 Cor. vi. 11). What a mercy if we can say this! "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans vi. 17). When the Lord Jesus Christ began His ministry, He walked hither and thither, and gave one and another a call to become His disciples. He found Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, a business we should not expect a man to readily give up—a profitable, money-making

business. But he left all the gains behind to follow Christ. What a mercy to have a separating call, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. vi. 17).

The Lord Jesus told His disciples, when they said they had left all and followed Him, "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Luke xviii. 29, 30). "Life everlasting." How little all things here appear compared with that! If we were going to die to-night, would we wish our thoughts to be about our worldly profits? You would not like to die with your thoughts on those things, my dear friends. Oh, then, the mercy of having in our dying moments a hope of heaven! What can be compared with that? Ah! and to have as we pass along, a well-founded hope, a sweet assurance of life eternal—oh, "How comfortable 'tis." This is the rest we are exhorted to strive to enter into here. Then there is the rest, even eternal life, to come, an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven. Oh that our thoughts might be more on the things of Christ, not on the things of the world! As we were just now reading, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. iii. 2). God's Word often speaks to us like this, and finds us with our thoughts in the wrong place—in the world, and I then feel it comes to me as a reproofing and admonishing Word. When the Word exhorts us to do a thing, it is a right thing for us to follow. Do you say, "I cannot set my affections on things above"? I often have to tell the Lord the same tale, and I have to take my "cannots" to Him, they are too big for me to manage. He can work in you the "work of faith with power."

"His Spirit all the motion gives,  
By springs of faith and love."

There are two Gospel marks I shall try and speak of a little to-night. I had not at first thought of preaching from this text, but it fixed me, and then I thought, "Who can tell? There may be some poor soul here to-night who wants to know if they are the Lord's." I do hope He may settle the question in your heart, "Am I His, or am I not?" We want that decided before we die. I do hope I may carry that decision down to my dying hour. As the poet sings—

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done!  
I am the Lord's and He is mine;  
He drew me, and I followed on,  
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

What a blessed standing to go down to the grave with, "I am the Lord's." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I think some here to-night will say, "I wish I did know!" Have you a hope, my dear friend? Do you answer, "Sometimes"? Well, I am glad to hear that, for if there is a small measure of hope, the Lord can make that to grow. I hope He may encourage it to-night. I am sure if you have that little hope, you want to come to the standard of our text, "We know." I do not wish you to be frightened at this standard, set before us in God's Word, for He says, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord" (Hosea vi. 3); and again, "They shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jer. xxxi. 34). It is all a gift, every grace is freely bestowed. You often find that you cannot get it by reading, or hearing alone. You know, as well as I do, that sometimes you cannot find what you want in the Word, you cannot always hear as you would like. The Word does not appear to reach you; but still you know that the Holy Spirit uses means; He works in the heart by the Word; and when we find our heart and His Word coming together, there is a link in the Bible and a link in our heart, this is receiving the Word in faith and love, and in this way the Holy Spirit causes us to know that the Word is truth. When the Word comes right into our heart, we are sure it must come from heaven; we find our affections, desires, and prayers going upwards to Him who fills the mercy-seat, and our love drawn out to the Lord and His people.

Do you know any who you believe are the children of God? and do you like to talk with them sometimes? Do you prefer their company to the world's favours? If you were going for a walk, would you like to get among the gay and thoughtless, or with one who could tell you what the Lord had done for their soul? "Why," say you, "I feel the other would be no company for me." How glad I am if the Lord has made the worldly pleasure-stream death to you, you won't seek the company of such as run in that downward course! How many of the Lord's people are tried by ungodly fellow-servants or fellow-workers! How often they wish they were in the company of the Lord's

own people. There is a saying, "If you see a straw on the water, you may know which way the stream is going"; so with these things, if you feel you want the Lord's people for companions, and there are multitudes in the world you would not care for, why is it? This is like seeking its like, my dear friend! If the Lord has put the seed of grace in your heart, that little seed will find out the seed in others. Thus you know, where the Lord has made a heart tender in His fear, and be assured if He has given you His fear, you will want to be with those who have it and manifest it too. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) Do you believe they are the children of God? Do you love them? "Yes," say you, "I would rather be in their company than in any other." You believe God has blessed them with His grace, and that they love Him because He has put His love in their hearts, and the language of your heart is, "Numbered with them may I be." It was so with Moses, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Did he ever regret it? He had many sore troubles, many trials of a very heavy kind. Yes, those forty years he was journeying in the wilderness were one long scene of trial to him, but we never read that he made one reflection against God respecting it; we never read that he had one regret that he had made this choice; the Word of God holds him up for an example of meekness. He wanted to be one with the people of God; he could not find them in Pharaoh's palace, only in the land of Goshen; so he turned his back upon the palace, and chose to have his portion with this people, believing they were a part of the Lord's family, of which it is said, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15). Some below and some above; yes, some have crossed the flood, and some here "are to the margin come," and soon expect to dip their feet into those dividing waters. I do hope the Lord will lift up their head then, and that they may find the bottom good, and thus be able to take courage, as Hopeful said to Christian, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." "We love the brethren," because we feel they are the children of God, and some of us hope we are included in that list. Is there one here troubled about sin? Have you come to the house of God with a sense of sin? If so, that feeling is known in heaven, my friend. Yes, Jesus Christ knows all about your trouble, and all about your desires for Him. He knows you want pardoning mercy, and that you long to realize the

salvation of God. He knows your heart is thus going up, "'Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.' Thou hast said it to many souls, Lord, say it to me. Lay Thy hand upon my heart and say, 'Fear not, I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.'" Now every one who bears the marks of hungering and thirsting for Christ, is included among His children, among those who are pardoned, justified, and made accepted in the Beloved. These are marks of the brethren. I should call every such a hungerer and thirster one of the brethren. I feel sure the Lord loves them. Do you want Him to put away your sin, so that you can go to Him on blessed terms of friendship? He calls that "hungering," and if the Lord has given you that, you have the gift of love, and that proves to me that He gave His life for you. I am telling you now what the Lord has taught me; these are things I know and am persuaded of. I know these marks, I can read them, and I love to discover, in any, the marks of godly fear and life divine. Where I see those marks, I can say, I know Christ died for you and that you are saved. Is it this blessed knowledge you want?

Well, let me here remark that there is such a thing as knowing a thing, and yet not being able to enjoy it. I talk of things sometimes, when I cannot enjoy them as I would, although I know them to be truth; but when the Lord lets a little of the joy of His salvation into my heart, then I can preach them with love and affection. These longings for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ are some of the marks which the brethren bear, and I write all those souls down who have them as given to Christ. They believe the Word of God, and want the testimony of Christ well impressed on their hearts. They do not want to sit in His house listless and indifferent, they want to enjoy the things of God. Am I not telling the truth about some of you? Well, the Word of God says, "Compel them to come in" (Luke xiv. 23). How are we to do that? I can only tell them the Lord has spread His table for the poor. Yes, He is the Benefactor of the poor, and gives to those who cannot give to Him. He makes His feast for the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; they are not able to make Him any returns, but how their faces will shine when they see what is on the Gospel table for them! They will be glad of what He has to give them, and He will give them, in Christ, all they need. He keeps an open house for poor, bankrupt, poverty-stricken souls; yes—

"The door of His mercy stands open all day,  
To the poor and the needy, who knock by the way  
No sinner shall ever be empty sent back  
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus's sake."

What more can He say? Will you say, "I do not believe it is for me"? Give Him a trial, my dear friend, do not give Him up till you have tried Him. These words have been much on my mind to-day—

"Fly then, awakened sinners, fly,  
Your case admits no stay;  
The fountain's opened now for sin,  
Come, wash your guilt away."

He saves the outcasts, those who are ready to perish. I hope that you, poor wandering sheep, may feel compelled to come in. We know those who have passed from death unto life by these marks. Dead people know nothing about love. It is the quickened ones only who pant, like the hunted hart, and seek for Christ. Look at the needle on the compass, however it is shaken it will always settle down to the north, always point to the north pole; so it is with love. The Lord is the great central attraction, and wherever His people are, they will always turn to Him. David said, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications; therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live" (Psalm cxvi. 1). Now will I carry all my trouble to His blessed feet, and my prayer shall be, "Lord, undertake for me; Lord, remember me."

"Thou art the sea of love,  
Where all my pleasures roll,  
The circle where my passions move,  
And centre of my soul."

Job said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him." Paul said, "That I may know Him." That's the pointing of the needle. We love the brethren, and want to be found among them, living and dying; they are the children of God, members of Christ, the seed that He has blessed, and He will take them all to heaven. "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke xii. 32). Oh, the mercy of having "passed from death unto life"! Have

you this evidence to-night, my dear friends? Do you feel the world is dead to you, and that the company and spirit of it brings death into your soul? If you feel this, then you have life divine within. A dead man would not complain of touching a corpse, it is the poor weak man who would shiver if laid on the dead man, it would send a thrill through his heart. That shows life. What a mercy if you have life enough to know your deadness, and if your heart is soft enough to feel your hardness, and to complain of having a stone in your breast. A dead man would not complain of coldness and hardness. If the Lord has loved you, and blessed you with love to Him and to the brethren, never mind if the world hates you; you want the better part, the pearl of great price, the one thing needful. That one thing that makes everything right, and reconciles you to your lot. If you talk to some in the world, they will soon want no more of you. They will say, "We could not enjoy the things of the world if we were like you; you make us so doleful and miserable." They have no appetite for the things of Christ. Bless God, I hope He has stopped you, and given you something better, so that you would rather have the things of God than the best the world could give. It is so with me; I can appeal to the Lord, He knows my heart; I should dread the thought of being left to the world; that is a wretched portion, which will end in destruction, but—

"They that in the Lord confide,  
And shelter in His wounded side,  
Shall see the danger overpast,  
Stand every storm, and live at last."

The Lord add His blessing, and He shall bear the glory.