

THE LIVING PULPIT,

OR

EIGHTEEN SERMONS

BY EMINENT LIVING DIVINES

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

WITH

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE EDITOR,

BY GEO. W. BETHUNE, D. D.

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THE PRODIGAL.

BY

JOHN LEYBURN, D. D.

EDITOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN, PHILADELPHIA.

I will arise and go to my Father.—LUKE xv. 18.

THE parable of the prodigal son is among the most interesting and affecting portions of the Word of God. Its strong pictures stand out with great brilliancy and force. Its tender associations, drawn from the family hearth-stone, grouping together a father's love, the waywardness of intractable boyhood, the prodigal's alienation from home, his spendthrift life, and what it brought him to; the coming to himself amidst the wretchedness and want his sins had induced, his return, the old father still, though years had passed, looking out for his lost one, and recognizing him afar off in his rags, the meeting, the forgiveness, the rejoicing—did ever painter have a finer succession of scenes for pencil and canvass, than inspiration has here written in its simple, telling language?

This parable, however, has other bearings, far out-reaching its mere dramatic interest. Whilst it speaks of the relation of father and son, of alienation, return and forgiveness, it shadows forth under beautiful imagery great scriptural truths, which have to do

with the immortal welfare of the soul. Under the person of the father is represented God, the one great Father of us all; the son is the sinner, fallen and estranged, and loving his wanderings well; the far country is the world of sin and misery, in which he makes his home; the coming to himself, his conviction of sin; his return, his repentance; and his acceptance and the rejoicings over him, his regeneration and adoption into the household of the righteous. The parable, then, has great practical bearings; and in order to bring these into such shape as that they may favourably affect you, my readers, we shall educe from the passage a few of its plain, practical teachings.

1. The first thought which the passage suggests is—that God has given to all men a portion of substance. Over and above that, which may be regarded as in some measure mediately the result of our own application and industry, we are endowed by nature with certain important gifts, which may be regarded as a capital in hand, wherewith to do our trading for time and for eternity, and of which all after accumulations are but the workings up. What greater gift could the Father of us all bestow upon one of his creatures, than a reasonable soul? This he has not given to beasts, birds, creeping things, or to any other order of creation connected with this planet where we dwell. A soul, rational and immortal, is man's possession alone. It uplifts him from the common ground on which stand all other earth-born creatures, invests him with a lofty superiority, and makes him to have dominion over them all. A great gift is this soul of man—more valuable than

gems, than mines of gold, or crowns and kingdoms—than all the world beside. Especially does this gift of a soul seem to be a valuable portion when we look at its varied faculties and capabilities.

It is endowed with an understanding. It has capacities for high intelligence. It can discern, appropriate, digest, and powerfully use knowledge. It can reason, analyze, pursue long and difficult logical processes, and fairly revel in the great fields of thought which stretch out over the vast universe of God. It has imagination, and can create from next to nothing realms of fancy, peopling them at pleasure from her vast store-houses.

The soul has a conscience also. It has capacities not only for intelligence, but is possessed of moral susceptibilities; it can discern truth and approve it; it can know evil and condemn it. Rightly educated and directed, of all the elements of a human soul, conscience is of most importance. Better could we do without any thing else than do without that which God has put within us as a sort of vicegerent for himself—sent to occupy the inner temple of ourselves, to make right suggestions, to chide us when we would go astray, to encourage and cheer us on in all right-doing. Conscience—the law written on the heart, excusing and accusing—when properly enlightened, is as if we heard the voice of God, speaking in audible terms approbation or displeasure.

And, further, to the soul also belongs a will; it has powers of volition; like the pilot of the boat, it can turn the soul about, bearing it onward or keeping it steadfast, consenting to evil or refusing, accepting the offered ways of life and walking in them,

or else choosing the road to death and travelling there. In this will lies the power of the man; turn this and you turn one's whole self; fix this to purposes of good, and you have lashed the bark's helm, with her bows towards a peaceful haven, from which no adverse winds or currents can divert her.

The soul has affections too; it can love and it can hate. Among the chiefest joys life affords, are the knitting together of hearts by ties of warm affection, so that in each other they find something to approve and delight in, to enlist the sympathies and sensibilities—something to enjoy and almost live for. Men love their children, wives, neighbours—they have sympathies warm and tender beating in common with a circle in whose veins runs their blood, or in whose minds dwell kindred sentiments and purposes.

Here, then, in this soul, with its treasure of understanding, conscience, will and affections, we have the portion of goods which God our Father from on high bestows upon us all, at the outset of life. A rich inheritance truly is ours, worth infinitely more than houses, lands, ships or stocks.

2. The impenitent have taken this, their substance, and gone into a far country.

This present evil world, with its pride, covetousness, lust and self-seeking, is a country far from God. God is, indeed, in his essence and by his ever-present providence, not far from every one of us. The sinner, with all his efforts, cannot escape from the vision of the Omniscient, nor from the immediate proximity of the Omnipresent, nor from the all-powerful grasp of the Omnipotent. The wings of

the morning cannot bear him from God's sight, nor can the darkness hide him. nor the uttermost parts of the earth, nor the depths of hell conceal him.

Still, as to that nearness of the soul to God, which presumes a resemblance to him in moral nature, a sympathy in the things hated and delighted in, and a close and joyful communion of spirit with him, there is none of it. It is matter of no great difficulty, impenitent reader, to prove from the actings out of your own life towards all that represents your God and Saviour here on earth, that you have wandered far from him. Here, for instance, is his Word. In this blessed book of inspiration is the very language of his utterance, placed on record for the instruction and admonition of mankind; historically it is an interesting book; poetically, strikingly sublime and beautiful; as to the times in which it was produced, it runs through the lapse of ages, and in the subjects of which it treats, extends through eternity. There is no reason, therefore, in the Bible itself, why it should not be as attractive as any other volume. But is it so? Under the suggestions of an uneasy conscience, you may at rare intervals, or perhaps even statedly, read over a chapter or two, but in these glorious themes with which its pages are enriched, and which are so well adapted to enkindle the enthusiasm and affections of the soul, how far are you from any thing of this! To the unregenerate man, God's word is not so welcome as an ordinary history, or a poem, a novel, or a newspaper; its perusal is absolutely uninteresting and irksome; if read at all, it is read under the direct stress of conscience; you do not love its truths, nor

do its great principles wake up any congenial chord in your bosom. You will hence generally neglect it, treat it with practical contempt, allow it to lie until the dust accumulates on its unopened covers, ever trying to get away from what will bring God and eternity before you.

So also it is with prayer. Prayer is a direct speaking to God through the intervention of his Son. It is when the soul is engaged in earnest supplication that God, by his Spirit, deigns to visit the soul. The closet is a place of constant, sweet communion to the true disciple, akin in its pure, heart-cheering enjoyments to heaven; but the sinner has no appreciation of the privilege; he does not find comfort in pouring out his soul to Him whose ear is ever open to the suppliant's cry; if he utters what is called prayer, it is but the idle repetition of words; no wrestlings of the soul are there, no taking hold of the promises, no visions of Christ, no well-springs of consolation; all is dull, unattractive, repulsive. Hence he seldom goes through even the form of private prayer to God. He lives day after day without asking the Divine blessing upon him for this world and the next—without even thinking of it. In fact, if by any means he should be reminded that living prayerless is an offence before God, so that his conscience begins to rebuke him, he bestirs himself straightway to silence conscience or drug it to sleep. He does not wish to pray; he has no desire for communion with heaven; he has taken his portion of goods and wandered far away; he does not wish to speak with God.

In regard to the public services of God's house,

too, the same spiritual phenomena occur. This is a place where God vouchsafes to be present. His children, who love him, and desire to enjoy his favour, delight to be there. They can say, like the Psalmist, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!" "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Not so with the sinner. He had rather dwell in the tents of wickedness. No desire has he to keep the doors of the sanctuary. Not that we would intimate that he is not a church-goer. Education, a vague sense of religious obligation, a general impression of the importance of sustaining the ordinances and influences of Christianity for the public good, and other circumstances, may have rendered him quite a punctual attendant at church. Nor is he always an uninterested hearer. When the preacher delivers his message with fine rhetorical accompaniments, it may be in his ears as the melodious sound of a pleasant instrument. When good hits are made at the short-comings of religious professors, or at general public evils, he can listen with real enjoyment, and say, That was well done. When a doctrinal point is discussed, he can follow the speaker in his logical connections, appreciate the argument, confess that he has made good his points, and give his judgment that he is an able minister of the Word of God.

But let the minister forget his rhetoric, and, leaving generalities, or abstract doctrines and other people's sins, come directly home to the sinner's own case, charging his transgressions down upon him, waking up conscience to say, "Thou art the man,"

and pointing to the terrible retributions threatened against such as he, then what has this hearer to say? Wearily he sits beneath such messages; no praises has he now for the preaching, and but little admiration for the preacher. He is disposed to be captious, perhaps wishes for a change of ministers, or a change of his church for one where he will hear things less unpleasant, or, it may be he forsakes the sanctuary altogether. It was not from love of the truth, or love to God, he ever went there; but from habit, interest in good speaking, or of a well-digested argument, and other extrinsic influences; and now, when these are withdrawn, and God, through the instrumentality of his Word, is revealed, he wishes to flee away and hide himself. He has left his father's house, and gone so far astray that he does not wish to have God even speak to him.

So far has he gone, too, and so fixed is he in his purpose to stay at a distance, that hitherto all means have failed to bring him back. Preaching, persuasions of friends, the example of others returning, solemn and affecting providences, and even the occasional movings of the Spirit, have all been unsuccessful. He has taken his goods and gone into a far country.

3. In the far country, whither the sinner has gone, like the prodigal, he is squandering his goods. Understanding, affections, conscience, and will, may not indeed be buried in a napkin, but they are traded with for self and this world, instead of for God. What seekings after divine truth, what flames of heavenly love, what heart-searching to bring out hidden sins that they may be slain, what self-morti-

fication, what purposes to lay out the life for Christ and his cause, are ever seen in him! Alas! to all these he is as much a stranger, and they as much strange to him, as if such things were never set forth as a part of the obligations incumbent upon him. According to that high and holy sense in which God looks upon nothing as rightly done, which has not as its prime motive a desire for his glory, the sinner's whole life has been fruitless. From the dawn of his being, to the present hour, he has not done one act, nor spoken one word, nor exercised a single affection nor volition, nor cherished a thought which heaven can approve. Neither his own soul, nor the souls of others are, by any intention upon his part, the better of his having come into this world. As to all the rich and glorious revenues, which God had a right to expect from the priceless inheritance he has given him, he has been a most unprofitable servant.

But this neglect, rightly to use his goods, is only the negative aspect of his sin. He has positively misused and squandered them; he has diverted them to ends absolutely mischievous; he has lived for self, for family, and for worldly aggrandizement. If sensual pleasures have been most agreeable, to these he has devoted himself, and, in that delusive department of things earthly, has gone the rounds of gaiety and fashionable dissipation, laying out himself for sumptuous living, worldly show, or more vulgar vice, and saying, "Soul, take thine ease." Or if his tastes have been of an avaricious cast, he has gone out into the market place, and there, with care and toil, has lived but to ac-

cumulate, and having accumulated, still abandoned himself to the same. Or if ambition has been his ruling passion, he has sought, by all devices which ingenuity could suggest, and all the industry of which he was capable, for power and place. These have constituted the one great object for which the portion of life already past has been exhausted—to which the talents given him have been devoted. Fruitless as to the chief end for which he was created, and fruitful in all that is forbidden, in the far country of this world of sin, he has squandered his substance on things which have produced no profit, either for God's glory, for the highest welfare of his fellow men, or for his own eternal interests. With such riotous living have his talents been wasted.

4. Like the prodigal, also, the sinner is in a perishing condition. Restive was the wayward son with the restraints of his father's house; puffed up with the vain conceit that he could do better for himself than could be done for him at his native home; imagining that the indulgences from which parental love withheld him were things to be desired, and wishing to be where he could revel amid such pleasures unmolested, he secured his portion of goods, and went away to lead a life of sensuality. For a season, perhaps, all went on well. Vice yielded a transient satisfaction. With money at command and none to hinder, he could betake himself to such pleasures to his heart's content. He probably wondered that he could so long have endured the mopish life at home. The freshness of sinful joys enables him to enter into them with a full relish. But soon the scene changes.

He finds that sin has a bitter as well as a sweet; that the chalice, whose delicious draughts have so exhilarated, had wormwood amongst its dregs. Hours of revelry left days of ennui, and an aching, empty, desolated heart. Soon money was gone—that which had bought the momentary pleasures—and with that went friends, and the joys of the sinful, lustful life. He has tried in vain to find the real good which he had sought for. With all his gettings, his soul is emptier than at first; and now he has not wherewith to get, at all. He lacks the very necessities for existence—he perishes with hunger.

Now to this end has the prodigal sinner already come. With all his toil he has never been satisfied. Every acquisition, however eagerly and patiently sought for, and whatever he may have hoped from it, has but left the same void within. His plans may have been well laid, they may have been judiciously prosecuted, they may have been successful. But what then? Success when achieved has been his bane instead of his lasting joy. The end attained, all the exhilaration and interest of the pursuit have vanished, and he finds himself in possession of that which, if honest, he can only hold up before his mind's eye, and look at, whilst he exclaims, "How hast thou cheated me? With hard toil, for long months, with much care and weariness, I have sought thee, and now thou art mine, what art thou? What joy canst thou give to this empty soul, thou inert thing? What sorrows canst thou soothe, what cares drive away? What am I better than before?" With all his getting, he has gotten but the chaff which the swine do eat, and is still perishing with hunger.

Is not such the experience of the ungodly world? Who amongst the throngs that crowd the broad road to the second death, have ever found that houses and lands, stocks and moneys at interest, operas, routes and gay apparel, or crowns, kingdoms, and sceptres, satisfied the cravings of the soul? Pythius, who lived in Asia Minor in the time of Xerxes, and who was, next to that monarch, the wealthiest man in the world, but who was still grinding the faces of the poor, received a most eloquent rebuke, as to the folly of so setting his heart on gold, from his wife, when she had a splendid banquet prepared with nothing to eat on the table but gold. Saladin, one of the sovereigns of Asia, after all the glories he had won, when at last his dying hour approached, could but say to his standard bearer—"Go show this flag of the dead to the army, and tell them that the lord of the East could bring nothing but a single garment to the grave." All the world's promised good, however fascinating in appearance, like the beautiful apples of Sodom, falls to ashes at the touch. Far, far have you wandered amidst such vain pursuits; long, long, has your aching heart craved for something to fill its vast desires; but all earth's resources exhausted, has there not remained the aching, empty heart still? Are you not hungering, perishing still? The priceless treasure, the immortal soul, which God gave you as your inheritance, is, indeed, still yours, but in the wanderings and squanderings it has become stupified with sin, and is of itself incapable of yielding any revenue of real good; and there, lying in your helplessness, with only the swine's chaff for your diet, you perish with hunger.

5. The only remedy in this sad extremity is, first of all, like the prodigal, to come to yourself.

Amidst the wretchedness and ruin which his reckless course had brought upon him, God's mercy still allowed him to remember that there were good things in the home he had left. At that father's house want was never known; no rags were seen even on the lowest menial who waited within its portals; none ever hungered in vain, amid the plenty with which that board was spread; all were cared for bountifully, cheerfully, and to their hearts utmost content. How does he envy the lot of the lowest who dwell there. Happy are they; whilst he, who once as a son shared the bounties of that board, is here in a far country, in the fields amidst the swine, striving to keep off famine with the husks on which the poor brutes he is tending seem to revel, but which refuse to refresh and nourish him. Why did he ever leave that home? What compensation has his riotous living afforded, for the peaceful plenty and comfort he there relinquished? How was he deluded in imagining that a life of folly and sin was more to be desired, than the gentle and wholesome restraints which prevailed in the paternal mansion. The spell which rested on him has been broken, and he now sees things in their proper light. He has come to himself; he was beside himself before.

And how truly may it be said of every wanderer from God, who is seeking his treasures among earthly things, that he is beside himself. What man in his sane mind could choose a portion such as this world affords, in preference to that offered him from the Father's house on high; and especially when his oft-

repeated experience has taught him how vain are all things here below? In that house there are indeed restraints, but these are only to bar the soul from what would bring but disappointment, sorrow and shame, were they ours. With kind paternal tenderness and discrimination, and with a full knowledge of what is best for his children, our Father in heaven places his prohibitory mandate only over the gateways which lead to wretchedness and ruin. His commandments are not grievous. His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. He spreads rich banquets of heavenly provision; he opens up fountains of consolation and enjoyment, such as know no poisonous intermixture; his own Son received by faith is meat indeed for the famishing soul; his word is spirit and life; he gives peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and a hope of eternal life beyond the grave; and in the ways of obedience to him, and the fruition of the promises, there is a welling up of a fountain from which, if a man drink, he need never thirst again. With such provision all his children are supplied bountifully and freely; none need ever want; there is enough and to spare.

Why should the sinner forsake such a home to wander in the deserts of this world; and instead of this wholesome nutriment, prepared for the soul by him who made it and knew its wants, endeavour to satisfy himself with the husks of earthly good? Never can he satiate his hungerings until he come to his right mind, and sees things in their real and relative value. If this world has yielded no fruits such as the soul would have, why will he not look

where alone they can be found? If wandering from God has brought only disappointment and sorrow, why will he not return to God and find real joy? Heaven's resources have not been exhausted by the glorious multitude who feed at its banquet tables. The portals of that forsaken home are open to receive him if he will but return; what folly and madness, then, to stay away! Let reason resume her throne. Let him whom God has made capable of the high dignity of a son appreciate his privilege, and seek to dwell where he properly belongs. Let him come to his right mind; let him prefer the real to the counterfeit, the substance to the shadow, the solid gold to worthless dust, the banquets of his Father's house to the poor husks of the swineherds.

6. But, unhappily, like the prodigal, the sinner, finding himself in want, often betakes himself for aid to some citizen of the country where he dwells. All his inheritance being gone, the famine pressing hard upon him, and no other prospect in view but death by hunger, unless he finds relief from some source, the prodigal seeks the help nearest at hand and most congenial. As yet he has hardly thought of returning to his long forsaken home; he does not care to go there; he fears to meet the piercing, reproachful glance of an injured father; his great object is to avert the calamity which stares him in the face; he hopes to do this by becoming a hireling, and forthwith joins himself to a citizen of that far off country, and goes into the fields as a tender of swine.

A most striking counterpart of the prodigal's

course is found in the almost uniform conduct of the sinner awakened to a sense of his perishing condition. He finds himself in want; hunger is gnawing at his vitals, the world has never satisfied him, he sees worse things in store, death is coming on and he must perish if he remains where he is. Forthwith, therefore, instead of resorting at once to the full provisions of the Gospel, he sets himself to work out some righteousness of his own, by joining himself to what at best must be regarded as belonging to the country of this present world, and not to the kingdom which is from above. He betakes himself to reformation, breaking off from his more overt sins; he abandons Sabbath breaking, profane swearing, licentiousness, attendance on places of worldly amusement and folly, and is outwardly a very different man. He hopes to be better satisfied under his new system of living. Finding this, however, unavailing, he goes further, and now opens his long neglected Bible, reading portions of it every day; he bows his knees in secret to pray; he is regular in his attendance on the sanctuary, and perhaps begins to frequent the weekly social meetings. In these he hopes to find relief for his famishing soul. But, alas! no relief comes; the Bible is a sealed book to him; his prayers seem idle words; the messages of the minister bring no comfort to his bosom. In fact the longer he continues his toilsome routine of religious services the more hopeless his prospects seem to be; his heart is hard; he cannot feel, or think, or act as he would do. He begins to despair of help from these sources. And well he may. He has been striving to work out a righteousness of his

own, instead of humbly seeking that which is Christ Jesus. The means of grace, however important in their place as means, and an outward reformation, however indispensable, will not of themselves avail; he has stopped short of the right refuge, and joined himself to what are best but citizens of the country of this present world. If he goes no further for help, he must still perish with hunger.

7. And this leads to the remark, that, like the prodigal, and with the same spirit also, the sinner must return to his father's house.

Temptations, indeed, there may be to keep him where he is. Looking at the distance to which he has gone, and the steps which must be retraced, the way back seems long and difficult. In his poverty and rags he may think himself badly prepared for the journey. Should he reach the gates of the homestead, how does he know that he will be received? He erred in forsaking that home; and his career since, together with his present wretched appearance, have nothing to recommend him. Has not his father cast him off for ever? With kindred doubts and fears may the sinner, whom God's Spirit has convinced of the vanity of the world and the wretchedness of his condition, be perplexed when he thinks of returning to God. A long way, indeed; has he wandered in sin. Difficult does it seem for him to retrace his steps. With a soul all polluted and guilty—in spiritual rags and wretchedness, what has he to recommend him? He has treated with fixed and intentional neglect and contempt the calls to return which have been long ringing in his ears.

Even should he go begging to be received again, will the paternal doors be opened to him?

And yet, what would the prodigal gain by staying away? Like the leprous men at the gate of Samaria, if he stays there he will perish, and he can but perish if he goes. He will relinquish all idea of sonship; he will humble himself, and beg, as matter of special grace, to be but admitted as a servant. And so, also, we may ask the prodigal sinner thinking of a return, but kept back by doubts and fears, what will it profit you to stay where you are in your sins? You are dying with hunger; a little longer, and the famine will have clean overtaken you, and you will have perished forever. Death is inevitable—the undying, everdying second death, should you remain in your sins; if you go to your neglected God and Saviour, seeking for mercy, you can but perish. In the whole universe there is no hope of safety but in this one thing of returning. You have no merit of your own to plead; but you can confess your sins, and beg for mercy; and peradventure pardon will ensue. So thought the prodigal, and in that dark and guilty soul the struggle was ended; the last resolve was made; the swine-herds and the husks were to be forsaken; and from his trembling lips fell the words, “I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight.” Such a resolution, rising from the heart-depths of a sinner, evinces the very spirit of evangelical penitence. Here is a sense of sin; a willingness frankly and fully to confess it; the conviction that it has all been against the holy and excellent law of God; an abandonment of all

pretension to self-righteousness and a willingness to plead guilty, and acquiesce in the sentence which would debar him from sonship for ever; and withal, a determination to return, casting himself upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus as his only hope. Herein is that mingled despair and rising hope—that giving up of self, and the going out of faith towards an all-sufficient Saviour, which marks the transition of a soul from the kingdom of darkness into that of God's dear Son. With such a spirit, no sinner need fear to seek an injured father's face.

8. And this leads us finally, to say, that returning with the spirit of the prodigal, a favourable and joyful reception is certain. Long though it had been since that wayward son had fled his home, the kindness of a father's heart had not grown cold. Wicked as has been his life, and wretched as he is in his poverty and rags, he will not be spurned from the homestead doors. His trembling footsteps bring him near that home; his fainting heart almost dreads to make the appeal to be received again; at the last moment he is almost ready, like Lot's wife, to look back to Sodom. But just then the Father's eye discerns him, the long lost son is recognized, the tender heart of paternal love melts in compassion; the prodigal begins his confessions, but ere they have been ended, he is embraced by a father's arms, forgiven for all his wanderings, and acknowledged as a son once more. Robes white and clean are put upon him, he is adorned with gold, the fatted calf is killed, and the whole household echoes with strains of joy. He that was as good as dead, is made alive again; the lost is found.

Such a reception, free and joyful, awaits you, my unconverted reader, if in your wretchedness and ruin you come pleading for mercy, at the doors of the kingdom. Through the riches of grace, which is in Christ Jesus, all your sins can be forgiven; by the Spirit which he has purchased a new heart can be put within you; and in the pure garments of his righteousness you can stand accepted. More favoured than the prodigal, you have a divine, all-powerful friend to plead your cause. God the Father, and this elder brother Jesus Christ, in the counsels of eternity, devised a plan for securing the return for such as you. The Redeemer's incarnation; his life of faithful obedience; his agonizing death on Calvary, and his intercession at the right hand of the Father in heaven, all were designed to prepare the new and living way by which the prodigal sinner may come back to God. His own honour and the compensation for the travail of his soul are involved in the rescue of the lost. Every prodigal returned is a fresh contribution to the rich revenue of glory he is to receive as recompense for his shame, dishonour and death; every wanderer brought back from sin and hell, is a new token of his triumph over his enemies—another star added to the lustre of his peerless crown. In such conquests all heaven sympathises—for there is joy among the angels even over one sinner that repenteth. Why then should you not come? The way through Christ is an open way. "Him that cometh to me," says he, "I will in no wise cast out," and in him your utmost desires shall be satisfied, for he also says, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger."

More willing is the Father to receive you, than you are to return. His yearning heart pities you, his kind voice calls you, and if you but come you shall be a son and an heir in that glorious household. No sooner will the broken utterances of your guiltiness fall from your lips, than they shall be heard, and the lofty courts of heaven shall reverberate with songs of joy.

And will you come? Let me plead with you to tarry no longer away. Does your proud spirit at last relent? Has the great resolve been made? From your troubled heart has the language gone forth, "I will arise and return?" Then, blessed, thrice blessed will you be. A Saviour's blood will wash your sins away, and your rags will be exchanged for a robe of righteousness. A prodigal returned; how great the change! No more a stranger, but a son at home; no longer away in a desert land among the swine, perishing with hunger, but here at a father's board, where there is enough and to spare. The husks all gone; the empty aching heart at last filled—the longing soul satisfied from the rich provisions of a Saviour's love; and though but yesterday an outcast beggar, now an heir of God, a joint heir with Jesus Christ, in full brotherhood with the saints on earth and in heaven, and but waiting for the mansions prepared above, for the full fruition of a kingdom and a crown. Joy, joy for ever! The dead is made alive! The lost is found!