

[No. 25.]

A LETTER

PW
92
Zp
#9

or

THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

THE LIBRARY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia 23227



or

REV. WM. S. PLUMER, D. D.

PW
10
Zp
Box 1
no. 7

FROM THE LIBRARY OF
REV. WILLIAM S. PLUMER, D. D.

RICHMOND:

PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE OF PUBLICATION.

A LETTER

UN

THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

MY DEAR FRIEND: I have just heard of your bereavement, and offer you my Christian sympathies. I know, indeed, that no creature can give you effectual comfort; nor do I propose to do more than any servant of Christ might perform. The sooner you look away from earth, and set your hope in God alone, the better for you. He is our refuge and salvation; a very present help in trouble. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." The very tears of our friends often show us how vain is human help. But our heavenly Father is full of mercy and grace, of wisdom and power. He does not afflict willingly. He is a sun and shield. His mercy endureth for ever. "There is more comfort in one drop that distils from God than in ten thousand rivers that flow from creature delights."

If you are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, nothing can harm you. God is your Father, and Jesus Christ your Brother, Saviour and Redeemer. In all the affliction of His saints He is afflicted. He is the angel of God's presence, and saves His chosen. He says, Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. He well knows what sorrow means. He has felt the keenest pangs. He never breaks the bruised reed. He came to bind up the broken-hearted and to comfort all that mourn. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. Blessed Saviour. Because Thou livest, we shall live also. At Thy bidding I would bear all things. I would rather be with Thee in a dungeon than with Thy enemies in a palace. Let me in my measure fill up that which is behind of Thy sufferings. Let the hope of glory animate me, and I will glory in tribulation. Let my sins be surely pardoned, then

“The glory of my glory still shall be,
To give all glory and myself to Thee.”

The Saviour has promised the Comforter. Seek His blessed presence. It is the very office of the Holy Spirit to cheer and encourage our hearts. Marvelously can this Spirit of love and holiness chase away our darkness. He giveth songs in the night. He is the oil of gladness. His grace and love and pity are infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Get the help of the Spirit, and nothing can undo you.

This is the very time for you to plead and rest upon the provisions of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, which is both new and everlasting, which is sealed with blood, confirmed with an oath, established upon the best promises, and ordained in the hands of a Mediator who cannot fail nor be discouraged. In this covenant is no flaw. Under it there can be no failure. Rest, yea, glory in it, and remember all it secures.

Still you weep for your child. Blessed be God, it is no sin to weep. Jesus wept. When nature weeps, let grace triumph. I have long thought that the grief of the pious for the death of their infant offspring should be very moderate. The view taken of the state of such by the best reformed Churches has always been cheering. Hear the Synod of Dort: "Seeing that we are to judge of the will of God by His word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not indeed by nature, but by the benefit of the gracious covenant, in which they are comprehended along with their parents, pious parents ought not to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom God hath called in infancy out of this life."

The Westminster Confession goes further, and clearly tells how they are saved: "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth." Dr. Hodge goes even further: "If, without personal

participation in the sin of Adam, all men are subject to death, may we not hope that, without personal acceptance of the righteousness of Christ, all who die in infancy are saved?" If, therefore, you still weep, weep as one full of hope and peace and comfort.

Moreover, your present affliction will furnish an occasion of showing your readiness to perform two duties united by the Psalmist: "Trust in the Lord, and do good." Trust Him, though He slay you. And it can hardly be doubted that great as is your sorrow, you can easily find others who need your aid and sympathy. To such do good. Visit them. Write to them. Speak comfortably to them. Weep with them. If they are needy, give them a portion of what you can spare. In a word, be as useful as you can. In watering others you shall be watered.

Beware of moping over your trials and brooding over your sorrows. Cultivate a cheerful temper. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness."

Nor should any of us forget that our hearts, and tongues, and lives need correction and amendment. Our inconstancy is very blameworthy. If we had fewer chastisements, our state would probably be worse.

I know not the design of God in this affliction, but we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. You have found benefit from former trials. This too, if you will view it rightly, shall yield the

peaceable fruit of righteousness. And as to your loved one, has not God already done for your child far more than you and all the world could have done in a thousand years? Has He not made it a king and a priest unto God? If Hannah willingly gave up Samuel to serve in the tabernacle with Eli, surely you should cheerfully resign your darling to serve in the temple not made with hands.

At most, will not this darkness soon be gone? Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. It is but a little while, and He that cometh shall come and will not tarry. The time is short. Let us wait patiently for Him. His deliverances are as seasonable as they are effectual. When you reach the blessed home above, you will be the first to say, God hath done all things well.

If the tempter still annoys and discourages, resist him. yield not to his seductions. Hope in God.



LINES ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

I have a pet, a little pet, her age I cannot tell;
For they count not by years or months where she has gone to dwell.
To us for four and forty months her infant smiles were given,
And then she bade farewell to earth, and went to dwell in heaven.

I cannot tell what form is hers, what looks she weareth now,
Nor guess how bright a glory crowns her shining seraph brow.
The thoughts that fill her sinless soul, the bliss which she doth feel,
Are numbered with the secret things which God will not reveal.

I know—for God hath told me thus—that she is now at rest,
Where other blessed infants be, on Jesus' loving breast.
I know her spirit feels no more this weary load of flesh,
Her sleep is blessed with endless dreams of joy for ever fresh.

I know the angels fold her close beneath their glittering wings,
And soothe her with a song that's full of heaven's divinest things.
I know that we shall meet our pet—her mother dear and I—
Where God for aye shall wipe away all tears from every eye.

Whate'er befalls her brothers four, *her* bliss can never cease;
Their lot may here be grief and fear, but *hers* is certain peace.
It may be that the tempter's wiles their souls from bliss may sever,
But if our own poor faith fail not, *she* must be ours for ever.

When we think what our darling is, and what we still must be,
When we muse on that world's pure bliss, and this world's misery,
When we groan 'neath this load of sin, and feel this grief and pain,
We'd rather yield the other four than have her back again.