

Why They Leave Us

A Sermon (1892) Delivered On Lord's Day

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At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, England

Suggested by the death of Charles Stanford, D.D.,

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"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." - John 17:24

The prayer of the Savior rises as it proceeds. He asked for his people that they might be preserved from the world, then that they might be sanctified, and then that they might be made manifestly one; and now he reaches his crowning point—that they may be with him where he is, and behold his glory. It is well when in prayer the spirit takes to itself wings. The prayer that swings to and fro like a door upon its hinges may admit to fellowship; but that prayer is more after the divine pattern which, like a ladder, rises round by round, until it loses itself in heaven.

This last step of our Lord's prayer is not only above all the rest, but it is a longer step than any of the others. He here ascends, not from one blessing which may be enjoyed on earth, to another of higher degree; but he mounts right away from all that is of this present state into that which is reserved for the eternal future. He quits the highest peaks of grace, and at a single stride his prayer sets its foot in glory: "that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

There is this to be noticed also concerning this divine prayer, that not only does it rise as to its subject, but it even ascends as to the place which the Intercessor appears to occupy. Has it not been so with yourselves in prayer at times, that you have hardly known where you were? You might have cried with Paul, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." Do not these words of our Lord Jesus remind you of this? Was he not carried away by the fervor of his devotion? Where was he when he uttered the words of our text? If I follow the language I might conclude that our Lord was already in heaven. He says, "rather, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Does he not mean that they should be in heaven with him? Of course he does; yet he was not in heaven; he was still in the midst of his apostles, in the body upon earth; and he had yet Gethsemane and Golgotha before him ere he could enter his glory. He had prayed himself into such an exaltation of feeling that his prayer was in heaven, and he himself was there in spirit. What a hint this gives to us! How readily may we quit the field of battle and the place of agony, and rise into such fellowship with God, that we may think and speak, and act, as if we were

already in possession of our eternal joy! By the ardor of prayer and the confidence of faith we may be caught up into Paradise, and there utter words which are beyond the latitude of earth, and are dated "from the Delectable Mountains."

Nor is this all; for still the prayer rises, not only as to its matter and place, but in a very singular way it also takes to itself a higher style. Before, our Lord had asked and pleaded; but now he uses a firmer word: he says, "Father, I will." I would not force that word so as to make it bear an imperious or commanding meaning, for the Savior speaketh not so to the Father: but still it has a more elevated tone about it than asking. Our Lord here useth the royal manner rather than the tone of his humiliation. He speaketh like unto the Son of God; he addresses the great Father as one who counteth it not robbery to be equal with him, but exercises the prerogative of his Eternal Sonship. He saith, "I will." This is a tone which belongs not to us except in a very modified degree, but it teaches us a lesson. It is well in prayer, when the Holy Spirit helpeth us, not only to groan out of the dust as suppliant sinners, but to seek unto our Father in the spirit of adoption with the confidence of children, and then with the promise of God in our hand we may with consecrated bravery lay hold upon the covenant angel, and cry, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Importunity is a humble approach to this divine "I will." The will consecrated, educated, and sanctified, may and must reveal itself in our more spiritual petitions, just as, with equal correctness, it hides away when the pleading is for temporal things, and whispers, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." The Lord pours upon his pleading servants at times a kind of inspiration by which they rise into power in prayer, and have their will of the Lord. Is it not written, "Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart?" We come at last to feel that the desires of our heart are inspired of his Spirit, and then that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

There ought to be much for our edification in a text like this, which in subject, place, and style rises to such an elevation. It is the apex of this wonderful pyramid of prayer; the last round of the ladder of light. O Spirit of the Lord, instruct us while we behold it!

I have taken this text because it has taken hold on me. Our beloved brother, Charles Stanford, has just been taken from us. I seem to be standing as one of a company of disciples, and my brethren are melting away. My brethren, my comrades, my delights, are leaving me for the better land. We have enjoyed holy and happy fellowship in days of peace, and we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord; but we are melting away. One has gone; another has gone; before we look round another will have departed. We see them for a moment, and they vanish from our gaze. It is true they do not rise into the air like the Divine Master from Olivet; yet do they rise, I am persuaded of that: only the poor body descends, and that descent is for a very little while. They rise, to be for ever with the Lord. The grief is to us who are left behind. What a gap is left where stood Hugh Stowell Brown! Who is to fill it? What a gap is left where stood Charles Stanford! Who is to fill it? Who among us will go next? We stand like men amazed. Some of us stood next in

the rank with those who have been taken. Why this constant thinning of our ranks while the warfare is so stern? Why this removal of the very best when we so much need the noblest examples? I am bowed down, and could best express myself in a flood of tears as I survey the line of graves so newly digged; but I restrain myself from so carnal a mode of regarding the matter, and look upon it in a clearer light. The Master is gathering the ripest of his fruit, and well doth he deserve them. His own dear hand is putting his apples of gold into his baskets of silver; and as we see that it is the Lord, we are bewildered no longer. His word, as it comes before us in the text, calms and quiets our spirits. It dries our tears, and calls us to rejoicing as we hear our heavenly Bridegroom praying, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." We understand why the dearest and best are going. We see in whose hand is held the magnet which attracts them to the skies. One by one they must depart from this lowland country, to dwell above, in the palace of the King, for Jesus is drawing them to himself. Our dear babes go home because "he gathereth the lambs with his arm and carrieth them in his bosom;" and our ripe saints go home because the Beloved is come into his garden to gather lilies. These words of our Lord Jesus explain the continual home-going; they are the answer to the riddle which we call death. I am going to talk of how our honored brethren are not, because God taketh them; and I shall be happy if my words shall prepare us to exercise a holy readiness to see the grand request of our Redeemer fulfilled, even though it cost us many a sorrowful parting.

I. Let us begin as our text begins, and thus the first thought about the continual gathering to the house above will be THE HOME-WORD—the rallying word: "Father." Observe, our Lord had said, "Holy Father," and toward the close of the prayer he said, "O righteous Father;" but in commencing this particular petition he uses the word "Father" by itself alone: this relationship is in itself so dear that it agrees best with the loftiest petition. I like to think of that name "Father," as used in this connection. Is it not the center of living unity? If there is to be a family gathering and reunion, where should it be but in the father's house? Who is at the head of the table but the father? All the interests of the children unite in the parent, and he feels for them all.

From the great Father the Lord Jesus himself came forth. We do not understand the doctrine of the eternal filiation—we adore the mystery into which we may not pry. But we know that as our Lord Jesus is God-and-man Mediator, he came forth from the Father; and unto the Father's will he submitted himself in so doing. As for us, we come distinctly of that Father, it is he that made us, and not we ourselves; and, better and brighter fact still, of his own will begat he us by the word of truth. We were born a second time from heaven, and from our Heavenly Father our spiritual life is derived.

The whole of this sermon through, I want to show you that it is right that we should part with our brethren and joyfully permit of their going home; and surely I may at once ask you—What can be more right than that children should go home to their father? From him they came, to him they owe their

life; should they not always tend towards him, and should not this be the goal of their being, that they should at last dwell in his presence? To go away from the Father and to live apart from him is the sorrow of our fallen nature as it plays the prodigal; but the coming back to the Father is restoration to life, to peace, to happiness. Yes, all our hopeful steps are towards the Father. We are saved when by believing in the name of Jesus we receive power to become the sons of God. Our sanctification lies in the bosom of our adoption. Because Jesus comes from the Father and leads us back to the Father, therefore is there a heaven for us. Wherefore, whenever we think of heaven let us chiefly think of the Father; for it is in our Father's house that there are many mansions, and it is to the Father that our Lord has gone, that he may prepare a place for us.

"FATHER!" why, it is a bell that rings us home. He who hath the spirit of adoption feels that the Father draws him home, and he would fain run after him. How intensely did Jesus turn to the Father! He cannot speak of the glory wherein he is to be without coupling his Father with it. Brethren, it is in the Father that we live and move and have our being. Is there any spiritual life in the world which does not continually proceed from the life of the great Father? Is it not by the continual outcoming of the Holy Ghost from the Father that we remain spiritual men? And as from him we live, so for him we live, if we live aright. We wish so to act as to glorify God in everything. Even our salvation should not be an ultimate end with any one of us; we should desire to glorify God by our salvation. We look upon the doctrines that we preach, and the precepts which we obey, as means to the glory of God, even the Father.

This is the consummation which the First-born looks for, and to which all of us who are like him are aspiring also, namely, that God may be all in all: that the great Father may be had in honor, and may be worshipped in every place. Since, then, we are from him, and of him, and to him, and for him, this word "Father" calls us to gather at his feet. Shall any one of us lament the process? No; we dare not complain that our choicest brethren are taken up to gladden the great Father's house. Our brother is gone; but we ask, "Where is he gone?" and when the answer comes, "He is gone to the Father," all notion of complaint is over. To whom else should he go? When the great First-born went away from us, he told his sorrowing followers that he was going to their Father and his Father; and that answer was enough. So, when our friend, or our child, or our wife, or our brother is gone, it is enough that he is with the Father. To call them back does not occur to us; but rather we each one desire to follow after them.

***"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of thine abode;
I'd leave thine earthly courts and flee
Up to thy seat, my God."***

A child may be happy at school, but he longs for the holidays. Is it merely to escape his lessons? Ah, no! Ask him, and he will tell you, "I want to go home

to see my father." The same is equally true, and possibly more so, if we include the feminine form of parentage. What a home-cry is that of "mother!" The sight of that dear face has been longed and hungered for by many a child when far away. Mother or father, which you will; they are blended in the great Fatherhood of God. Let it but be said that any one has gone to his father, and no further question is asked as to the right of his going thither. To the father belongs the first possession of the child; should he not have his own child at home? The Savior wipes our tears away with a handkerchief which is marked in the corner with this word—"Father."

II. The Home Impetus

Secondly, I want your thoughts upon THE HOME IMPETUS. The force which draws us home lies in the word, "I will." Jesus Christ, our most true God, veiled in human form, bows his knee and prays, and throws his divine energy into the prayer for the bringing home of his redeemed. This one irresistible, everlastingly almighty prayer carries everything before it. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am," is the centripetal energy which is drawing all the family of God towards its one home.

How shall the chosen get home to the Father? Chariots are provided. Here are the chariots of fire and horses of fire in this prayer. "I will," saith Jesus, "that they be with me;" and with him they must be. There are difficulties in the way—long nights and darkness lie between, and hills of guilt, and forests of trouble, and bands of fierce temptations; yet the pilgrims shall surely reach their journey's end, for the Lord's "I will" shall be a wall of fire round about them. In this petition I see both sword and shield for the church militant. Here I see the eagles' wings on which they shall be upborne till they enter within the golden gates. Jesus saith, "I will;" and who is he that shall hinder the home-coming of the chosen? As well hope to arrest the marches of the stars of heaven.

Examine the energy of this "I will" for a moment, and you will see, first, that it hath the force of an intercessory prayer. It is a gem from that wonderful breastplate of jewels which our great High-priest wore upon his breast when he offered his fullest intercession. I cannot imagine our Lord's interceding in vain. If he asks that we may be with him where he is, he must assuredly have his request. It is written, that "he was heard in that he feared." When with strong crying and tears he poured out his soul unto death, his Father granted the requests of his heart. I do not wonder it should be so; how could the best Beloved fail of that which he sought in intercession from his Father God! Mark, then, that the force of irresistible intercession is drawing every blood-bought soul into the place where Jesus is. You cannot hold your dying babe; for Jesus asks for it to be with him. Will you come into competition with your Lord? Surely you will not. You cannot hold your aged father, nor detain your beloved mother, beyond the time appointed; for the intercession of Christ has such a force about it that they must ascend even as sparks must seek the sun.

More than intercession is found in the expression "I will." It suggests the idea of a testamentary bequest and appointment. The Lord Jesus is making his last will and testament, and he writes, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me." No man who makes his will likes to have it frustrated. Our Savior's testament will assuredly be carried out in every jot and tittle; and, if for no other reason, yet certainly for this cause, that though he died, and thus made his will valid, yet he lives again to be his own executor, and to carry out his will. When I read in our Lord's testament the words, "Father, I will that they be with me," I ask, "Who is to hold them back?" They must in due time be with him, for the will of the ever blessed Savior must be carried out: there can be no standing against a force of that kind.

Nor is this all: the words read to me, not only like intercession and testamentary decree, but there is a strong expression of desire, resolve, and purpose. Jesus desires it, and saith, "I will." It is a deliberate desire—a forcible, distinct, resolute, determined purpose. The will of God is supreme law. It needeth not that he should speak; he doth but will or purpose, and the thing is done. Now read my text: "I will that they be with me;" the Son of God wills it. How are the saints to be hindered from what the Lord wills? They must rise from their beds of dust and silent clay;—they must rise to be with Jesus where he is, for Jesus wills it. By your anxious care you may seek to detain them; you may sit about their bed and nurse them both night and day, but they must quit these dark abodes when Jesus gives the signal. You may clutch them with affectionate eagerness, and even cry in despair, "They shall not go, we cannot bear to part with them;" but go they must when Jesus calls. Take back your naughty hands, which would detain them, for naughty they are if you would rob your Savior. Would you cross his will? Would you set at naught his testament? You could not if you would; you would not if you could. Rather be inclined to go with them than think to resist the heavenly attraction which upraises them. If Jesus saith, "I will," then it is yours to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt. They were never so much mine as they are thine. I never had so much right to them as thou hast who hast bought them. They never so truly could be at home with me as they will be at home with thee in thine own bosom; so my will dissolves itself into thy will, and I say with steadfast resignation, 'Let them go.'"

Brothers and sisters, you perceive the forces which are bearing away our beloved ones. I see tender hands reaching after us this morning; they are invisible to sense, but palpable to faith. Cords of love are being cast about the chosen, and they are being drawn out secretly from their fellows. Would you break those bands asunder, and cast those cords from us? I beseech you, think not so; but let that pierced hand which bought the beloved ones seek out its own purchase and bring them home. Should not Jesus have his own? Do we not bow our knee and pray for Jesus, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven?"

III. The Home Character

But now I want to conduct you farther into the text. We have had the home-word and the home-bringing impetus, and now let us carefully note THE HOME CHARACTER. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." The description is—"They also, whom thou hast given me." The Greek is somewhat difficult to translate. The translators of the Revised Version were, no doubt, excellent Greek scholars, and if they had known a little more English, they might have come a little nearer to a perfect translation, but they do not always appear to think the common English reader to be worthy of their consideration. This is their translation in the present instance:—"Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am they also may be with me." This, to speak plainly, sounds very like nonsense. It is the translation which a boy would present to his tutor at school, but it is of small use to the general reader. It is literal, no doubt; but literalisms are often another proof that the letter killeth. Translators into the English tongue might have contrived to have given us words with a meaning in them. I merely quote the version to show you that there is here a something in the singular as well as persons in the plural. "Father, I will concerning that which thou hast given me, that they may be with me where I am." Our Lord looked upon those whom the Father gave him as one—one body, one church, one bride: he willed that as a whole the church should be with him where he is. Then he looked again and saw each of the many individuals of whom the one church is composed, and he prayed that each, that all of these, might be with him and behold his glory. Jesus never so prays for the whole church as to forget a single member; neither does he so pray for the members individually as to overlook the corporate capacity of the whole. Sweet thought! Jesus wills to have the whole of what he bought with his precious blood with him in heaven; he will not lose any part. He did not die for a part of a church, nor will he be satisfied unless the entire flock which he has purchased shall be gathered around him.

But while the Lord looks at those whom his Father gave him as one body, he looks upon you and me, and each believer here, as a part of that great unity, and his prayer is that all of us may be with him. I believe that he prays as much for the least as for the greatest, as much for Benjamin as for Judah, as much for the despondent as for those who are fully assured. The prayer is one of great breadth and comprehensiveness, but yet it is not the prayer which those who believe in Universalism would put into his mouth. He does not pray that those who die unbelievers may be with him where he is, neither does he will that souls in hell should one day come out of it and be with him in glory. There is no trace of that doctrine in holy writ: those who teach such fables draw their inspiration from some other source. The new purgatory, in which so many have come to believe, is unknown to Holy Scripture. No, our Lord's prayer is distinctly for those whom the Father gave him—for every one of these, but for no others. His "I will" concerns them only.

I feel right glad that there is no sort of personal character mentioned here, but only—"Those whom thou hast given me." It seems as if the Lord in his last

moments was not so much looking at the fruit of grace as at grace itself; he did not so much note either the perfections or the imperfections of his people, but only the fact that they were his by the eternal gift of the Father. They belonged to the Father—"thine they were." The Father gave them to Jesus—"thou gavest them me." The Father gave them as a love token and a means of his Son's glorification—"Thine they were and thou gavest them me;" and now our Lord pleads that because they were the Father's gift to him he should have them with him. Does anybody raise a cavil as to Christ's right to have those with him who were his Father's, whom his Father gave him, and whom he himself actually took into his own possession? No, they ought to be with him, since they are his in so divine a manner. If I possess a love-token that some dear one has given me I may rightly desire to have it with me. Nobody can have such a right to your wedding-ring, good sister, as you have yourself, and are not Christ's saints, as it were, a signet upon his finger, a token which his Father gave him of his good pleasure in him? Should they not be with Jesus where he is, since they are his crown jewels and his glory? We in our creature love lift up our hands, and cry, "My Lord, my Master, let me have this dear one with me a little longer. I need the companionship of one so sweet, or life will be misery to me." But if Jesus looks us in the face, and says, "Is thy right better than mine?" we draw back at once. He has a greater part in his saints than we can have. O Jesus, thy Father gave them to thee of old; they are his reward for the travail of thy soul; and far be it from us to deny thee. Though blinded by our tears, we can yet see the rights of Jesus, and we loyally admit them. We cry concerning our best beloved, "The Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Does not the text sweetly comfort us in the talking away of one and another, since it shows how they belong to Christ?

IV. The Home Companionship

And now, advancing another step, Christ reveals to us something concerning THE HOME COMPANIONSHIP in the glory land. Those who are taken away, where are they gone? The text saith, "I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."

By this language we are impressed with the nearness of the saints to Christ in glory—"that they may be with me." Think for a moment: when our Lord used these words, and John took them down, the disciples were with him. They had left the supper-table where they had feasted together. The Master had said, "Arise, let us go hence;" and it was in the very midst of them that the Lord Jesus offered this choice prayer. Learn, then, that in heaven the saints will be nearer to Christ than the apostles were when they sat at the table with him, or heard him pray. That was a nearness which might consist only in place, and their minds might still be, as they often were, far away from him: but up in heaven we shall be one with him in sympathy, in spirit, in conscious fellowship. We shall be with Jesus in the closest, clearest, and most complete sense. No fellowship on earth can reach to the plenitude of the communion which we shall enjoy above. "With him"—"for ever with the Lord"—this is heaven. Who would wish to detain from such companionship those whom we

love?

Yet do not drop the thought of place, lest you refine away the essence of the prayer. Let us see the spiritual clearly, but let us not, on that account, make the sense less real, less matter of fact. To the prayer that his saints may be with him our Lord added the words, "May be with me where I am." Our bodies will rise from the dust, and they must occupy a place: that place will be where Jesus is. Even spirits must be somewhere, and that somewhere with us is to be where Jesus is. We are to be, not metaphorically and fancifully, but really, truly, literally with Jesus. We shall enjoy an intense nearness to him in that blessed place which the Father has prepared for him, and which he is preparing for us. There is a place where Jesus is revealed in all the splendor of his majesty, amid angels and glorified spirits; and those whom our Lord's will has taken away from us have not gone into banishment in a mysterious land, neither are they shut up in a house of detention till there is a general jail delivery, but they are with Christ in Paradise. They serve him, and they see his face. Who would be so cruel as to keep a saint from such a fair country? I would desire all good for my children, my relatives, my friends; and what good is better than to be where Jesus is? Are you not glad to hear of the promotion of those you love? Will you quarrel with God because some of your dearest ones are promoted to the skies? The thought of their amazing bliss greatly moderates our natural grief. We weep for ourselves, but as we remember their companionship with the Altogether Lovely One a smile blends with our tears.

Notice the occupation of those who are with Jesus: "That they may behold my glory." I do not wonder that Jesus wants his dear ones to be with him for this purpose, since love always pines for a partner in its joys. When I have been abroad, and have been specially charmed with glorious scenery, I have a hundred times felt myself saying, almost involuntarily, "How I wish that my dear wife could be here! I should enjoy this a hundred times as much if she could but see it!" It is an instinct of affection to seek fellowship in joy. The Lord Jesus is truly human, and he feels this unselfish desire of every loving human heart, and therefore says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Our Lord graciously permits his disciples to have fellowship with him in his sufferings, and hence he is all the more desirous that they should participate in his glory. He knows that nothing will be a greater joy to them than to see him exalted; therefore he would give them this highest form of delight. Was not Joseph delighted when he said to his brethren, "Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt;" and still more so when he could actually show his father how great was his power, how exalted was his rank. It is joy to Jesus to let us behold his joy, and it will be glory to us to behold his glory. Should not the redeemed ascend to such blessed delights? Would you hinder them?

How unselfish it is on our Lord's part to think himself not fully glorified till we behold his glory! How unselfish he will make us also, since it will be our glory to see his glory! He does not say that he is going to take us home, that we may be in glory, but that we may behold his glory. His glory is better to us than

any personal glory: all things are more ours by being his. Glory apart from him were no glory. Beloved, even as our Lord seems to lose himself in his people, his people hide themselves away in him. It is his glory to glorify them; it is their glory to glorify him; and it will be the glory of glories for them to be glorified together. Who would not want to go to this heaven? Who would want to keep a brother out of it even just an hour?

Observe the fellowship which exists in the glory land. Read the verse: "That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." What a blending of persons! Where did our Lord's glory come from? "Thou gavest it me," says Jesus. Hence it is the Father's glory passed over to the Son. Yet Jesus calls it "my glory," for it is truly his own. The saints are to behold this, and it will be their glory to see it. Here we have the Father, and the Elder Brother, and the many brethren, and a wonderful sharing of interests and possessions. It is ever so in a loving family. There we draw no hard and fast lines of "meum and tuum" (what is mine and what is thine). "All thine are mine, and mine are thine." We ask not whose is this? or whose is that? when we are at home. If you were to go into a stranger's house, you would not think of taking this or that; but as your father's own son you make yourself at home, and no one enquires, "What doest thou?" Bridegroom and bride do not quarrel about property whether it be his or hers. Laws have been made lately to settle different estates for those who are one: this is well enough when love is gone, but true conjugal love laughs at all that can make separate that which God hath joined together. The wife says, "That is mine." "No" saith the disputer, "it is your husband's." Her answer is, "and therefore it is mine." In that blessed union into which divine love has admitted us Christ is ours, and we are Christ's; his Father is our Father, we are one with him, he is one with the Father: and hence all things are ours, and the Father himself loveth us. All this will not only be true in heaven, but it will there be realized and acted on. So when the Lord brings his people home, we shall be one with him, and he one with the Father, and we also in him one with the Father, so that we shall then find boundless glory in beholding the glory of our Lord and God.

My text has baffled me. I am beaten back by its blaze of light. Forgive me. I had a thought, but I cannot express it. The fire of my text burns with such fervent heat that it threatens to consume me if I draw nearer to it. Easily could I step into heaven—so I feel at this moment.

V. The Home Atmosphere

I must end by speaking of THE HOME ATMOSPHERE. None of us can wish our departed friends back from their thrones. Since they have gone to be where Jesus is, and to enter so fully into the most blissful fellowship with him and the Father, we would not have them return even for an instant to this poor country. We only wish that our turn for migration may come soon. We would not be too long divided from our fellows. If some of the birds have gone to the sunny land, let us plume our wings to follow them. There will be only a little interval between our parting and our everlasting meeting. Look at the many who died before we came into the world. Some of them have been in

heaven together now for thousands of years. To them it must seem that they were only divided by a moment's interval; their continents of fellowship have made the channel of death seem but a streak of sea. Soon we shall take the same view of things.

Breathe the home atmosphere. Jesus tells us that the atmosphere of his home is love: "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Brethren, can you follow me in a great flight? Can you stretch broader wings than the condor ever knew, and fly back into the unbeginning eternity? There was a day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. There was a time before all time, when God only was: the uncreated, the only-existent One. The Divine Three, Father, Son, and Spirit, lived in blessed consort with each other, delighting in each other. Oh the intensity of the divine love of the Father to the Son! There was no world, no sun, no moon, no stars, no universe, but God alone; and the whole of God's omnipotence flowed forth in a stream of love to the Son, while the Son's whole being remained eternally one with the Father by a mysterious essential union. How came all this which we now see and hear? Why this creation? this fall of Adam? this redemption? this church? this heaven? How came it all about? It needed not to have been, but the Father's love made him resolve to show forth the glory of his Son. The mysterious volume which has been gradually unfolded before us has only this one design—the Father would make known his love to the Son, and make the Son's glories to appear before the eyes of those whom the Father gave him. This Fall and this Redemption, and the story as a whole, so far as the divine purpose is concerned, are the fruit of the Father's love to the Son, and his delight in glorifying the Son. Those myriads, those white-robed myriads, harping to music infinitely deep, what mean they all? They are the Father's delight in the Son. That he might be glorified for ever, he permitted that he should bear a human body, and should suffer, bleed, and die, so that there might come out of him, as a harvest cometh from a dying and buried corn of wheat, all the countless hosts of elect souls, ordained for ever to a felicity exceeding bounds. These are the bride of the Lamb, the body of Christ, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Their destiny is so high that no language can fully describe it. God only knows the love of God, and all that it has prepared for those who are the objects of it.

Love wraps up the whole in its cloth of gold. Love is both the source and the channel, and the end of the divine acting. Because the Father loved the Son he gave us to him, and ordained that we should be with him. His love to us is love to the Son. "Not for your sakes do I this, O House of Israel; be ashamed and be confounded." Because of the boundless, ineffable, infinite love of the great Father toward his Son, therefore hath he ordained this whole system of salvation and redemption, that Jesus in the church of his redeemed might everlastingly be glorified. Let our saintly ones go home, beloved, if that is the design of their going. Since all comes of divine love, and all sets forth divine love, let them go to him who loves them—let divine love fulfill its purpose of bringing many sons unto glory. Since the Father once made our Lord perfect by his sufferings, let him now be made perfectly glorious by the coming up of his redeemed from the purifying bath of his atonement I see them rise like

sheep from the washing, all of them gathering with delight at the feet of that great Shepherd of the sheep.

Beloved, I am lost in the subject now. I breathe that heavenly air. Love surrounds all, and conquers grief. I will not cause the temperature to fall by uttering any other words but this—Hold your friends lovingly, but be ready to yield them to Jesus. Detain them not from him to whom they belong. When they are sick, fast and pray; but when they are departed, do much as David did, who washed his face, and ate, and drank. You cannot bring them back again; you will go to them, they cannot return to you. Comfort yourselves with the double thought of their joy in Christ and Christ's joy in them; add the triple thought of the Father's joy in Christ and in them. Let us watch the Master's call. Let us not dread the question—who next, and who next? Let none of us start back as though we hoped to linger longer than others. Let us even desire to see our names in the celestial conscription. Let us be willing to be dealt with just as our Lord pleases. Let no doubt intervene; let no gloom encompass us. Dying is but going home; indeed, there is no dying for the saints. Charles Stanford is gone! Thus was his death told to me—"He drew up his feet and smiled." Thus will you and I depart. He had borne his testimony in the light, even when blind. He had cheered us all, though he was the greatest sufferer of us all; and now the film has gone from the eyes, and the anguish is gone from the heart, and he is with Jesus. He smiled. What a sight was that which caused that smile! I have seen many faces of dear departed ones lit up with splendor. Of many I could feel sure that they had seen a vision of angels. Traces of a reflected glory hung about their countenances. O brethren, we shall soon know more of heaven than all the divines can tell us. Let us go home now to our own dwellings; but let us pledge ourselves that we will meet again. But where shall we appoint the trysting place? It would be idle to appoint any spot of earth, for this assembly will never come together again in this world. We will meet with Jesus, where he is, where we shall behold his glory. Some of you cannot do this. Turn from your evil ways. Turn to the right, where stands that cross, and keep straight on, and you will come to Jesus in glory. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON - Revelation 21:22-27; 22

NOTE: Some minor editing has been done for improved readability.
