



Articles and Sermons :: ONE THING IS NEEDFUL ~ Bunyan

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL ~ Bunyan - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/11/2 14:58

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL

OR

SERIOUS MEDITATIONS UPON THE FOUR LAST THINGS-
DEATH, JUDGMENT, HEAVEN, AND HELL
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ENSUING DISCOURSE.

These lines I at this time present
To all that will them heed,
Wherein I show to what intent
God saith, Convert (Â¹.2Â¹) with speed.

For these four things come on apace,
Which we should know full well,
Both death and judgment, and, in place
Next to them, heaven and hell.

For doubtless man was never born
For this life and no more:
No, in the resurrection morn
They must have weal or woe.

Can any think that God should take
That pains, to form a man
So like himself, only to make
Him here a moment stand?

Or that he should make such ado,
By justice, and by grace;
By prophets and apostles too,
That men might see his face?

Or that the promise he hath made,
Also the threatenings great,
Should in a moment end and fade?
O! no, this is a cheat.

Besides, who is so mad, or worse,
To think that Christ should come
From glory, to be made a curse,
And that in sinners' room,

If nothing should by us be had
When we are gone from hence,
But vanities, while here? O mad
And foolish confidence.

Again, shall God, who is the truth,
Say there is heaven and hell
And shall men play that trick of youth
To say, But who can tell?

Shall he that keeps his promise sure

In things both low and small,
Yet break it like a man impure,
In matters great'st of all?

O, let all tremble at that thought,
That puts on God the lie,
That saith men shall turn unto nought
When they be sick and die.

Alas, death is but as the door
Through which all men do pass,
To that which they for evermore
Shall have by wrath or grace.

Let all therefore that read my lines,
Apply them to the heart:
Yea, let them read, and turn betimes,
And get the better part.

Mind therefore what I treat on here,
Yea, mind and weigh it well;
'Tis death and judgment, and a clear
Discourse of heaven and hell.

OF DEATH

Death, as a king rampant and stout
The world he dare engage;
He conquers all, yea, and doth rout
The great, strong, wise, and sage.

No king so great, nor prince so strong,
But death can make to yield,
Yea, bind and lay them all along,
And make them quit the field.

Where are the victors of the world,
With all their men of might?
Those that together kingdoms hurl'd,
By death are put to flight.

How feeble is the strongest hand,
When death begins to gripe!
The giant now leaves off to stand,
Much less withstand and fight.

The man that hath a lion's face
Must here give place and bend,
Yea, though his bones were bars of brass,
'Tis vain here to contend.

Submit he must to feeble ones,
To worms who will enclose
His skin and flesh, sinews and bones,
And will thereof dispose

Among themselves, as merchants do
The prizes they have got;

Or as the soldiers give unto
Each man the share and lot,

Which they by dint of sword have won,
From their most daring foe;
While he lies by as still as stone,
Not knowing what they do.

Beauty death turns to rottenness,
And youth to wrinkled face;
The witty he brings to distress,
And wantons to disgrace.

The wild he tames, and spoils the mirth
Of all that wanton are,
He takes the worldling from his worth,
And poor man from his care.

Death favours none, he lays at all,
Of all sorts and degree;
Both old and young, both great and small,
Rich, poor, and bound, and free.

No fawning words will flatter him,
Nor threat'nings make him start;
He favours none for worth or kin,
All must taste of his dart.

What shall I say? the graves declare
That death shall conquer all;
There lie the skulls, dust, bones, and there
The mighty daily fall.

The very looks of death are grim
And ghastly to behold;
Yea, though but in a dead man's skin,
When he is gone and cold.

How 'fraid are some of dead men's beds,
And others of their bones;
They neither care to see their heads,
Nor yet to hear their groans.

Now all these things are but the shade
And badges of his coat; (Â'1.3Â')
The glass that runs, the scythe and spade,
Though weapons more remote:

Yet such as make poor mortals shrink
And fear, when they are told,
These things are signs that they must drink
With death; O then how cold.

It strikes them to the heart! how do
They study it to shun!
Indeed who can bear up, and who
Can from these shakings run?

But how much more then when he comes
To grapple with thy heart;
To bind with thread thy toes and thumbs, (Â¹.4Â¹)
And fetch thee in his cart?

Then will he cut thy silver cord,
And break thy golden bowl;
Yea, break that pitcher which the Lord
Made cabin for thy soul.

Thine eyes, that now are quick of sight,
Shall then no way espy
How to escape this doleful plight,
For death will make thee die.

Those legs that now can nimbly run,
Shall then with faintness fail
To take one step, death's dart to shun,
When he doth thee assail.

That tongue that now can boast and brag
Shall then by death be tied
So fast, as not to speak or wag,
Though death lies by thy side.

Thou that didst once incline thine ear
Unto the song and tale,
Shall only now death's message hear,
While he, with face most pale,

Doth reason with thee how thy days
Hath hitherto been spent;
And what have been thy deeds and ways,
Since God thee time hath lent.

Then will he so begin to tear
Thy body from thy soul,
And both from life, if now thy care
Be not on grace to roll.

Death puts on things another face
Than we in health do see:
Sin, Satan, hell, death, life and grace
Now great and weighty be.

Yea, now the sick man's eye is set
Upon a world to come:
He also knows too without let (Â¹.5Â¹)
That there must be his home.

Either in joy, in bliss and light,
Or sorrow, woe, and grief;
Either with Christ and saints in white,
Or fiends, without relief.

But, O! the sad estate that then
They will be in that die
Both void of grace and life! poor men!

How will they fear and cry.

Ha! live I may not, though I would
For life give more than all;
And die I dare not, though I should
The world gain by my fall.

No, here he must no longer stay,
He feels his life run out,
His night is come, also the day
That makes him fear and doubt.

He feels his very vitals die,
All waxeth pale and wan;
Nay, worse, he fears to misery
He shortly must be gone.

Death doth already strike his heart
With his most fearful sting
Of guilt, which makes his conscience start,
And quake at every thing.

Yea, as his body doth decay
By a contagious grief,
So his poor soul doth faint away
Without hope or relief.

Thus while the man is in this scare,
Death doth still at him lay;
Live, die, sink, swim, fall foul or fair, (Â¹.6Â¹)
Death still holds on his way.

Still pulling of him from his place,
Full sore against his mind;
Death like a sprite stares in his face,
And doth with links him bind.

And carries him into his den,
In darkness there to lie,
Among the swarms of wicked men
In grief eternally.

For only he that God doth fear
Will now be counted wise:
Yea, he that feareth him while here,
He only wins the prize.

'Tis he that shall by angels be
Attended to that bliss
That angels have; for he, O he,
Of glory shall not miss.

Those weapons and those instruments
Of death, that others fright:
Those dreadful fears and discontents
That brings on some that night.

That never more shall have a day,

Brings this man to that rest
Which none can win but only they
Whom God hath called and blest

With the first fruits of saving grace,
With faith, hope, love, and fear
Him to offend; this man his face
In visions high and clear,

Shall in that light which no eye can
Approach unto, behold
The rays and beams of glory, and
Find there his name enroll'd,

Among those glittering starts of light
That Christ still holdeth fast
In his right hand with all his might,
Until that danger's past,

That shakes the world, and most hath dropt
Into grief and distress,
O blessed then is he that's wrapt
In Christ his righteousness.

This is the man death cannot kill,
For he hath put on arms;
Him sin nor Satan hath not skill
To hurt with all their charms.

A helmet on his head doth stand,
A breastplate on his heart:
A shield also is in his hand,
That blunteth every dart.

Truth girds him round the reins, also
His sword is on his thigh;
His feet in shoes of peace do go
The ways of purity.

His heart it groaneth to the Lord,
Who hears him at his call,
And doth him help and strength afford,
Wherewith he conquers all.

Thus fortified, he keeps the field
While death is gone and fled;
And then lies down upon his shield
Till Christ doth raise the dead.

OF JUDGMENT.

As 'tis appointed men should die,
So judgment is the next
That meets them most assuredly;
For so saith holy text.

Wherefore of judgment I shall now
Inform you what I may,

That you may see what 'tis, and how
'Twill be with men that day.

This world it hath a time to stand,
Which time when ended, then
Will issue judgment out of hand
Upon all sorts of men.

The Judge we find, in God's record,
The Son of man, for he
By God's appointment is made Lord
And Judge of all that be.

Wherefore this Son of man shall come
At last to count with all,
And unto them shall give just doom,
Whether they stand or fall.

Behold ye now the majesty
And state that shall attend
This Lord, this Judge, and Justice high
When he doth now descend.

He comes with head as white as snow,
With eyes like flames of fire;
In justice clad from top to toe,
Most glorious in attire.

His face is filled with gravity;
His tongue is like a sword;
His presence awes both stout and high,
The world shakes at his word.

He comes in flaming fire, and
With angels clear and bright,
Each with a trumpet in his hand,
Clothed in shining white.

The trump of God sounds in the air,
The dead do hear his voice;
The living too run here and there,
Who made not him their choice.

Thus to his place he doth repair,
Appointed for his throne,
Where he will sit to judge, and where
He'll count with every one.

Angels attending on his hand
By thousands on a row;
Yea, thousand thousands by him stand,
And at his beck do go.

Thus being set, the books do ope
In which all crimes are writ.
All virtues, too, of faith and hope,
Of love; and every whit

Of all that man hath done or said,
Or did intend to do;
Whether they sinn'd, or were afraid
Evil to come into.

Before this bar each sinner now
In person must appear;
Under his judgment there to bow
With trembling and with fear:

Within whose breast a witness then
Will certainly arise,
That to each charge will say Amen,
While they seek and devise

To shun the sentence which the Lord
Against them then will read,
Out of the books of God's record,
With majesty and dread.

But every heart shall opened be
Before this judge most high;
Yea, every thought to judgment he
Will bring assuredly.

And every word and action, too,
He there will manifest;
Yea, all that ever thou didst do,
Or keep within thy breast,

Shall then be seen and laid before
The world, that then will stand
To see thy judge open ev'ry sore,
And all thy evils scann'd.

Weighing each sin and wickedness
With so much equity,
Proportioning of thy distress
And woful misery.

With so much justice, doing right,
That thou thyself shalt say,
My sins have brought me to this plight,
I threw myself away.

Into that gulph my sins have brought
Me justly to possess,
For which I blame not Christ, I wrought
It out by wickedness.

But O! how willingly would these
That thus in judgment be,
If that they might have help or ease,
Unto the mountains flee.

They would rejoice if that they might
But underneath them creep,
To hide them from revenging right,

For fear of which they weep.

But all in vain, the mountains then
Will all be fled and gone;
No shelter will be found for men
That now are left alone.

For succour they did not regard
When Christ by grace did call
To them, therefore they are not heard,
No mountains on them fall.

Before this Judge no one shall shroud
Himself, under pretence
Of knowledge, which hath made him proud,
Nor seeming penitence.

No high profession here can stand,
Unless sincerity
Hath been therewith commixed, and
Brought forth simplicity. (Â¹.7Â²)

No mask nor vizor here can hide
The heart that rotten is;
All cloaks now must be laid aside,
No sinner must have bliss.

Though most approve of thee, and count
Thee upright in thy heart;
Yea, though preferred and made surmount
Most men to act thy part,

In treading where the godly trod,
As to an outward show;
Yet this hold still, the grace of God
Takes hold on but a few,

So as to make them truly such
As then shall stand before
This Judge with gladness; this is much
Yet true for evermore.

The tree of life this paradise
Doth always beautify,
'Cause of our health it is the rise
And perpetuity.

Here stands the golden throne of grace
From out of which do run
Those crystal streams that make this place
Far brighter than the sun.

Here stands mount Zion with her king.
Jerusalem above,
That holy and delightful thing,
So beautified with love.

That, as a mother succours those

Which of her body be,
So she far more, all such as close
In with her Lord; and she

Her grace, her everlasting doors
Will open wide unto
Them all, with welcome, welcome, poor,
Rich, bond, free, high and low,

Unto the kingdom which our Lord
Appointed hath for all
That hath his name and word ador'd;
Because he did them call

Unto that work, which also they
Sincerely did fulfil,
Not shunning always to obey
His gracious holy will.

Besides, this much doth beautify
This goodly paradise,
That from all quarters, constantly,
Whole thousands as the price

Of precious blood, do here arrive;
As safe escaping all,
Sin, hell, and satan did contrive
To bring them into thrall.

Each telling his deliverance
I' th' open face of heaven;
Still calling to remembrance
How fiercely they were driven

By deadly foe, who did pursue
As swift as eagles fly;
Which if thou have not, down thou must
With those that then shall die
The second death, and be accurs'd
Of God. For certainly,

The truth of grace shall only here
Without a blush be bold
To stand, whilst others quake and fear,
And dare not once behold.

That heart that here was right for God
Shall there be comforted;
But those that evil ways have trod,
Shall then hang down the head.

As sore confounded with the guilt
That now upon them lies,
Because they did delight in filth
And beastly vanities.

Or else because they did deceive
With hypocritical

Disguises, their own souls, and leave
Or shun that best of all

Approved word of righteousness,
They were invited to
Embrace, therefore they no access
Now to him have, but woe.

For every one must now receive
According to their ways;
They that unto the Lord did cleave,
The everlasting joys.

Those that did die in wickedness,
To execution sent,
There still to grapple with distress,
Which nothing can prevent.

Of which two states I next shall write,
Wherefore I pray give ear,
And to them bend with all our might
Your heart with filial fear.

OF HEAVEN.

Heaven is a place, also a state,
It doth all things excel,
No man can fully it relate,
Nor of its glory tell.

God made it for his residence,
To sit on as a throne,
Which shows to us the excellence
Whereby it may be known.

Doubtless the fabric that was built
For this so great a king,
Must needs surprise thee, if thou wilt
But duly mind the thing.

If all that build do build to suit
The glory of their state,
What orator, though most acute,
Can fully heaven relate?

If palaces that princes build,
Which yet are made of clay,
Do so amaze when much beheld,
Of heaven what shall we say?

It is the high and holy place;
No moth can there annoy,
Nor make to fade that goodly grace
That saints shall there enjoy.

Mansions for glory and for rest
Do there prepared stand;
Buildings eternal for the blest

Are there provided, and

The glory and the comeliness
By deepest thought none may
With heart or mouth fully express,
Nor can before that day.

These heav'ns we see, be as a scroll,
Or garment folded up,
Before they do together roll,
And we call'd in to sup.

There with the king, the bridegroom, and
By him are led into
His palace chambers, there to stand
With his prospect to our view.

And taste and smell, and be inflam'd,
And ravished to see
The buildings he hath for us fram'd,
How full of heaven they be.

Its state also is marvellous,
For beauty to behold;
All goodness there is plenteous,
And better far than gold.

Adorn'd with grace and righteousness,
While fragrant scents of love
O'erflow with everlasting bliss,
All that do dwell above.

The heavenly majesty, whose face
Doth far exceed the sun,
Will there cast forth its rays of grace
After this world is done.

Which rays and beams will so possess
All things that there shall dwell,
With so much glory, light, and bliss,
That none can think or tell.

That wisdom which doth order all
Shall there be fully shown;
That strength that bears the world there shall
By every one be known.

That holiness and sanctity
Which doth all thought surpass,
Shall there in present purity
Outshine the crystal glass.

The beauty and the comeliness
Of this Almighty shall
Make amiable with lasting bliss
Those he thereto shall call.

The presence of this God will be

Eternal life in all,
And health and gladness, while we see
Thy face, O immortal!

Here will the Lord make clear and plain
How sweetly did agree
His attributes, when Christ was slain
Our Saviour to be.

How wisdom did find out the way,
How strength did make him stand,
How holiness did bear the sway,
And answer just demand.

How all these attributes did bend
Themselves to work our life,
Through the Christ whom God did send
To save us by his might.

All this will sparkle in our eye
Within the holy place,
And greatly raise our melody,
And flow our hearts with grace.

The largest thought that can arise
Within the widest heart
Shall then be filled with surprize,
And pleas'd in every part.

All mysteries shall here be seen,
And every knot, unty'd;
Electing love, that hid hath been,
Shall shine on every side.

The God of glory here will be
The life of every one;
Whose goodly attributes shall we
Possess them as our own.

By wisdom we all things shall know,
By light all things shall see,
By strength, too, all things we shall do,
When we in glory be.

The Holy Lamb of God, also,
Who for our sakes did die,
The holy ones of God shall know,
And that most perfectly.

Those small and short discoveries
That we have of him here,
Will there be seen with open eyes,
In visions full and clear.

Those many thousand acts of grace
That here we feel and find,
Shall there be real with open face
Upon his heart most kind.

There he will show us how he was
Our prophet, priest, and king;
And how he did maintain our cause,
And us to glory bring.

There we shall see how he was touch'd
With all our grief and pain
(As in his word he hath avouch'd),
When we with him shall reign;

He'll show us, also, how he did
Maintain our faith and love,
And why his face sometimes he hid
From us, who are his dove;

These tempting times that here we have,
We there shall see were good;
Also that hidden strength he gave,
The purchase of his blood.

That he should stand for us before
His Father, thus we read.
But then shall see, and shall adore
Him for his gracious deed.

Though we are vile, he without shame
Before the angels all
Lays out his strength, his worth, and name,
For us, who are in thrall.

This is he who was mock'd and beat,
Spit on, and crown'd with thorns;
Who for us had a bloody sweat,
Whose heart was broke with scorns.

'Tis he who stands so much our friend,
As shortly we shall see,
With open face, world without end,
And in his presence be.

That head that once was crown'd with thorns,
Shall now with glory shine;
That heart that broken was with scorns,
Shall flow with life divine;

That man that here met with disgrace,
We there shall see so bright;
That angels can't behold his face
For its exceeding light.

What gladness will possess our heart
When we shall see these things!
What light and life, in every part,
Will rise like lasting springs!

O blessed face and holy grace,
When shall we see this day?

Lord, fetch us to this goodly place
We humbly do thee pray.

Next to this Lamb we shall behold
All saints, both more and less,
With whit'ned robes in glory roll'd,
'Cause him they did confess.

Each walking in his righteousness
With shining crowns of gold,
Triumphing still in heav'nly bliss,
Amazing to behold.

Each person for his majesty
Doth represent a king;
Yea, angel-like for dignity,
And seraphims that sing.

Each motion of their mind, and so
Each twinkling of their eye;
Each word they speak, and step they go,
It is in purity.

Immortal are they every one,
Wrapt up in health and light,
Mortality from them is gone,
Weakness is turn'd to might.

The stars are not so clear as they,
They equalize the sun;
Their glory shines to perfect day,
Which day will ne'er be done.

No sorrow can them now annoy,
Nor weakness, grief or pain;
No faintness can abate their joy,
They now in life do reign.

They shall not there, as here, be vex'd
With Satan, men, or sin;
Nor with their wicked hearts perplex'd,
The heavens have cop'd (Â¹.8Â¹) them in.

Thus, as they shine in their estate,
So, too, in their degree;
Which is most goodly to relate,
And ravishing to see.

The majesty whom they adore,
Doth them in wisdom place
Upon the thrones, and that before
The angels, to their grace.

The saints of the Old Testament,
Full right to their degree;
Likewise the New, in excellent
Magnificency be.

Each one his badge of glory wears,
According to his place;
According as was his affairs
Here, in the time of grace.

Some on the right hand of the Lamb,
Likewise some on the left,
With robes and golden chains do stand
Most grave, most sage, and deft. (Â¹.9Â¹)

The martyr here is known from him
Who peaceably did die,
Both by the place he sitteth in,
And by his dignity.

Each father, saint, and prophet shall,
According to his worth,
Enjoy the honour of his call,
And plainly hold it forth.

Those bodies which sometimes were torn,
And bones that broken were
For God's word; he doth now adorn
With health and glory fair.

Thus, when in heav'nly harmony
These blessed saints appear,
Adorn'd with grace and majesty,
What gladness will be there!

The light, and grace, and countenance,
The least of these shall have,
Will so with terror them advance,
And make their face so grave,

That at them all the world will shake,
When they lift up their head;
Princes and kings will at them quake,
And fall before them dead.

This shall we see, thus shall we be,
O would the day were come,
Lord Jesus take us up to thee,
To this desired home.

Angels also we shall behold,
When we on high ascend,
Each shining like to men of gold,
And on the Lord attend.

These goodly creatures, full of grace,
Shall stand about the throne,
Each one with lightning in his face,
And shall to us be known.

These cherubims with one accord
Shall cry continually,
Ah, holy, holy, holy, Lord,

And heavenly majesty.

These will us in their arms embrace,
And welcome us to rest,
And joy to see us clad with grace,
And of the heavens possess'd.

This we shall hear, this we shall see,
While raptures take us up,
When we with blessed Jesus be,
And at his table sup.

Oh shining angels! what, must we
With you lift up our voice?
We must; and with you ever be,
And with you must rejoice.

Our friends that lived godly here,
Shall there be found again;
The wife, the child, and father dear,
With others of our train.

Each one down to the foot in white,
Fill'd to the brim with grace,
Walking among the saints in light,
With glad and joyful face.

Those God did use us to convert,
We there with joy shall meet,
And jointly shall, with all our heart,
In life each other greet.

A crown to them we then shall be,
A glory and a joy;
And that before the Lord, when he
The world comes to destroy.

This is the place, this is the state,
Of all that fear the Lord;
Which men nor angels may relate
With tongue, or pen, or word.

No night is here, for to eclipse
Its spangling rays so bright;
Nor doubt, nor fear to shut the lips,
Of those within this light.

The strings of music here are tun'd
For heavenly harmony,
And every spirit here perfum'd
With perfect sanctity.

Here runs the crystal streams of life,
Quite through all our veins.
And here by love we do unite
With glory's golden chains.

Now that which sweet'neth all will be

The lasting of this state;
This heightens all we hear or see
To a transcendant rate.

For should the saints enjoy all this
But for a certain time,
O, how would they their mark then miss,
And at this thing repine?

Yea, 'tis not possible that they
Who then shall dwell on high,
Should be content, unless they may
Dwell there eternally.

A thought of parting with this place
Would bitter all their sweet,
And darkness put upon the face
Of all they there do meet.

But far from this the saints shall be,
Their portion is the Lord,
Whose face for ever they shall see,
As saith the holy word.

And that with everlasting peace,
Joy, and felicity,
From this time forth they shall increase
Unto eternity.

OF HELL, AND THE ESTATE OF THOSE THAT PERISH.

Thus, having show'd you what I see
Of heaven, I now will tell
You also, after search, what be
The damned wights of hell.

And O, that they who read my lines
Would ponder soberly,
And lay to heart such things betimes
As touch eternity.

The sleepy sinner little thinks
What sorrows will abound
Within him, when upon the brinks
Of Tophet he is found.

Hell is beyond all though a state
So doubtful (Â¹.10Â¹) and forlorn,
So fearful, that none can relate
The pangs that there are born.

God will exclude them utterly
From his most blessed face,
And them involve in misery,
In shame, and in disgrace.

God is the fountain of all bliss,
Of life, of light, and peace;

They then must needs be comfortless
Who are depriv'd of these.

Instead of life, a living death
Will there in all be found.
Dyings will be in every breath,
Thus sorrow will abound.

No light, but darkness here doth dwell;
No peace, but horror strange:
The fearful damning wights (Â'11.1Â') of hell
In all will make this change.

To many things the damned's woe
Is liked in the word,
And that because no one can show
The vengeance of the Lord.

Unto a dreadful burning lake,
All on a fiery flame,
Hell is compared, for to make
All understand the same.

A burning lake, a furnace hot,
A burning oven, too,
Must be the portion, share, and lot,
Of those which evil sow.

This plainly shows the burning heat
With which it will oppress
All hearts, and will like burnings eat
Their souls with sore distress.

This burning lake, it is God's wrath
Incensed by the sin
Of those who do reject his path,
And wicked ways walk in.

Which wrath will so perplex all parts
Of body and of soul,
As if up to the very hearts
In burnings they did roll.

Again, to show the stinking state
Of this so sad a case,
Like burning brimstone God doth make
The hidings of his face.

And truly as the steam, and smoke,
And flames of brimstone smell,
To blind the eyes, and stomach choke,
So are the pangs of hell.

To see a sea of brimstone burn,
Who would it not affright?
But they whom God to hell doth turn
Are in most woful plight.

This burning cannot quenched be,
No, not with tears of blood;
No mournful groans in misery
Will here do any good.

O damned men! this is your fate,
The day of grace is done,
Repentance now doth come too late,
Mercy is fled and gone.

Your groans and cries they sooner should
Have sounded in mine ears,
If grace you would have had, or would
Have me regard your tears.

Me you offended with your sin,
Instructions you did slight,
Your sins against my law hath been,
Justice shall have his right.

I gave my Son to do you good,
I gave you space and time
With him to close, which you withstood,
And did with hell combine.

Justice against you now is set,
Which you cannot appease;
Eternal justice doth you let
From either life or ease.

Thus he that to this place doth come
May groan, and sigh, and weep;
But sin hath made that place his home,
And there it will him keep.

Wherefore, hell in another place
Is call'd a prison too,
And all to show the evil case
Of all sin doth undo.

Which prison, with its locks and bars
Of God's lasting decree,
Will hold them fast; O how this mars
All thought of being free!

Out at these brazen bars they may
The saints in glory see;
But this will not their grief allay,
But to them torment be.

Thus they in this infernal cave
Will now be holden fast
From heavenly freedom, though they crave,
Of it they may not taste.

The chains that darkness on them hangs
Still ratt'ling in their ears,
Creates within them heavy pangs,

And still augments their fears.

Thus hopeless of all remedy,
They dyingly do sink
Into the jaws of misery,
And seas of sorrow drink.

For being cop'd (Â'1.12Â') on every side
With helplessness and grief,
Headlong into despair they slide
Bereft of all relief.

Therefore this hell is called a pit,
Prepared for those that die
The second death, a term most fit
To show their misery.

A pit that's bottomless is this,
A gulf of grief and woe,
A dungeon which they cannot miss,
That will themselves undo.

Thus without stay they always sink,
Thus fainting still they fail,
Despair they up like water drink,
These prisoners have no bail.

Here meets them now that worm that gnaws,
And plucks their bowels out,
The pit, too, on them shuts her jaws;
This dreadful is, no doubt.

This ghastly worm is guilt for sin,
Which on the conscience feeds,
With vipers' teeth, both sharp and keen,
Whereat it sorely bleeds.

This worm is fed by memory,
Which strictly brings to mind,
All things done in prosperity,
As we in Scripture find.

No word, nor thought, nor act they did,
But now is set in sight,
Not one of them can now be hid,
Memory gives them light.

On which the understanding still
Will judge, and sentence pass,
This kills the mind, and wounds the will,
Alas, alas, alas!

O, conscience is the slaughter shop,
There hangs the axe and knife,
'Tis there the worm makes all things hot,
And wearies out the life.

Here, then, is execution done

On body and on soul;
For conscience will be brib'd of none,
But gives to all their dole.

This worm, 'tis said, shall never die,
But in the belly be
Of all that in the flames shall lie,
O dreadful sight to see!

This worm now needs must in them live,
For sin will still be there,
And guilt, for God will not forgive,
Nor Christ their burden bear.

But take from them all help and stay,
And leave them to despair,
Which feeds upon them night and day,
This is the damned's share.

Now will confusion so possess
These monuments of ire,
And so confound them with distress,
And trouble their desire.

That what to think, or what to do,
Or where to lay their head,
They know not; 'tis the damned's woe
To live, and yet be dead.

These cast-aways would fain have life,
But know, they never shall,
They would forget their dreadful plight,
But that sticks fast'st of all.

God, Christ, and heaven, they know are best,
Yet dare not on them think,
The saints they know in joys do rest,
While they their tears do drink.

They cry alas, but all in vain,
They stick fast in the mire,
They would be rid of present pain,
Yet set themselves on fire.

Darkness is their perplexity,
Yet do they hate the light,
They always see their misery,
Yet are themselves all night.

They are all dead, yet live they do,
Yet neither live nor die.
They die to weal, and live to woe,
This is their misery.

Amidst all this so great a scare
That here I do relate,
Another falleth to their share
In this their sad estate.

The legions of infernal fiends
Then with them needs must be,
A just reward for all their pains,
This they shall feel and see.

With yellings, howlings, shrieks, and cries,
And other doleful noise,
With trembling hearts and failing eyes,
These are their hellish joys.

These angels black they would obey,
And serve with greedy mind,
And take delight to go astray,
That pleasure they might find.

Which pleasure now like poison turns
Their joy to heaviness;
Yea, like the gall of asps it burns,
And doth them sore oppress

Now is the joy they lived in
All turned to brinish tears,
And resolute attempts to sin
Turn'd into hellish fears.

The floods run trickling down their face,
Their hearts do prick and ache,
While they lament their woful case,
Their loins totter and shake.

O wetted cheeks, with bleared eyes,
How fully do you show
The pangs that in their bosom lies,
And grief they undergo!

Their dolour in their bitterness
So greatly they bemoan,
That hell itself this to express
Doth echo with their groan.

Thus broiling on the burning grates,
They now to wailing go,
And say of those unhappy fates
That did them thus undo.

Alas, my grief! hard hap had I
Those dolours here to find,
A living death, in hell I lie,
Involv'd with grief of mind.

I once was fair for light and grace,
My days were long and good;
I lived in a blessed place
Where was most heav'nly food.

But wretch I am, I slighted life,
I chose in death to live;

O, for these days now, if I might,
Ten thousand worlds would give.

What time had I to pray and read,
What time to hear the word!
What means to help me at my need,
Did God to me afford!

Examples, too, of piety
I every day did see,
But they abuse and slight did I,
O, woe be unto me.

I now remember how my friend
Reproved me of vice,
And bid me mind my latter end,
Both once, and twice, and thrice.

But O, deluded man, I did
My back upon him turn;
Eternal life I did not heed,
For which I now do mourn.

Ah, golden time, I did thee spend
In sin and idleness,
Ah, health and wealth, I did you lend
To bring me to distress.

My feet to evil I let run,
And tongue of folly talk;
My eyes to vanity hath gone,
Thus did I vainly walk.

I did as greatly toil and strain
Myself with sin to please,
As if that everlasting grain
Could have been found in these.

But nothing, nothing have I found
But weeping, and alas,
And sorrow, which doth now surround
Me, and augment my cross.

Ah, bleeding conscience, how did I
Thee check when thou didst tell
Me of my faults, for which I lie
Dead while I live in hell.

I took thee for some peevish foe,
When thou didst me accuse,
Therefore I did thee buffet so,
And counsel did refuse.

Thou often didst me tidings bring,
How God did me dislike,
Because I took delight in sin,
But I thy news did slight.

Ah, Mind, why didst thou do those things
That now do work my woe?
Ah, Will, why was thou thus inclin'd
Me ever to undo?

My senses, how were you beguil'd
When you said sin was good?
It hath in all parts me defil'd,
And drown'd me like a flood.

Ah, that I now a being have,
In sorrow and in pain;
Mother, would you had been my grave,
But this I wish in vain.

Had I been made a cockatrice,
A toad, or such-like thing; (Âˆ1.13Âˆ)
Yea, had I been made snow or ice,
Then had I had no sin;

A block, a stock, a stone, or clot,
Is happier than I;
For they know neither cold nor hot,
To live nor yet to die.

I envy now the happiness
Of those that are in light,
I hate the very name of bliss,
'Cause I have there no right.

I grieve to see that others are
In glory, life, and well,
Without all fear, or dread, or care,
While I am racked in hell.

Thus will these souls with watery eyes,
And hacking of their teeth,
With wringing hands, and fearful cries,
Expostulate their grief.

O set their teeth they will, and gnash,
And gnaw for very pain,
While as with scorpions God doth lash
Them for their life so vain.

Again, still as they in this muse,
Are feeding on the fire,
To mind there comes yet other news,
To screw their torments higher.

Which is the length of this estate,
Where they at present lie;
Which in a word I thus relate,
'Tis to eternity.

This thought now is so firmly fix'd
In all that comes to mind,
And also is so strongly mix'd

With wrath of every kind.

So that whatever they do know,
Or see, or think, or feel,
For ever still doth strike them through
As with a bar of steel.

For EVER shineth in the fire,
EVER is on the chains;
'Tis also in the pit of ire,
And tastes in all their pains.

For ever separate from God,
From peace, and life, and rest;
For ever underneath the rod
That vengeance liketh best.

O ever, ever, this will drown'd
Them quite and make them cry,
We never shall get o'er thy bound,
O, great eternity!

They sooner now the stars may count
Than lose these dismal bands;
Or see to what the motes (Â¹1.14Â¹) among
Or number up the sands.

Then see an end of this their woe,
Which now for sin they have;
O wantons, take heed what you do,
Sin will you never save.

They sooner may drink up the sea,
Than shake off these their fears;
Or make another in one day
As big with brinish tears;

Than put an end to misery,
In which they now do roar,
Or help themselves; no, they must cry,
Alas, for evermore.

When years by thousands on a heap
Are passed o'er their head;
Yet still the fruits of sin they reap
Among the ghostly dead.

Yea, when they have time out of mind
Be in this case so ill,
For EVER, EVER is behind (Â¹1.15Â¹)
Yet for them to fulfill.

THE END