



Articles and Sermons :: The life and letters of John Angell James

The life and letters of John Angell James - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/8 3:40

The life and letters of John Angell James

(Choice excerpts)

You who are poor— with this 'pearl of great price' to enrich you, with a title to a priceless inheritance, reserved in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay—to animate and comfort you; all the privations of your earthly poverty can be borne—not only with patience, but with cheerfulness.

The grace of God in the heart, the promise of God in the hand, and the glory of God in the eye—are enough to reconcile us to the longest life of the most dire poverty.

But poverty, without true piety—is to be poor indeed! To be both poor and wicked, is to have a double hell—a hell here, and a worse hell hereafter!

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Consider that the eternal loss of the soul is not a rare—but a very common occurrence! So far from being a rare thing for a soul to go to hell—it is a much rarer thing for them to go to heaven! Jesus tells us that the road to eternal destruction is thronged, while the way to eternal life is traveled by few. Hell opens its mouth wide—and swallows up multitudes in eternal perdition! Every day brings you nearer to everlasting torments—or everlasting bliss. You may die at any moment; and you are as near to heaven or hell—as you are to death. Some who read these lines will very likely spend their eternity in hell.

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If your experience . . .  
strengthens your faith in the Lord Jesus,  
increases your love to Him,  
gives you more exalted views of Jesus,  
enflames your love to the brethren,  
weans you from the world,  
makes you more humble,  
then it is genuine Christian experience.

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Who is able to talk of controversies, or fine theological points—while he sees a multitude of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before him—who must either be converted—or damned! What little matters men will quarrel about—when they leave the great things of God's truth!

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Is our concern for Christ, and for souls—or for ourselves? No 'titles of distinction' are to exist among Christian ministers. They suggest the idea of superiority—and foster pride and vanity. What an exorbitant extent of mischief has this love of distinction done in Christianity! It is the base ambition of many ministers—to be contented with an admiring crowd. " Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'" Matthew 23:5-7.

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It is the gospel addressed in simple earnestness to the soul—which will move it.

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Everything related to the worship of God which is not commanded in Scripture, or implied in a command—is forbidden.

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The thought is very dreadful to me, that any should go from beneath my ministry—to the worm which never dies, to the fire which is never quenched. I can scarcely bear to dwell upon the reflection that my sermons should be forgotten on earth—only to be remembered in hell.

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Adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things. There is such a thing as disfiguring, deforming this doctrine. Fly not only from what would be vice in a wicked or worldly man, but what would be a spot upon the character of a Christian.

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If you are parents, let your profession lead you to instruct your children in the fear of God, especially by the impressive admonition of a good example. Be very attentive to the education of your children—let them neither hear nor see anything in you that would hinder true religion. Example is more powerful than precept. It is vain to teach them religion by your words—unless you show it to them by your actions. Teach them to obey you. Be firm, but mild. Govern them in love. Subdue them by kindness.

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In the death of our dear friend Elmore, the church has lost a very valuable member, and I a most affectionate friend. Cut off in the prime of his life—his death speaks loudly to us all. What now is the world, or any of its concerns, to him? Let our hearts be more in heaven! We are too earthly and sensual. We are too much elated by the comforts of life; and too much depressed by the sorrows of life—forgetting how close at hand is the event which will render them both alike indifferent to us—and us to them. Eternity, eternity is before us—and what earthly trifle should greatly affect those who are speedily traveling to eternity?

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The love of God, in sending Jesus Christ die upon the cross for our sins, is the greatest wonder that we shall ever hear of—on earth or in heaven, in time or through eternity! How constantly should we think of it; how much should we talk of it; how great should be our gratitude to God; how strong should be our love to Jesus!

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What a change has the gospel produced in your customs, manners, and feelings!

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The sins of the people, are the deepest afflictions of a true minister's heart.

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There is in the present day, a proneness to depend upon organized systems of human religious energy—more than upon God's own Spirit and grace.

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We have no right to live in opulent houses, and feast at tables covered with luxuries—while the souls of men are famishing for lack of the Bread of Life. A showy and lavish profusion in our habits, is not only injurious to our own spiritual interests, but also to the interests of others. Frugality is the best financier of Christianity.

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Time is the best expounder of Prophecy. I could never make up my mind on the precise meaning of the Apocalypse, except as to its general design. No expositor I have ever read—and I have read many—has yet satisfied me. As they all disagree among themselves, I presume that none of them fully understand the subject.

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All my time and all my strength, I intend to devote to the great work of stirring up my people's hearts to serve the Lord more fully.

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Most professing Christians are sunk deep in the mire of worldly-mindedness. Mammon is the wicked and shameful idol of the church. Our churches are, in my opinion, far from a state of sound healthy piety. We have but little of what constitutes the essence of experimental religion. Everything is superficial. Our repentance, our faith, our love, our devotional habits—are all superficial! The world has . . .

engrossed men's minds,  
absorbed their feelings,  
starved their piety.

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Attention has been drawn off from the heart and the closet—to public meetings and bustle and activity. I am persuaded that Satan has taken advantage of them, to divert men's minds from the state of their own souls. Professing Christians are so entangled with the world in various ways, that I do not look at present for any great increase of spirituality in their devotional habits. I am afraid that the tone of personal piety is not likely to be much raised. The generality of our church members appear to be in a state of much lukewarmness. I wish I could see more spiritual feeling apparent in our meetings. They appear too much like religious amusements.

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Modern practice tends to throw the door of entrance into our churches too widely open. We are too much in haste to swell the number of church members. Multitudes find their way into our churches without the wedding garment. Admission into our churches is generally considered by the individuals, as a certificate of saving religion; and should they be still in an unconverted state, in that state they will, in all probability die. Therefore the admission of unconverted people into the church is, in effect, to be accessory to their self-deception, and therefore to their destruction.

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Oh, what a mercy to be kept sound in the faith!

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What a word is salvation! It is uttered in a moment—but it will require an eternity to understand it; and if lost—an eternity to deplore it! Salvation is our great business in this world—and whatever else we gain, yet if we miss salvation—the end of life is lost, existence is thrown away, and, to all valuable purposes—we have been made in vain. Eternity, eternity is before you—and that eternity must either be spent in heaven—or hell!

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The best ornaments of piety; and loveliest fruits of saving faith—are humility and love.

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Oh, for more prayer, faith, and deadness to the world! Christians must return to simpler habits!

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What humbling lessons we learn by being laid aside by sickness, from labor! How the world goes on without us! And when we are silent forever—it will be the same.

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Prayer is the very soul of all religion; and privacy is the very life of prayer. Prayer is the first step in the divine life; prayer is the second; prayer is the third; and indeed, it is necessary through the whole Christian course.

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All true piety in the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. Not a single really holy feeling will ever come into the mind, or be kept there—but by God.

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It is sometimes a matter of surprise to me, to think upon how small a stock of moral excellence—I am keeping up so respectable an appearance. Of one thing I am certain—that, if I do any good to my generation, the work is not only to be ascribed to grace, but will prove in the eternal world, how much of Divine agency and how little of human instrumentality there was in anything done by me. I am sure, that if others thought of me as I think of myself—I would soon be forgotten and unnoticed. I blush over my own fame—from an entire consciousness how little I deserve it. I have all along been sensitive and jealous for the honor of God, and was alarmed and afraid lest the Master should be robbed of His glory—and the servant invested with sinful spoils.

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Men are now so busy, either with their own secularities, or with church work—that they have but little time, and therefore little opportunity, to read a profitable Christian book.

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"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness." Hebrews 12:10. God must set a high value upon holiness when, in order to produce it, He puts His children whom He loves, to so much pain. It is a great mercy to grow in grace, and, when nothing else will promote it—we should be thankful even for afflictions.

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Don't puzzle yourself about the mystery of the death of your dear wife. It is God who has done it! He never does a foolish or unkind action. Submission and occupation will be the best balm for your wounded spirit. Christ's service will be your best cordial. May God comfort, sanctify and bless you in this dark dispensation. God knows what He has done; why He has done it; and how to comfort you under it.

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We cannot, for the sake of union and peace, sacrifice truth. There must be no compromise.

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Our principle defects as ministers, lie chiefly in our character as Christians. We would be better preachers, and better pastors—if we were holier men.

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I am sure that it is the gospel in all its fullness—earnestly, feelingly, and powerfully preached—which God will bless to the conversion of souls.

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My habits of social interaction have been somewhat restrained. To sit three hours in mere chit-chat, or hearing young ladies play the piano and sing—was a waste of time which I could not endure.

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That Christian laymen may be useful in the cause of the gospel, cannot be questioned; and that many of them do far more good than some preachers—is quite clear.

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We preach too little from the heart—and to the heart. We need more pathos, which flows out of intense earnestness. I am more than ever convinced that this is the kind of preaching that is needed today—a combination of the intellectual, doctrinal, experimental, and practical—sermons coming from the head through the heart; or from the heart through the head.

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There is a richness and fullness of divine truth in the old writers, which, with all their antiquated style—the modern writers lack. And oh! Their devotion—their communion with God—their sustained and elevated piety! This is what we lack—this is our deficiency!

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I intend on preaching a series of very rousing, searching sermons—"Four Last Things"—Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell.

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It is a great thing to live and labor for God and souls. This alone, is to work for immortality. But how difficult to keep the waters pure—to live for Christ alone.

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Men's minds are wholly engrossed by the things which are seen and temporal. In general, the church partakes of the spirit of the world. Worldliness, in various forms, is eating out the core of personal godliness.

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The state of individual piety is undevout and feeble. A spirit of worldliness characterizes the church; and its separation from the ungodly is less conspicuous than it ought to be. Men's minds, hearts, and hands are so full, that it is difficult, even with the themes of eternity, to gain a serious hearing—and arrest the torrent of worldliness that is flowing through society.

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I dwell much alone—but He whose company is a substitute for all others, is with me.

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What a mercy it is—that others do not know us, as we know ourselves!

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How sweet and sacred a thing, is Christian friendship. And how blissful a reflection, that it is to be perfected in heaven—and perpetuated through eternity!

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By God's grace, you are to derive spiritual benefit from your dire affliction. Have you communed with your own heart upon your bed? Have you been taking the candle of the Lord—which is His Word—and gone down into the depths of your soul, searching for besetting sins and defects? Has the gold shone in the furnace? Has the dross of earthliness been consumed? God's design in afflicting us, is that we may be partakers of His holiness. An affliction sanctified—is better than an affliction removed. Oh, let us long, intensely long, to be made more holy, spiritual, heavenly.

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We all know far more of the Bible—than we practice. The head is far in advance of the heart. It is no easy thing to be a Christian—however easy it is to be called one.

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Be eminently holy, spiritual, and heavenly men. Be examples in all these things, to the flock. You will need much wisdom, grace, and a mixture of firmness and kindness.

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It is a great mercy for me to be brought nearly to sixty years of age—without any serious mistake. I often think and say, that in looking back, I see many things which, if I could go over life again, I would correct and do better. But then again, perhaps I would commit still greater blunders; so that while I am humble—and there is much to make me so—I am thankful.

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Oh, what a life of unmerited and unexpected mercy I have enjoyed! Never, no, never was so much favor shown to one so undeserving of it! My lengthened affliction has caused me to search my heart—and oh, what strange and humbling disclosures! I thought I knew myself, but I find now, at age seventy, I have much to learn. How humbling the discoveries I have made! I need no other argument for Sovereign Grace, than the knowledge of myself—compared with the multitudinous and wondrous blessings showered upon me.

**Re: The life and letters of John Angell James - posted by Goldminer (), on: 2007/2/8 8:50**

This is absolutely wonderful. Thanks for sharing it. You would probably like " The Imitation of Christ" by Thomas a'Kempis.

Blessings to you.

**Re: The life and letters of John Angell James - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/8 15:08**

What a change has the gospel produced in your customs, manners, and feelings!

**John Angell James - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/2/8 15:25**

Quote:  
-----Oh, for more prayer, faith, and deadness to the world! Christians must return to simpler habits!  
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Brother, how fascinating that never hearing of John James I would alternately come across by sheer accident in a search an incredibly timed piece of his work and then find all this as well.

Hope to post it a bit later.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/2/8 15:40

Quote:

-----The life and letters of John Angell James  
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The book that carries this title is of utmost value. Thank you for sharing these excerpts.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/8 16:15

i never heard of this man before, but i found some sermons and some other writings from him, i must say we could use a few more preachers like this today, i posted a sermon called YOUTH WARNED! under other speakers, its quite long but its well worth the time.... how many youths could have been spared from walking astray into the world if they where raise d whit preaching like that!

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/12 15:34

take time to read this and be blessed

Re: The life and letters of John Angell James - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/2/12 16:44

Quote:

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Quote:

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Brother you cannot know how much these priceless gems mean right now ... My head is somewhere near this mans thoughts on death ... as a constant consideration, well before recent events, will get that other post up tonight.

Bless you for these brother.

Re: SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF FRIENDS - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/2/13 23:22

SORROW FOR THE DEATH OF FRIENDS

By John Angell James, on the death of his wife

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Praise the name of the Lord! (Job 1:21)

"See, I am the only God! There are no others. I kill, and I make alive! I wound, and I heal, and no one can rescue you from My power!" Deuteronomy 32:39

I hope I shall not be thought by any to be indelicately obtruding my personal sorrows upon public attention. I allude to the situation in which I am placed by a mysterious but all-wise Providence. If I refer to the event that has now befallen me,

it is not to move your sympathy, for this has already flowed towards me in full tide, and in every variety of soothing attentions, both before and since the stroke of separation; and for which I thus publicly return you my sincere gratitude—but it is for a still higher and holier purpose, to promote your spiritual welfare. If the ordinary afflictions of life should be improved by us for our good, surely the deeper sorrows of the grave should be eminently conducive to our soul's present and eternal welfare. When it is not possible for us to derive any further benefit from the life of our friends, we should be tremblingly solicitous to receive it from their death. When their own vital selves are no longer before us in all the beautiful form and activity of a holy example, and nothing remains of them but their tomb and their memory—we should render these precious remains subservient to our spiritual improvement. This is the best, the only compensation for their loss.

When a holy and beloved object of our affection is removed by death, we ought to sorrow. Humanity demands it, and Christianity, in the person of the weeping Jesus, allows it. The man without a tear, is a savage or a Stoic—but not a Christian. God intends when he bestows his gifts—that they should be received with smiles of gratitude; and when he recalls them—that they should be surrendered with "drops of sacred grief." Sorrow is an affection implanted by the Creator in the soul, for wise and beneficent purposes; and it ought not to be ruthlessly torn up by the roots—but directed in its exercise by reason and piety. The work of grace, though it is above nature—is not against it. The man who tells me not to weep at the grave, insults me, mocks me, and wishes to degrade me. I do weep. I must weep. I cannot help it. God requires me to do so—and has opened a fountain of tears in my nature for that purpose. And it is the silent, pure, unsophisticated testimony of my heart to the excellence of the gift he gave in mercy; and in mercy, no doubt, as well as judgment, has recalled.

Without sorrow we would not improve by his correcting hand; chastened grief is like the gentle shower, falling first upon the earth to prepare it for the seed, and then upon the seed to cause it to germinate. Wild, clamorous, passionate sorrow is like the thunder shower of inundation—which carries away soil and seed together. Can we lose the company of one whose presence was the light and charm of our dwelling, whose society was the source of our most valuable and most highly valued earthly comfort; whose love, ever new and fresh, was presented daily to us in full cup by her own hand; who cheered us with her conversation; bore with our infirmities; solved our doubts; disclosed to us in difficulty the path of duty; and quickened us by her example—is it possible, I say, to lose such a friend—and not sorrow?

But, then, though we mourn—we must not murmur. We may sorrow—but not with the passionate and uncontrolled grief of the heathen, who have no hope. Our sorrow must flow, deep as we like, but noiseless and still—in the channels of submission. It must be a sorrow so quiet, as to hear all the words of consolation which our heavenly Father utters amidst the gentle strokes of his rod. It must be a sorrow so reverential, as to adore him for the exercise of his prerogative in taking away what and whom he pleases. It must be a sorrow so composed, as to prepare us for doing his will as well as bearing it. It must be a sorrow so meek and gentle, as to justify him in his dispensations. It must be a sorrow so confiding, as to be assured that there is as much love in taking the mercy away—as there was in bestowing it. It must be a sorrow so grateful, as to be thankful for the mercies left, as well as afflicted for the mercies lost. It must be a sorrow so trustful, as to look forward to the future with hope, as well as back upon the past with distress. It must be a sorrow so patient, as to bear all the aggravations that accompany or follow the bereavement with unruffled acquiescence. It must be a sorrow so holy, as to lift the prayer of faith for Divine grace to sanctify the stroke. It must be a sorrow so lasting, as to preserve through all the coming years of life the benefit of that event, which in one solemn moment changed the whole aspect of our earthly existence.

When grief impairs the health and preys upon the constitution, it is "the sorrow of the world which works death;" when it closes the ear to the words of consolation, and the eye to mercies left; when it paralyzes the energies, and benumbs and stupefies the soul, so that incumbent duties, personal and relative, domestic and social, civil and sacred, are neglected, and the soul does nothing but lie down upon the sepulcher to weep; when it refuses to be comforted, even with all the consolation of the gospel—then it is a sorrow unworthy of the honorable name which the Christian bears.

But it is not against too long and too deep a sorrow that some need to be admonished, but against a too short and too superficial sorrow. Nothing promises more, and, too generally, yields less improvement and benefit, than the death of friends. At their decease life loses its charm; society, occupation, and favorite tastes, give up their attraction; the pall that covers their dear remains extends its dark folds over all other things; and every hope is entombed in their grave. Temporal things fade, and are lost amidst the glory and grandeur of eternal things. Invisible realities displace from imagination the vain shows and shadows of the visible world! The tie that binds us to earth is cut, and our spirit seems set loose to rise to heaven and glory. For a while we hear the voice which comes from the tomb. The edifying and exemplary life; the triumphant death; the kind and pious counsels, and the tender or affectionate farewell of a beloved companion—for some days or weeks employ our thoughts or engross our conversation. We can talk and think of nothing else, as long as our sorrow remains.

But, by degrees, the world which seemed dead, corrupted, and loathsome—recovers its life, its health, its attractions, and its power. Time abates the violence of grief; "by degrees new associations are formed, new projects are devised, new pleasures are pursued; the stream of reflection is diverted into other and far different channels; the heart plunges as deeply as ever into worldly hopes and fears; the fondness for what was lately pronounced vanity and vexation of spirit, is revived. Thus the tears shed for departed friends have been shed in vain, and they who were stricken by God and afflicted, hearken no longer to the voice of the rod, and reap no lasting fruit from correction.

It is wisely ordered, I know, that the poignancy of sorrow should be abated by the lapse of time, and that the mind by its elastic power should rise from beneath the first pressure of overwhelming calamity—or else death would smite with paralysis the whole framework of society. Still it must be confessed and lamented, that in too many cases the grief of the mourner is too evanescent, either for a just tribute to the memory of 'departed excellence', or for his own spiritual improvement. If departed spirits could be spectators of what is going on upon earth, and were susceptible of the frailties of their mortal sojourn, it would surprise and grieve them, in some cases, to see how soon the grass grows around their sepulcher, and the foot turns from it into another path! It would check our vanity and curb our expectations of posthumous honor and affection—to think how soon our names will be pronounced without a tear, and our history be forgotten amidst the new objects that rise to occupy our place!

But it is now time to consider the LESSONS to be learned by the death of Christian friends.

1. How dreadful is the nature of SIN! Sin is the parent of death; and death the first-born of sin. What must be the parent—when so hideous and so dreadful is the offspring? Who can have watched the harbingers of death—"the groans, the pains, the dying strife," and have seen all this in the dying Christian too, without being struck with the fearful nature of man's revolt from God? True, "the mortal paleness on the cheek" is associated, almost irradiated, with "a glory from the soul," just as the rays of the sun, falling upon a base and even unsightly object, may conceal its deformity from an observer at a little distance. But death in itself, and by itself—is horrid and revolting! To see all this inflicted, I repeat, upon a Christian, a saint, a child of God, an heir of glory; to see no way even to the kingdom of God, to the realms of immortality—but this dark valley of corruption, earth, and worms—this gives us a most impressive idea of the dreadful nature of sin!

Grace triumphs, I admit. The soul rises superior to its situation, sees the glimpses of glory in that low, dark situation, and echoes amidst the groans of expiring nature the song of the redeemed. Yes, but then this is the victory of faith over death; this is grace triumphing over sin. Take away what grace does—and all that pertains to death itself, is as awful in the most eminent believer, as in the most confirmed and blaspheming infidel. Death, as to its physical effects, cannot change its nature, though, in the death of the Christian, sin and grace, in their effects, are often presented in wondrous conflict and in glorious contrast. How such scenes should enlarge our views of the malignity of sin, and embitter our hearts against it! O sin, sin—what have you done!

2. But what a glorious view does the death of Christians give us of the work of our Lord JESUS Christ, as the great peace-maker with God through the blood of his cross; as the destroyer of death; the Prince of life; the restorer of immortality; the compassionate High Priest of his people; their companion and helper in the mortal conflict; and their conductor to celestial glory! There it is—his mediatorial office; his redeeming work; his soul-saving power; his abounding mercy; not in a sermon, not in a book, no, not even in a verse or page of the New Testament—but in the glorious result and reality, embodied in that dying saint, set forth in that dissolving yet imperishable believer.

Hear the comfortable words that fall from the lips of the departing Christian, as his voice, almost lost in death, still praises God, and sends forth expressions which seem more like the first sounds of the cherubim's song than the last words of mortal man. See the peace which spreads over the countenance, and the sparkle which lights up with joy the eye that is growing dim in death. What is it all? How does this come to pass? Why that tranquility on the verge of the grave—that confidence in the near prospect of meeting a holy God—that voluntary surrender of life—that fearless tread down into the dark valley—that resolute plunge into the vast abyss of eternity—that act of the soul herself in loosening all the ties which bound her to earth, and laying hold of a hand that is lifting her up to the heavens? Why that that longing after holiness, as if the atmosphere, not only of the world but of the church, was not pure enough for her to breathe—that reaching after the presence of a glorified Savior—that sweet spirit of ineffable charity, which casts back its smiles on the world it is leaving, and which covets to be in a world of pure unmixed love?

I say, what is this? "O Redeemer of our lost, and sinful, and miserable world—this is your love's redeeming work—the

glory of your cross—the fruit of your agonies—the travail of your soul!" Yes, this is true religion—it is faith, hope, love! It is a scene that presents the work of grace on earth, and as much of the work of glory as can be seen on earth. Does it not prove the reality of religion? Is it not an evidence of the truth of the Bible? Is there anything like it, can there be anything like it, in the region of imposture? Is it not—too holy for falsehood; too elevated for delusion; too sober for mere enthusiasm? What a view does it give us of the excellence and power of religion! Never does true piety shine brighter than in such a dark scene as this! Never does it appear stronger than in this scene of weakness! Never does piety appear more beautiful, than when thus surrounded with all that is repulsive in disease and death! Next to a seraph spirit before us in the robes of light and immortality—the dying believer, triumphing by faith and hope over the last enemy—is the brightest specimen of our holy religion!

My dear friends, do not be afraid to die! Trust the Conqueror of death with your soul—not only for 'living duties' but for 'dying agonies'. Seek more and more of that piety for your living scenes, which you saw putting forth its power and beauties amidst the dying scenes of your friends. It is a mistake, and a dangerous error, to suppose that God intentionally reserves the joy and peace of believing, for a death bed. He is willing to give us grace to enjoy all this peace now. It is our own fault that we are not thus blessed as Christians, while engaged in the affairs of life. If faith, and hope, and love—which can do all this for dying saints—and they can do the same things for living ones.

And this is one use we should make of such scenes—to quicken our graces, to shame us for our lukewarmness, to cure us of our worldly-mindedness! Dying saints are patterns, not only for other dying saints, but for living ones. Our exclamation, on witnessing such, should not only be, "Let me die thus," but—"Let me live thus." "Let me be thus holy, thus heavenly now. I cannot wait until I die for this grace—I want it now! I will seek for it now! I must have it now!" And you may.

3. The death of Christian friends should impress us with, even as it shows us—the vanity of the WORLD. All that poetry ever wrote—even the most mournful, beautiful, and pensive of its strains—all that philosophy ever argued—all that morality ever taught, conveys no such view, and is calculated to produce no such impressions, of the emptiness of the world—as the desolate chamber, the vacant place, the deserted chair, the picture of some dear object of our heart's affection. It is at the tomb of that loved, lost friend, the world stands stripped of its false disguise, and is presented to us as a shadow! Gloom now covers everything. Scenes that once pleased, please no more. Favorite walks are shunned, or retrodden only to remind us of the dear companion that once shared their beauties with us. Seasons return, but not to bring with them the delights with which the presence of one beloved object associates them. We go about in the bitterness of our spirit, crying, "Vanity of vanity—all is vanity and vexation of spirit!" We are ready to sigh for death to relieve us from the tedium of existence, and the sense of emptiness!

Be it so! It is all true! The world is empty—and it was intended by God that it should be! The world contains no satisfying bliss! It is a cistern, a broken cistern, which can hold no water. God told us so, but we would not learn this by His word—so now we must learn it by painful experience! If we cannot be taught by 'faith', since we must learn—we are in mercy taught by feeling it to be empty! Oh let us go to the fountain that is full, flowing, open! Let us go to the fountain of living waters! If there is emptiness, nothingness, in the world—there is fullness in God. He makes angels happy; he makes perfect spirits happy; he makes Christ's human nature happy; he makes himself happy—and cannot he make us happy? Is there enough in Him to satisfy millions of millions, and not enough to satisfy us? Let us crucify the world—there is more happiness in a crucified world, than in an idolized one.

How, then, we should die to the world! I know that faith is the consecrated means of gaining this victory. I know that it is amidst the glory of the cross and of heaven—that all the twinkling and artificial lights of this world, like the gaudy luster of a candle, expiring as the sun rises in splendor upon the earth, should fade away and become invisible. I know that one clear, impressive, heart-satisfying view of a crucified and glorified Christ, does more to wean our affections from seen and temporal things, than the bleakest and dreariest aspect of this sublunary scene. But still, it is well to press everything into the work and service of our mortification to seen and temporal things. It is well to feel how much less there is on earth to love. It is well to feel how impoverished and disfigured and unattractive it has become by the removal of that which constituted its loveliest charm; and, therefore, how much less worthy it is of our regard than it was. If our hearts cannot die to the world anywhere else—let them be crucified at the tomb of those we love.

4. From the death of our friends, we learn how important it is to discharge well our duty to those who remain. Perhaps no one ever yet committed to the tomb an object of his dear affection, without some reproach for not having duly appreciated its value while the blessing was possessed—or for not having treated it with sufficient tenderness and attention. The

magnitude of our mercies seems to be best seen by the shadows they cast behind them as they retire from us! And our obligations to promote the happiness of our friends are never so well understood—<sup>as</sup> when the opportunity for discharging them is forever gone. The most sincere, ardent, and unvarying affection, when its object is removed, finds out how much more could have been done for its happiness than was done.

Many and sad are the regrets which we pour out at the sepulcher of our friends—for unrequited proofs of regard, which at the time made little or no impression upon us; for acts of unselfish and devoted service which were received with too much coldness or ingratitude; for duties neglected, which might have been performed; for opportunities to give pleasure, which were allowed to pass by unimproved; for words too sharply spoken, or unkind feelings too hastily indulged. Such injuries, often more imaginary than real, though sometimes true, can never be repaired—and it is the sting of sorrow that they cannot; for the grave has closed over the subject of them. That grave, however, sends forth a warning voice—Go perform every duty in love, in season, and in measure to the friends that remain! Do now what you will certainly wish you had done, when the time for acting is at an end! Perform every office of benevolence, discharge every duty of affection, while it can be performed! Beware of being guilty of that neglect, or of doing that hurt to another, which his death may make it impossible for you to redress. Whatever your hand finds to do for the good of your friend—do it speedily with your might! For your friend may die, and there is no work nor action in the grave. Your tears of regret, your confession of unkindness, your wishes for reparation—will not reach him there!

5. We should curb the selfishness of our sorrow, by rejoicing in the PRESENT FELICITY of our departed friends—and thus make their decease a means of promoting the virtue of unselfish benevolence. They are with the Lord, where they longed to be, and are fully blessed in the enjoyment of his love! Have we not love enough for them, to choose that they should remain in that blissful place where they now are? They have looked on the beauties of the New Jerusalem! They have fallen in humble adoration and ecstatic joy before the throne of God! They have seen the glory of the Lamb! They have eaten the fruit of the tree of life, and drunk from the crystal stream that flows from the living fountains of waters! They are perfect in holiness, happiness, and knowledge! Would we pluck them from such bliss, and imprison them again in our world and in the flesh, merely to solace us, to wipe away the tears from our eyes, and to weep with us when we weep? Let us better discipline our hearts. Let us go up in faith and in imagination to rejoice with them—since they cannot come down to weep with us. This is cultivating the generous, unselfish, and benevolent affections. It is high and difficult virtue; the last triumph of affection; and the profoundest exercise of love!

6. Let us learn the duty of sending our hearts after our friends—to heaven. If their removal has impoverished earth, it has enriched heaven! And though the presence of Christ is the sun of the celestial world, and the Lamb is the glory thereof—yet the apostle speaks with joy of our gathering together unto Jesus, of our coming to the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the joy and crown of rejoicing which our friends will be to us on the day of our Lord. Surely, it will be no small joy to meet those in heaven, whom we loved on earth! And though Christ is the great magnet that draws all holy hearts to paradise, yet even our blessed and glorified friends are not without a certain and legitimate, though inferior influence of the same kind.

7. We should imitate their virtues. It is a lovely propensity of our nature, which leads us to forget the failings of departed friends, and hold fast their excellences. And those whom we were perhaps but too apt to censure while they lived, we are willing to canonize when they are dead. Their decease has invested their character with new beauty; and their virtues appear to us, even as they are presented to us by memory, to have caught and to reflect some of the light of heaven, to which they have ascended. And, indeed, this in many cases is the fact, for we see such a maturity of spiritual graces, such a measure of the beauties of holiness in their last days, as plainly shows that the rays of the excellent glory have fallen upon them before they have emerged from the dark valley. Oh let us follow their footsteps!

When the first tears of sorrow are wiped away from our eyes, through which it is difficult to see anything clearly, and the stupor or the tumult of the mind has subsided into the reflective silence of acquiescence—let us set their pattern before us, and learn what we ought to be, and what we ought to do. Let us, while the recollection of them is fresh, and before the tints of their picture are faded upon the memory—copy into our character all the excellences of their character. Let ours not only be a sorrowing, but an imitating love; assured that no remembrance of them is so honorable to their character, or would please them so well—if they could know it in their celestial sphere—as an attempt to resemble them, in all that is worthy of imitation.

8. Let us comply with their holy wishes, and their devout requests. One wish there was, not only cherished in the heart, but expressed with the dying accents of that dear saint who has recently departed from the midst of us, and that was, that her decease might be a dispensation of love to us, in the way of increasing our spiritual attainments. "Give my love to the church—that church I so much love. Tell them to be a pattern and example of holiness to all the churches around." How often, in the privacy and fellowship of grief and prayer in her sick chamber, have I wrestled for this. Amidst what tears and sobs have I implored that her approaching death, might be as life to the church. Shall it not be? Ought we to let so much spiritual wealth be taken from us, without endeavoring to make up the loss by an increase of our own piety? Members of my church, sheep of my flock, souls committed by the Holy Spirit to my spiritual oversight, let us all seek to have the dispensation sanctified for our spiritual good. Let the sepulcher of your pastor's wife unite with his pulpit, to give emphasis to the admonition, "Be holy in every detail of your lives!" You loved her, and you still honor her; gratify her dying wishes. The last wishes of dying friends, you know, and especially such wishes, of such a friend, are sacred—fulfill her parting request, and be a holy people. Let us seek a revival of true piety among us. Let each of us purpose to have the affliction eminently blessed to our own souls. Look regularly at her grave, from which she being dead yet speaks, and says, "Be a pattern of holiness to all the churches around." Be every heart her monument, and this her epitaph.

<http://www.gracegems.org/>

**Re: The life and letters of John Angell James - posted by Koheleth, on: 2007/2/14 11:06**

Like others, I have never heard of this man, but it is amazing how readily the spirit of Christ can be recognized. Surely, as we know in our own day, words can be fabricated, but what a stream of heavenly thoughts! All to much profit for the Christian reader.

**Re: Death - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/2/15 9:15**

Quote:  
-----But, by degrees, the world which seemed dead, corrupted, and loathsome—recovers its life, its health, its attractions, and its power. Time abates the violence of grief; "by degrees new associations are formed, new projects are devised, new pleasures are pursued; the stream of reflection is diverted into other and far different channels; the heart plunges as deeply as ever into worldly hopes and fears; the fondness for what was lately pronounced vanity and vexation of spirit, is revived. Thus the tears shed for departed friends have been shed in vain, and they who were stricken by God and afflicted, hearken no longer to the voice of the rod, and reap no lasting fruit from correction.

It is wisely ordered, I know, that the poignancy of sorrow should be abated by the lapse of time, and that the mind by its elastic power should rise from beneath the first pressure of overwhelming calamity—or else death would smite with paralysis the whole framework of society. Still it must be confessed and lamented, that in too many cases the grief of the mourner is too evanescent, either for a just tribute to the memory of 'departed excellence', or for his own spiritual improvement. If departed spirits could be spectators of what is going on upon earth, and were susceptible of the frailties of their mortal sojourn, it would surprise and grieve them, in some cases, to see how soon the grass grows around their sepulcher, and the foot turns from it into another path! It would check our vanity and curb our expectations of posthumous honor and affection—to think how soon our names will be pronounced without a tear, and our history be forgotten amidst the new objects that rise to occupy our place!

**No!** Fighting this mightily already. Already this world in it's mechanisms and vanity drawing off to *its self*. A couple of days ago had put down these thoughts;

Yesterday, mixed; Confusion, conflicting emotions and when the night had drawn near, a touch, a sense of sadness. This morning, this writing ... Peace. Yes, the peace that passes all understanding. How gracious is the Lord to dictate His own seasons and times. Where it seemed somewhat elusive, it was there, a backdrop, hidden, mingled and yet the motions of the reality being faced left to do their great work. To experience and think, to ponder it all, to take in lasting moments and memories now forever etched I pray.

Death. The sheer clarity it brings. The senses are enlightened. A new boldness and courage over things that formerly might have caused inner conflicts. Fear of man. The peculiar, actual fear of divulging the faith that drives us. It seems rampant enough to make the generalization. Would have to admit my own difficulties in this, strange as they are, reasons being so much more a misrepresentation, despite all that I might understand of the Lord. The great commission being peddled and marketed and made something other, a pitch, a sales pitch at that. "Say this", "Hold this reasoning", "Tote this creed, concept, tag line, denomination". It is all so bankrupt mostly, worthless, ineffectual ... harmful. These things I cannot do with any right conscience, more so without a violent reaction against the falsity and insincerity of it all.

"What is a Christian"? The how, how does one become a Christian. This nobility. This great honor, this mantle that has largely lost it's true dignity. It gained and built it's own foundation on the very blood and deaths of martyrs. Jesus, Jesus who Christianity is. Our great High Priest, Saviour, Lord. There is no other Name. All things to and for Him. These who loved not their lives to the death, following their Lord, despise and smitten, afflicted, murdered, martyred, killed by the very ones He came to give LIFE.

Death. Death has gone missing from our sincerity. Washed over, sidelined, put out of sight until the occasion brings it's reality. It has been my ever drawing to it's mysteries, to it's high moment, to it's very force of argument. Eternal realities, why will we not have them Christan? How many times will we hear the explanation of being tethered to this earth and it's vast machinations, it's sheer vanity, it's displaced priorities. The very things that even the saints argue about, divide over, controversies and extended emotional energy, the damage and peculiar overlooking of glaring omissions in our character and conduct. Death awaits! Why not put this in all our witnessing and preaching and pleading, from the heart, from the gut, from the very spirit and makeup of our being. Reality, honesty demands it does it not? In Spirit and Truth. Will we ever, truly get this to become what we are over something we hold to?

Death. It is beauty for the saved and horror for the lost. Think it not so? The fool says there is no God. And death decides. Your unknown is the very fear that ought to awaken your sleeping conscience that is tethered to the here and now. Think on it. Ponder it deeply to it's ultimate and final conclusion. Christian, you as well. Nothing is morbid about death other than to continue on in denying it's inevitableness, that is the high morbidity, pretense and denial, some other day.

Through these days past have thought it wise to put down all things that I can as a record, something to come back to, especially after a comment from my Step-son. Perhaps too young in his development to face these things and I have both an understanding and yet a plea, a prayer that he to will come to face it more fully, in fact, the shrinking back that many have on this deep dark open secret is not entirely lost on him. He came across a quote that he brought forth from memory;

*The greatest fear of death is that soon everything will go back to normal.*

That may be something of a paraphrase but, yes! Yes indeed. It certainly doesn't tell the whole story but it struck me with it's own profundity. It is why I am taking this all down for future considerations. I do not want things to go back to "normal", curse the thought! We are always 'forgetting' the most important things, this distracted life of duties and business must go on, of course. But where did we ever get such displaced priorities? No. No. No. A thousand times no. Some rising flame of emotion and import due to it's proximity? Again no. Oh that this cleared palate and heightened sense of pure clarity would burn continually. Etch it into the fiber of my being Oh Lord.

And you foolish man Mr. Balog have you come back to look upon your own words now this day in the future? Eat your words again brother! Humble yourself I pray. Recall all the things, all the moments, your precious wife kneeling in prayer before your mothers open grave. Recall the love shown you and all through these days. Recall the very dignity carried by your co-worker who you hardly know, present at both the funeral and the grave site. Recall your own words spoken before family, neighbors, loved ones, strangers. You gave great honor and dignity to your mother and to the Lord Jesus. Remember that and recall your unworthiness again this day despite all these things, lest pride find it's sinister way in.

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/15 14:05**

brother, i pray for you,

and the other thing is that the seriousness of your writing, awakes my thoughts brother, and I'm just really "effected" by the depths in your words brother, your thoughts of death and the reality of it and that it awaits around the corner,

Quote:

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crsschk wrote:

Death. Death has gone missing from our sincerity. Washed over, sidelined, put out of sight until the occasion brings it's reality. It has been my ever drawing to it's mysteries, to it's high moment, to it's very force of argument. Eternal realities, why will we not have them Christan? How many times will we hear the explanation of being tethered to this earth and it's vast machinations, it's sheer vanity, it's displaced priorities. The very things that even the sa

ints argue about, divide over, controversies and extended emotional energy, the damage and peculiar overlooking of glaring omissions in our character and conduct. Death awaits! Why not put this in all our witnessing and preaching and pleading, from the heart, from the gut, from the very spirit and makeup of our being. Reality, honesty demands it does it not? In Spirit and Truth. Will we ever, truly get this to become what we are over something we hold to?

death awaits..... those words hit me like a train...

thank you brother for opening your heart and sharing, i think you could repost this in a thread of its own so more people can see it and read it, we need to be reminded

Christian

**Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/2/16 2:55**

here are a few articles on this subject of death...

When we gaze upon the lifeless corpse

(J. C. Philpot, "Light Affliction and Eternal Glory" 1857)

From the cradle to the coffin, affliction and sorrow are the appointed lot of man. He comes into the world with a wailing cry, and he often leaves it with an agonizing groan! Rightly is this earth called "a valley of tears," for it is wet with them in infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. In every land, in every climate, scenes of misery and wretchedness everywhere meet the eye, besides those deeper griefs and heart-rending sorrows which lie concealed from all observation. So that we may well say of the life of man that, like Ezekiel's scroll, it is "written with lamentations, and mourning and woe."

But this is not all. The scene does not end here!

We see up to death, but we do not see beyond death.

To see a man die without Christ is like standing at a distance, and seeing a man fall from a lofty cliff—we see him fall, but we do not see the crash on the rocks below.

So we see an unsaved man die, but when we gaze upon the lifeless corpse, we do not see how his soul falls with a mighty crash upon the rock of God's eternal justice! When his temporal trials come to a close, his eternal sorrows only begin! After weeks or months of sickness and pain, the pale, cold face may lie in calm repose under the coffin lid; when the soul is only just entering upon an eternity of woe!

But is it all thus dark and gloomy both in life and death?  
Is heaven always hung with a canopy of black? Are there  
no beams of light, no rays of gladness, that shine through  
these dark clouds of affliction, misery, and woe that are  
spread over the human race?

Yes! there is one point in this dark scene out of which  
beams of light and rays of glory shine! "God did not  
appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation  
through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9  
"A"

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All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves.

If there were a great monster in the city of London,  
which every day ate ten of the inhabitants of London alive,  
we should be dreadfully miserable, especially if we never  
knew when it would be our turn to be eaten too.

If we were certain that it would eat all in London by-and-bye,  
but would only eat ten in a week, we should all tremble  
as we passed by the huge monster's den, and say-  
"When will it be my time?" and that would cast a cloud over  
the whole metropolis, blacker than its usual fog.

But here is a monster, DEATH, which devours its hundreds at  
its meal; and with its iron tongue the funeral knell keeps  
crying out for more;  
its greedy and insatiable throat never being filled;  
its teeth never being blunted;  
its ravenous hunger never being stayed.

And here we are, and though it will be our turn by-and-bye  
to be devoured of this great monster, yet how little do we  
think about it!

All men will persist in thinking all men mortal but themselves.

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These vile bodies of ours!

(Bonar, "Coming of the Perfect, Departure of the Imperfect")

"He will take these vile bodies of ours and change  
them into glorious bodies like His own!" Phil. 3:21

Our bodies shared the ruin into which sin brought  
our race. Mortality and corruption took possession  
of them. They became subject to weariness, and  
pain, and disease--in every organ and limb.

The one drop of poison coming from Adam's sin  
has spread itself out and pervaded every part of us.  
The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.

We begin with pain--and we end with it.

Our flesh, from the cradle to the tomb, is feeble,  
broken, ready to faint--the cause and the inlet  
of a thousand sorrows! It is truly a frail body,  
in which we groan, being burdened; a vile body,  
needing such perpetual care, and food, and  
medicine, and rest--yet, after all, incapable of  
being preserved--which, in spite of all our  
pamperings, is hastening on to the sick-bed,  
and the separation from its guest, the soul.

But look beyond the tomb and see the glory!

This head shall ache no more! These hands and  
feet shall be weary no more! This flesh shall throb  
with anguish no more! God Himself shall wipe  
away all tears from these eyes--and there shall  
be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying!

"He will take these vile bodies of ours and change  
them into glorious bodies like His own!" Phil. 3:21

"For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed  
into heavenly bodies that will never die!" 1 Cor. 15:53

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We are no longer young

(Letters of J. C. Philpot)

"My life is but a breath." Job 7:7

"My life passes more swiftly than a runner.  
It flees away, filled with tragedy." Job 9:25

My dear friend,  
We are no longer young. Life is, as it were,  
slipping from under our feet. It is a poor life  
to live to sin, self, and the world--but it is  
a blessed life to live unto the Lord.

I never expect to be free from trial, temptation,  
pain, and suffering of one kind or another, while  
in this valley of tears. It will be my mercy if these  
things are sanctified to my soul's eternal good.

I cannot choose my own path, nor would I wish to do so, as I am sure it would be a wrong one.

I desire to be led of the Lord Himself into the way of peace, and truth, and righteousness--to walk in His fear, live to His praise, and die in the sweet experience of His love.

I have many enemies, but fear none so much as myself. O may I be kept from all evil and all error, and do the things which are pleasing in God's sight.

Our days are hastening away swifter than a runner. Soon with us it will be time no longer, and therefore how we should desire to live to the Lord, and not to self!

Yours affectionately in the truth,  
J. C. Philpot, June 20, 1861

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How many more years will I live?

(John MacDuff, "Sunsets on the Hebrew Mountains")

The king said to Barzillai, "Come over with me and stay with me in Jerusalem, and I will provide for you." But Barzillai answered the king, "How many more years will I live, that I should go up to Jerusalem with the king?" 2 Samuel 19:33-34

PLEASURE, shaking in her hands her crowns,  
cries, "Come over with me!"

MAMMON, clinking his bags of gold, cries,  
"Come over with me!"

AMBITION, pointing to the hazy mountaintop,  
and her coveted palace gleaming in the sun,  
cries, "Come over with me!"

The day will come when these things will yield  
no pleasure; when they shall be seen in their  
true light, as the empty baubles of an hour!

Oh, what though you may have all that now  
caters to the pride of life . . .  
affluence,  
prosperity,  
success in business,  
"gaining the whole world;" are you imperilling  
or impoverishing your immortal soul?

But Barzillai answered the king, "How many

more years will I live, that I should go up to  
Jerusalem with the king?" 2 Samuel 19:34

What a solemn question for us all, amid the daily  
occurring proofs of our frailty and mortality. Oh,  
what a motto to bear about with us continually  
amid the wear and tear of life!

YOUNG MAN! with the flash of young hope in your  
eye; existence extending in interminable vista before  
you; pause ever and always on the enchanted highway,  
and put the solemn question to yourself, "How many  
more years will I live?"

MAN OF BUSINESS! in availing yourself of new openings  
in trade, accepting new responsibilities and anxieties,  
involving yourself in new entanglements, have you  
stopped at the threshold and probed yourself with  
the question, "How many more years will I live?"

CHILD OF PLEASURE! plunging into the midst of  
foolish excitement; the whirl of intoxicating gaiety;  
have you ever, in returning, jaded, and weary, and  
worn from the heated ballroom, flung yourself on your  
pillow, and sunk into a feverish dream, with the question  
haunting you, "How many more years will I live?"

FRUITLESS PROFESSOR! who, with the mere form of  
godliness, are yet destitute of every practical active  
Christian virtue; you who have lived a useless life.  
Have you ever seriously pondered the question,  
"How many more years will I live?"