

LESSON 28

SUGGESTIVE THOUGHTS.

ATTENDANCE at funerals constitutes a constantly recurring claim upon the time and thought of clergymen. They are frequently called on at short notice, and often when pressed with other duties. Aside from the remarks which the peculiar circumstances of each case may call forth, it is desirable they should address some instruction to those present, other than the relatives; some of whom seldom attend any other religious services. The following suggestions are not intended to serve as plans for sermons, but as simply opening lines of thought, where other and more mature preparation cannot well be made.

LORD, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.—*Ps.* xxxix. 4.

1. The frailty and brevity of human life impressed. 2. The end of life should be kept in view, to shape its conduct. 3. Divine aid is implored, that this important but difficult lesson may be learned.

Let it lead to humiliation, and prayer for assistance.

In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth.—*Ps.* xc. 6.

Life's rapid transitions; extremes, as within a single day. 1. In the morning, its beauty, vigor, promise. 2. In the evening, withered as to its glory, cut off from its connections, removed from its sphere.

But purity and truth shall survive the body's death.

Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.—*Ps.* lxxxviii. 18.

1. As friendship and kinship constitute one of the chief sources of human happiness, so their dissolution by death, forms one of the chief elements of human sorrow. 2. It is God who causes, or permits these events; first, by the natural constitution of our being; second, by the control of His providence. A friend has done it.

Let it draw us to Him. He will sustain.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.—*1 Cor.* xv. 54.

The triumph of the saints over death, and the redemption, even of their bodies, from its power, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead. 1. The corruptible shall put on incorruption. No more decay. 2. The mortal shall put on immortality. No more death. 3. Glorious victory.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.—*Thess.* iv. 13.

Glorious hope, and great consolation concerning them which sleep in Jesus. Read what follows. Christ shall bring them with Him in glory, when He comes. What a change!

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also, we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.—*Phil.* iii. 20, 21.

A marvelous transformation. 1. Christ shall change the vile body! 2. He shall fashion it like to His own glorious body.

Changed to youth, beauty, vigor, glory, immortality. Still more glorious shall the spirit be.

And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.—1 *Cor.* xv. 49.

A wonderful contrast for the saints, in the resurrection and glorification of the body. 1. It is sown in corruption, and raised in incorruption. 2. It is sown in dishonor, and raised in glory. 3. It is sown in weakness, and raised in power. 4. It is sown a natural body, and raised a spiritual body.

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.—1 *Cor.* ii. 9, 10.

1. God loveth them, who love Him. 2. His love is not in word only. He has prepared great and good things for them. 3. These great and good things transcend all earthly and sensible standards. 4. To their verity, however, the Spirit certifies, in the hearts of the inheritors.

I go to prepare a place for you.—*John* xiv. 2.

1. Christ, though absent from His disciples, is still mindful of them. 2. He is engaged on their behalf, preparing a place for their reception and habitation.

This is their comfort in the house of their pilgrimage.

Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—*Matt.* xxv. 34.

Life and earth, and sin and sorrow, end to the people of God, with a joyous welcome to a kingly heritage. 1. Christ's followers are the blessed of the Father. 2. They will not

simply dwell in a kingly realm, but inherit one. 3. This is a fixed and long settled preparation for them.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.—*Rev. xiv. 13.*

1. Death cannot hinder, but hastens the blessedness of the saints of God. 2. They rest from all toil, pain, trial and distress. 3. Their works appear with them, not to claim reward, but to magnify grace.

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—*Rev. vii. 14.*

The goodly company of the redeemed in heaven. 1. They came out of great tribulation. Gold tried in the fire. 2. They were purified and glorified through the blood of the Lamb. No other way to heavenly joy and bliss.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.—*Rev. vii. 16.*

The blissful estate of the glorified in heaven. 1. No more exposure to evil from bodily conditions, hunger, thirst, sickness, death. 2. No more exposure to calamities arising from the external conditions of life, as sunstroke, heat, or other outward misfortunes.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—*Rev. vii. 17.*

1. Tears, the symbol of all human sorrow and suffering, shall not be known in heaven. 2. On earth a mingled cup of smiles and tears, of joys and sorrows. 3. In the perdition of the ungodly, tears never cease. There is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. There is a calm for those who weep.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.—*Rev.* xxi. 4.

1. A complete deliverance from all earthly ills, which ills these things represent. 2. God wipes away the tears, and secures this bliss. His love prompts it; His purpose determines it; His power secures it.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.—*Rev.* xxii. 5.

The bliss of the righteous typified in the life to come.

1. Night indicates the passing of days, and the march of wasting years. Eternity, not time, there. 2. Night implies exhaustion and weariness, and brings a season of rest. No exhaustion or weariness there. 3. Night and darkness are emblems of evil, and the opportunity for iniquity and crime. None there.

God himself shall constitute their inexhaustible supply of bliss, and their eternal life shall be a kingly reign.

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.—*Heb.* xii. 5, 6.

1. Providential trials are the discipline which a kind Father sends upon the children of His love. 2. The end and purpose of them, is, to purify and sanctify those who endure them, and fit them for a better life.

It is God's way of dealing with His children.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.—2 *Cor.* iv. 17.

1. Thus God works eternal fruits of joy, from earthly seeds of sorrow. 2. But this is true only to those who receive the light afflictions graciously, looking at the things which are unseen, but eternal.

The "light afflictions," and the "weight of glory," are put in contrast. So are the "moment" of endurance, and the "eternal" enjoyment.

What an inspiration for suffering saints!

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.—*Ps.* xlix. 75, 76.

1. God's judgments are right; needed. 2. His afflictions spring from His fatherly faithfulness to His creatures. 3. His merciful kindness invoked, for comfort and support.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.—*Ps.* xxiii. 4.

Triumphant trust in God, in the most trying conditions. His presence cheers, His power sustains.

Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.—*Matt.* xix. 14.

1. The love of Jesus for little children exhibited. 2. He still calls them to himself, in the mansions above. They are in the most blissful of homes, and objects of the most perfect love.

And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.—*Mark* x. 14.

1. The gentle affection of Jesus for little children. Nor is His love less now than then. 2. He blessed them. So He does still, even by calling them to Himself.

They are the lambs of the Good Shepherd's flock.

But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.—*2 Sam.* xii. 23.

1. Unreasonable grief in bereavement restrained. 2. A reunion with the dead in this life impossible. 3. A reunion with the departed in the future possible, and more blessed than if it could be realized on earth.

And all wept and bewailed her; but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth.—*Luke* viii. 52.

Narrate the circumstances of this case.

1. The young die, as well as the old. 2. The presence of Jesus brings joy to the most sorrowful heart and home. 3. Christ is the resurrection and the life. He can make the dead to live. 4. He has full sympathy with, and compassion for the grief of afflicted parents and friends.

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.—*Psa.* xxxvii. 37.

1. A good man stands in the world, as a monument to be observed; commanding attention, and moulding by his silent influence. 2. The end of life, rather than any of its preceding stages, reveals its character, and is the test of its quality. 3. The end of the good, is peace. Peace in view both of the past and the future. Even where it is not rapturous delight, it is serene confidence.

A good life only, can bring a peaceful end.

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.—*Job xxx. 23.*

Do not let our interest in the loss and affliction of others, cause us to forget our personal relation to death and eternity.

1. God will bring *me* to death: each one of us. What comes to others, comes to us. The lessons are to the living, not to the dead. 2. And this we positively know. From the course of nature; from the word of God; from universal observation. Are we prepared for the event?

Our life is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.—*James iv. 14.*

So frail and ephemeral is life—is *our* life. Why then do we, 1. Trust it so confidently? 2. Spend it so lavishly? 3. Neglect it so heedlessly?

The Lord maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.—*Job v. 18.*

1. God is to be recognized in all the afflictions of life. This both dignifies and sanctifies sorrow. 2. He who afflicts can comfort; He who wounds can heal. Out of trial may come consolation.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—*2 Cor. v. 1.*

The present and the future of the righteous, contrasted. 1. Here the soul occupies an earthly house, a frail tent, dissolving and perishable. 2. There it will be a building of God, made without hands, in the heavens, and eternal.

The death of the saint is a victory, not a defeat.

Ed. Note:

A brief presentation of the gospel should be included in every funeral service. This gives the attendees the opportunity to be saved and is most effective at this time because they are face to face with their mortality.

An invitation should also be given to allow them the opportunity to be saved. Some preachers will have the entire group say a prayer out loud in unison after the presentation of the gospel. This avoids any embarrassment but still allows them an opportunity for salvation. Other preachers simply lead in a silent prayer and may or may not ask for a show of hands for those who prayed and accepted Christ as Saviour. The method used is up to the preacher as long as the Gospel is given and the attendees are afforded the opportunity of an invitation for Salvation.

This whole thing needs to be rather low-key yet accurate and sufficient for a clear understanding of the Gospel by the listeners and a clear opportunity for Salvation.

For a minister to not give the gospel and a brief invitation at the funeral would be for him to fail in his most important duty to God-- seeking the salvation of the lost. Which is the purpose for which God gave His only Begotten Son and the first part of the Great Commission given by Christ to the local Church.

Dr. VBK

You do NOT have to have completed the practice funeral ceremony assignment by the time you have finished this particular lesson. However, you do have to have completed it before completing this course overall and before submitting your Finish Sign In form and taking the Final Test.

Your attendance for the course is not considered completed until after you have performed the Baptism, Funeral, and Marriage practice assignments. Do not submit your Finish Sign In form ending your attendance for the course overall until after you have completed those assignments.

END LESSON 28