

## IS EARLY DEATH A BLESSING?

On last Sunday I was one of a crowd of over four thousand people who listened to a sermon by the noted Brooklyn preacher, De Witt Talmage. The whole discourse was a pessimistic view of this present life, and an effort to prove that the more brief the life the greater the blessing, because of the struggle, the labors and heart-aches that are escaped, as well as the temptations that are avoided.

To quote his own expressive language: "If one die at thirty-five, he gets through work at noon;" and speaking of the child that dies in infancy, "That child touched the earth and glanced into heaven."

I could not interpret the thoughts of the throng who appeared to receive his bold unproven assertions as the words of one speaking with authority, but I know that many thoughts coursed through my brain. The following are a few of them: –

I thought – You profess to be a minister of God, why don't you teach the people God's word instead of giving so many of your own words; for since bidding good-bye to your text you have not quoted a word of Scripture to support your assertions. I thought – If it is such a blessing to die young, what a great mistake our Creator has made. If he had taken counsel of modern theologians he would have arranged to have had the bulk of humanity "just touch the earth and glance into heaven," reserving only the "real good," who could not be corrupted, to perpetuate the race, and thus furnish more inhabitants for heaven.

I thought – My dear sir! I wonder were you taken seriously ill, if you would not send post-haste for a physician, and if necessary for a council of them, for fear that by some mistake you might be taken away to the "warmth and sunshine and beauteous landscapes" of heaven before you were quite ready to quit this "outer circle."

I thought – Had you been God's counselor on Mt. Sinai you would have advised Him not to add the promise of long life to the fifth commandment; and you could have corrected Paul when he quoted the commandment, so that he would not have added as a blessing: "That thou mayest *live long on the earth.*" Then again, how ignorant was Hezekiah. What a splendid opportunity he had to go directly through the pearly gates into glory; but he prayed and he wept to remain "in this cheerless world;" and God humored him, and as a special privilege allowed him to remain "outside in the cold and the wet" for fifteen long years. If Hezekiah could have listened to his sermon he would never have written as he did: "Behold for peace I had great bitterness, but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind my back. For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee even as I do this day." – Isa. 38:1,5,17-19.

I thought – Solomon was a very wise man; but if you, Mr. Talmage, are correct, he made one great mistake when he gave counsel to the young man, "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments; for *length of days, and long life*, and peace shall they add to thee;" Talmage would have given as the reward, "For you shall die young and go to glory." Again David ought never to have said, in enumerating the blessings of a perfect man, "With *long life* will I satisfy him," if as you say, the dead "are more alive than we are – we are the dead."

I thought – "What fools we mortals be" to struggle and labor in search of knowledge as we do, if it be true that, "in five minutes after death we will know more than by studying one hundred years;" and "a child six months old knows more than all the wisdom of Princeton, Yale, Harvard, Oxford, and all other universities combined;" and then, how strange it is that the inspired Psalmist did not know this, as he would not then have written that "the dead know not anything," that "in death there is no remembrance of Thee;" and concerning man

that "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." – Psa. 6:5; 146:4.

"If any man speak let him speak as the oracle of God."

– *Selected.*

