

"Thou Remainest."

Hebrews 1: 11-12; Hebrews 13: 5, 6, 8.

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O Lord and Saviour, we recline
On that eternal love of Thine,
Thou art our rest, and Thou alone
Remainest when all else is gone.

We look out upon a world that is perishing, where all things are waxing old. Over all we see the dark shadow of death, and that sooner or later death breaks up the happiest home on earth. We see how true it is that "the world passeth away." Then with tear-dimmed eyes we turn our gaze from this passing world, we look up through the opened heavens, and, at once we see "the glory of God, and JESUS," and faith delights to say to the Lord, "THOU REMAINEST."

Our loved ones pass out of our sight, but He remains. Blessed indeed for all saints at all times to realize that He remains, but never more precious than when in the deep sorrow of bereavement — amid the break-up of earthly homes, and the wreck of earthly hopes — we can look up into His face and say, "Thou remainest." And as He looks down into our stricken hearts, with infinite compassion, He answers back, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The first utterance of these comforting and sustaining words fell upon the ears of a saint about to face a journey. From the after history of that long journey we know by what rough ways it led, the sorrows it contained, the hardships it involved, and the trials it would bring, as well indeed its seasons of joy, its wholesome lessons, and its lasting gains. But in the mercy of the Lord no word is uttered to inform the patriarch Jacob of the character of the path. However, this indeed he does know — he knows the glorious end of the journey, for, says the Lord, "I will bring thee again into this land," and "In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." But he knows more. From the start of that journey until the last step which set his feet again in the promised land — he knows that he will never be forsaken, for says the Lord —

"I am with thee;"

"I will keep thee;"

"I will not leave thee."

Nor is it otherwise with the Christian today. Yea, rather in a deeper way, and with richer meaning, can we appropriate such words of comfort. We too know the start of our pilgrim journey. We set out with the grace of God that has brought salvation.

We know the end of our journey, for grace begun will end in glory. The appearing of grace makes way for the appearing of glory. A glory in which we shall be like Christ, and with Christ for ever and ever. But between the start in grace and the end in glory there lies our pilgrim path through a hostile world of sin and sorrow. What that untrodden path may hold for us we know not. But this we do know, the Lord has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

For our comfort and assurance this unconditional promise comes to us with all the absolute

authority of His own word. It is no prophet or apostle who speaks the word; no messenger from the Lord that brings it. No angel or archangel is equal to breathe such words of comfort into forlorn and sorrowing hearts. It is none other than the Lord Himself who draws near to us in our desolation, and with infinite tenderness, we hear Him say, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The binding of broken hearts shall not be in other hands than His. No hands so tender, so gentle, so skilful, to bind a broken heart as the hands once bruised and pierced in love upon the tree. And seeing the Lord 'hath said', faith, rising above a world of sin and sorrow and death, can 'boldly say': "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear."

Moreover the One who breathes these words of comfort — has promised to be with us — is One who has been before us in the journey. He has trodden every step of the way. He has reached the glorious end, and appears in heaven itself before the face of God for us. He can say, as it were, to His sorrowing saints, "I have been before you in the way. I have trodden the path as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man," as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." I know every turn in the road; I know the rough places and the smooth. There are hills to climb, dark valleys to tread, and rivers to cross, but I know them all. I have climbed the hills, I have trodden the valleys, I have forded the waters. I have passed through the last dark valley of the shadow of death, I have reached the home of glory, I have sat down at the right hand of God, and from My throne of glory I will sustain you, and succour you, and intercede for you as you journey on your way, and at last I will come for you and receive you to Myself, that where I am ye may be also. "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Moreover there is yet further comfort in the Lord for our sorrowing hearts. Not only can we look up and say, "Thou remainest," but we can add — "THOU ART THE SAME".

Full well we know the way of this sorrowful world. As we look back over the passing years and recall the faces of many we have known and loved, are we not confronted with the sorrow that some have gone, and some have changed? But how does it lift our spirits above the sadness of such moments to look up and discover there is One who will never pass away and never change. As indeed we sometimes sing: —

"Earthly friends may fail or leave us
One day soothe, the next day grieve us
But this friend will ne'er deceive us,
O, how He loves!"

And just as the Lord's words, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," give the blessed answer to that sweet word, "Thou remainest," so will this last chapter of Hebrews supply the enlargement of that other touching word, "Thou art the same." For there we read, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." This tells us more than the word in the first chapter, comforting indeed as that is, for this seasonable word tells us not only that He is the same, but that He is the same in heaven to-day as He was on earth in the days that are past.

His circumstances indeed have vastly changed. Yesterday He-was the poor and needy Man, the homeless Man, the Stranger with not where to lay His head. To-day He has resumed royalty and majesty in heavenly glory. He has laid aside for ever the garments of humiliation, He has put on the majestic robes of glory in suitability to that place of glory. But though He has changed His circumstance, He has not changed His heart. Many crowns are His, and we delight to crown Him Lord of all; but no crowns that will ever adorn His head will ever change His heart. The love that could weep

with Martha and Mary has not changed one whit. The heart that had compassion on the widow of Nain still beats in sympathy with sorrowing saints. The tender love that sustained the broken-hearted Jairus can still say with infinite compassion to a broken-hearted saint, "Be not afraid, only believe."