

Faith in God:

A Sermon

Delivered in the East Room of the Executive Mansion,

Wednesday, April 19th, 1865,

At

The Funeral of Abraham Lincoln, President of the U. States

By

The Rev. P. D. Gurley, D. D.,

Pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church,
Washington,

D. C.

Funeral Address.

Mark XI. 22.

"Have faith in God."

As we stand here to-day, mourners around this coffin and around the lifeless remains of our beloved Chief Magistrate, we recognize and we adore the sovereignty of God. His throne is in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. He hath done, and He hath permitted to be done, whatsoever He pleased. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne". His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder Him? For He knoweth vain men; He seeth wickedness also; will

He not then consider it? — The bow before before his infinite majesty. The bow, we weep, we worship.

"Where reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith prevails, and love adores."

It was a cruel, cruel hand, that dark hand of the assassin, which smote our honored, wise, and noble President, and filled the land with sorrow. But above and beyond that hand there is another which we must see and acknowledge. It is the chastening hand of a wise and a faithful Father. He gives us this bitter cup. And the cup that our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it?

"God of the just, thou gavest us the cup:

We yield to thy behest, and drink it up."

"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." O how these blessed words have cheered and strengthened and sustained us through all these long and weary years of civil strife, while our friends and brothers on so many encanguined fields were falling and dying for the cause of Liberty

and Union! Let them cheer, and strengthen, and sustain us to-day. True, this new sorrow and chastening has come in such an hour and in such a way as we thought not, and it bears the impress of a rod that is very heavy, and of a mystery that is very deep. That such a life should be sacrificed, at such a time, by such a foul and diabolical agency; that the man at the head of the nation, whom the people had learned to trust with a confiding and a loving confidence, and upon whom more than upon any other were centred, under God, our best hopes for the true and speedy pacification of the country, the restoration of the Union, and the return of harmony and love; that he should be taken from us, and taken just as the prospect of peace ^{brightly} was opening upon our torn and bleeding country, and just as he was beginning to be animated and gladdened with the hope of ere long enjoying with the people the blessed fruit and reward of his and their toil, and care, and patience, and self-sacrificing devotion to the interests of Liberty and the Union — O it is a mysterious and

a most afflicting visitation! But it is our Father in heaven, the God of our fathers, and our God, who permits us to be so suddenly and sorely smitten; and we know that his judgments are right, and that in faithfulness He has afflicted us. In the midst of our rejoicings we needed this stroke, this dealing, this discipline; and therefore He has sent it. Let us remember, our affliction has not come forth of the dust, and our trouble has not sprung out of the ground. Through and beyond all second causes let us look, and see the sovereign permissive agency of the great First Cause. It is his prerogative to bring light out of darkness and good out of evil. Surely the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain. In the light of a clearer day we may yet see that the wrath which planned and perpetrated the death of the President, was overruled by Him whose judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out, for the highest welfare of all those interests which are so dear to the Christian patriot and philanthropist,

and for which a loyal people have made such an unexampled sacrifice of treasure and of blood. Let us not be faithless, but believing.

"Blind unbelief is prone to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

We will wait for his interpretation, and we will wait in faith, nothing doubting. He who has led us so well, and defended and prospered us so wonderfully, during the last four years of toil, and struggle, and sorrow, will not forsake us now. He may chasten, but He will not destroy. He may purify us more and more in the furnace of trial, but He will not consume us. No, no! He has chosen us as He did his people of old in the furnace of affliction, and He has said of us as He said of them, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise". Let our principal anxiety now be that this new sorrow may be a sanctified sorrow; that it

may lead us to deeper repentance, to a more humbling sense of our dependence upon God, and to the more unreserved consecration of ourselves and all that we have to the cause of truth and justice, of law and order, of liberty and good government, of pure and undefiled religion. Then, though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning. Blessed be God! Despite of this great and sudden and temporary darkness, the morning has begun to dawn - the morning of a bright and glorious day, such as our country has never seen. That day will come and not tarry, and the death of an hundred Presidents and their Cabinets can never, never prevent it. While we are thus hopeful, however, let us also be humble. The occasion calls us to prayerful and tearful humiliation. It demands of us that we lie low, very low, before Him who has smitten us for our sins. O that all our rulers and all our people may bow in the dust to-day beneath the chastening hand of God! and may their voices go up to Him as one voice, and their hearts

go up to Him as one heart, pleading with Him for mercy, for grace to sanctify our great and sore bereavement, and for wisdom to guide us in this our time of need. Such a united cry and pleading will not be in vain. It will enter into the ear and heart of Him who sits upon the throne, and He will say to us, as to His ancient Israel, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer." —

I have said that the people confided in the late lamented President with a full and a loving confidence. Probably no man since the days of Washington was ever so deeply and firmly embedded and enshrined in the very hearts of the people as Abraham Lincoln. Nor was it a mistaken confidence and love. He deserved it — deserved it well — deserved it all. He merited it by his character, by his acts, and by the whole tenor, and tone, and spirit of his life. He was simple and sincere, plain and honest, truthful and just, benevolent and kind. His perceptions were quick and clear. His

judgments were calm and accurate, and his purposes
 were good and pure beyond a question. Always and every
 where he aimed and endeavored to be right and to do
 right. His integrity was thorough, all-pervading, all-
 controlling, and incorruptible. It was the same in
 every place and relation, in the consideration and the
 control of matters great or small, the same firm and
 steady principle of power and beauty that shed a
 clear and crowning lustre upon all his other excel-
 lencies of mind and heart, and recommended him to
 his fellow citizens as the man, who, in a time of unexam-
 pled peril, when the very life of the nation was at stake, should
 be chosen to occupy, in the country and for the country, its
 highest post of power and responsibility. How wisely and
 well, how purely and faithfully, how firmly and steadily,
 how justly and successfully he did occupy that post and
 meet its grave demands in circumstances of surpassing
 trial and difficulty, is known to you all, known to the
 country and the world. He comprehended from the

first the perils to which treason had exposed the freest and best
 government ^{on the earth,} ~~in the world~~ the vast interests of liberty and
 humanity that were to be saved or lost forever in the urgent
 impending conflict; he rose to the dignity and momentousness
 of the occasion, saw his duty as the Chief Magistrate of a
 great and ~~imperial~~ ^{imperialized} ~~imperial~~ ^{people} and he determined to
 do his duty, and his whole duty, seeking the guidance
 and leaning upon the arm of Him of whom it is written,
 "Hee giveth power to the faint, and to them that have
 no might he increaseth strength." Yes, he leaned upon His
 arm. He recognized and received the truth that the "king-
 dom is the Lord's, and He is the governor among the
 nations." He remembered that "God is in history," and
 he felt that nowhere had His hand and His mercy been
 so marvellously conspicuous as in the history of this
 nation. He hoped and he prayed that that same hand
 would continue to guide us, and that same mercy
 continue to abound to us in the time of our greatest
 need. I speak what I know, and testify what I have

often heard him say, when I affirm that that guidance and mercy were the prop on which he humbly and habitually leaned; they were the best hope he had for himself and for his Country. Hence, when he was leaving his home in Illinois, and coming to this city to take his seat in the executive chair of a disturbed and troubled nation, he said to the old and tried friends who gathered tearfully around him and bade him farewell, "I leave you with this request; pray for me." They did pray for him; and millions of others prayed for him; nor did they pray in vain. Their prayer was heard, and the answer appears in all his subsequent history; it shines forth with a heavenly radiance in the whole course and tenor of his administration, from its commencement to its close. God raised him up for a great and glorious mission, furnished him for his work, and aided him in its accomplishment. Nor was it merely by strength of mind, and honesty of heart, and purity and pertinacity of purpose, that He furnished him; in addition to these

things, he gave him a calm and abiding confidence in the overruling providence of God and in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness through the power and the blessing of God. This confidence strengthened him in all his hours of anxiety and toil, and inspired him with calm and cheering hope when others were inclining to despondency and gloom. Never shall I forget the emphasis and the deep emotion with which he said in this very room, to a company of clergymen and others, who called to pay him their respects in the darkest days of our civil conflict: "Gentlemen, my hope of success in this great and terrible struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justice and goodness of God. And when events are very threatening, and prospects very dark, I still hope that in some way which man can not see all will be well in the end, because our cause is just, and God is on our side." Such was his sublime and holy faith, and it was an anchor to his soul, both sure and steadfast. It made him firm and strong. It em=

boldened him in the pathway of duty, however rugged and perilous it might be. It made him valiant for the right; for the cause of God and humanity, and it held him in steady, patient, and unswerving adherence to a policy of administration which he thought, and which one all now think, both God and humanity required him to adopt. We admired and loved him on many accounts - for strong and various reasons: we admired his childlike simplicity, his freedom from guile and deceit, his staunch and sterling integrity, his kind and forgiving temper, his industry and patience, his persistent, self-sacrificing devotion to all the duties of his eminent position, from the least to the greatest; his readiness to hear and consider the cause of the poor and humble, the suffering and the oppressed; his charity toward those who questioned the correctness of his opinions and the wisdom of his policy; his wonderful skill in reconciling differences among the friends of the Union, leading them away from abstractions, and inducing them to work together and harmoniously for the common

weal; his true and enlarged philanthropy, that knew
 no distinction of color or race, but regarded all men
 as brethren, and endowed alike by their Creator "with
 certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty,
 and the pursuit of happiness"; his inflexible purpose
 that what freedom had gained in our terrible civil strife
 should never be lost, and that the end of the war should
 be the end of slavery, and, as a consequence, of rebellion;
 his readiness to spend and be spent for the attainment
 of such a triumph—a triumph, the blessed fruits of which
 shall be as wide-spread as the earth and as enduring
 as the sun:—all these things commanded and fixed
 our admiration, and the admiration of the world, and
 stamped upon his character and life the unmistakable
 impress of greatness. But more sublime than any or
 all of these, more holy and influential, more beautiful,
 and strong, and sustaining, was his abiding confidence
in God and in the final triumph of truth and righteousness
through Him and for his sake. This was his noblest virtue,

his grandest principle, the secret alike of his strength, his patience, and his success. And this, it seems to me, after being near him steadily, and with him often, for more than four years, is the principle by which, more than by any other, "he, being dead, yet speaketh." Yes: by his steady enduring confidence in God, and in the complete ultimate success of the cause of God, which is the cause of humanity, more than by any other way, does he now speak to us and to the nation he loved and served so well. By this he speaks to his successor in office, and charges him to "have faith in God." By this he speaks to the members of his cabinet, the men with whom he counseled so often and was associated so long, and he charges them to "have faith in God." By this he speaks to the officers and men of our noble army and navy, and, as they stand at their posts of duty and peril, he charges them to "have faith in God." By this he speaks to all who occupy positions of influence and authority in these sad and troublous times, and he charges them all to "have faith in God." By

this he speaks to this great people as they sit in sackcloth
 to-day, and weep for him with a bitter wailing, and refuse
 to be comforted, and he charges them to "have faith in God".
 And by this he will speak through the ages and to all
 rulers and peoples ⁱⁿ every land, and his message
 to them will be, "belong to liberty and right; battle for
 them; bleed for them; die for them, if need be; and have
 confidence in God." O that the voice of this testimony may
 sink down into our hearts to-day and every day, and into
 the heart of the nation, and exert its appropriate influence
 upon our feelings, our faith, our patience, and our devotion
 to the cause of freedom and humanity - a cause dearer
 to us now than ever before, because consecrated by the
 blood of its most conspicuous defender, its wisest and
 most fondly-trusted friend. He is dead; but the God in
 whom he trusted lives, and He can guide and strengthen
 his successor, as He guided and strengthened him. He is
 dead; but the memory of his virtues, of his wise and patriotic
 counsels and and labors, of his calm and steady faith in

God, lives, is precious, and will be a power for good in the country quite down to the end of time. He is dead; but the cause he so ardently loved, so ably, patiently, faithfully represented and defended - not for himself only, not for us only, but for all people in all their coming generations, till time shall be no more - that cause survives his fall, and will survive it. The light of its brightening prospects flashes cheerily to-day athwart the gloom occasioned by his death, and the language of God's united providences is telling us that, though the friends of liberty die, liberty itself is immortal. There is no assassin strong enough and no weapon deadly enough to quench its inextinguishable life, or arrest its onward march to the conquest and empire of the world. This is our confidence, and this is our consolation, as we weep and mourn to-day. Though our beloved President is ~~slain~~ slain, our beloved country is saved. And so we sing of mercy as well as of judgment. Tears of gratitude mingle with those of sorrow. While there is darkness, there is also the dawning of a brighter, happier day.

upon our stricken and weary land. God be praised that our fallen Chief lived long enough to see the day dawn and the daystar of joy and peace arise upon the nation. He saw it, and he was glad. Alas! alas! He only saw the dawn. When the sun has risen, full-orbed and glorious, and a happy reunited people are rejoicing in its light, - alas! alas! it will shine upon his grave. But that grave will be a precious and a consecrated spot. The friends of liberty and of the Union will repair to it in years and ages to come, to pronounce the memory of its occupant blessed, and, gathering from his very ashes, and from the rehearsal of his deeds and virtues, fresh incentives to patriotism, they will there renew their vows of fidelity to their country and their God.

And now I know not that I can more appropriately conclude this discourse, which is but a sincere and simple utterance of the heart, than by addressing to our departed President, with some slight modification, the language which Tacitus, in his life of Agricola, addresses to his venerable and de-

parted father-in-law: "With you we may now congratulate;
 you are blessed, not only because your life was a career of
 glory, but because you were released, when, your country safe,
 it was happiness to die. We have lost a parent, and, in our
 distress, it is now an addition to our heartfelt sorrow
 that we had it not in our power to commune with you on
 the bed of languishing, and receive your last embrace. Your
 dying words would have been ever dear to us; your commands
 we should have treasured up, and graven them on our
 hearts. This sad comfort we have lost, and the wound, for that
 reason, pierces deeper. From the world of spirits behold your
 disconsolate family and people; exalt our minds from fond
 regret and unavailing grief to the contemplation of your
 virtues. Those we must not lament; it were impiety to sully
 them with a tear. To cherish their memory, to embalm them
 with our praises, and, so far as we can, to emulate your
 bright example, will be the truest mark of our respect, the best
 tribute we can offer. Your wife will thus preserve the
 memory of the best of husbands, and thus your children

will prove their filial piety. By dwelling constantly on your words and actions, they will have an illustrious character before their eyes, and, not content with the bare image of your mortal frame, they will have what is more valuable - the form and features of your mind. Busts and statues, like their originals, are frail and perishable. The soul is formed of finer elements, and its inward form is not to be expressed by the hand of an artist with unconscious matter - our manners and our morals may in some degree trace the resemblance. All of you that gained our love and raised our admiration still subsists, and will ever subsist, preserved in the minds of men, the register of ages, and the records of fame. Others, who have figured on the stage of life and were the worthies of a former day, will sink, for want of a faithful historian, into the common lot of oblivion, inglorious and unremembered; but you, our lamented friend and head, delineated with truth, and fairly consigned to posterity, will survive yourself, and triumph over the injuries of time". —