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

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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; the earth is full of wickedness also; will
He not then consider it?—The bow before the bow, his infinite majesty. The bow, we weep, we worship.

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

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:
The yield to thy behest, and drink it up."

"Know the Lord loveth the chasteneth." 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 endangered 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; the life should be taken from us, and taken just as the prospect of peace was opening upon our torn and bleeding country, and just as he was beginning to be animated and gladdened with the hope of ever 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—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 one knows 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 sprang 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 perpetuated 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 unex-
ample sacrifices 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."

He 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 and in the furnace of
affliction, and He has said of us as He said of them,
"This people have I spared 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 penitence, to a more humbling sense of our dependence upon God, and to the more unwavering 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. Praise 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. And 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 one bereaved moment, 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. For 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 everywhere he aimed and endeavored to be right and to do right. His integrity was strong, 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 principles of power and beauty that shed a clean and crowning lustre upon all his other excellencies of mind and heart, and he commended him to his fellow citizens as the man, who, in a time of unexpected 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 peril to which treason had exposed the freest and best
government 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 imperiled republic, and he determined to
do his duty, and his whole duty, seeking the guidance
and leaning upon the arms of Him of whom it is written,
"He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have
no might he increaseth strength." Yes, he leaned upon His
arms. He recognized and received the truth that the kingdom
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 those guidance and mercy were the proofs 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, "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 prayers were heard, and the answer appeared 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 constancy 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 clergyman and others, who came to pay him their respects in the darkest days of our civil conflict: "Gentlemen, my hope of success in this civic and terrible struggle rests on the 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 in his soul, both sure and steadfast. It made him firm and strong. It ena...
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 steadfast, 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. He 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 eminence 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
...wealth; 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, 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 widespread 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 eke 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, "be, 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 conversed 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 broken heart, and refuse to be comforted, and he changes them to have faith in God. And by this he will speak through the ages and to all his message to them will be, "Lo, to liberty and right; battle for them; blush 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 cleaner 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 labors, of his calm and steadfast 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, the time shall be no more that cause survives his fall, and we shall survive it. The light of its brightening prospects flashes cheerfully to-day, though the gloom occasioned by his death, and the language of God's united providence 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 dead, 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 day-star arise, and peace arise upon the nation. He
saw it, and he was glad. Haa! alas! He only saw the dawn.
When the sun has risen, full-ordained and gloriously, and a happy
countless 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 friend of liberty,
and of the Union will remain to it in years and ages to
come, to commemorate the memory of its occupant, blessed,
and, gathering from his very ashes, and from the re-seeking
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-
Hated 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 was free. It was happiness to die. We have lost a parent, and, in our distress, it is now an addition to our heart felt 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 me; your commands we should have treasured up and quoted them on our hearts. This sad comfort we have lost, and this wound, for that reason, pierces deeper. From the world of spirits behold your disconsolate family and friends; exalt our minds from fond regret and unwavailing grief to the contemplation of your virtues. Those we must not lament; it were impious 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 and 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 moral 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 friends and heads, delineated withtruth, and fairly consigned to posterity, will survive yourself, and triumph over the injuries of time.