

The Sunday-School Teacher—A Steward

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon emphasizes the solemn responsibility and honored role of Sunday-school teachers as stewards who must give a personal and exact account of their faithful service to God.

Scripture: Luke 16:2, John 15:15

Topics: "Stewardship", "Christian Responsibility"

Description

In this powerful teaching sermon, C.H. Spurgeon exhorts Sunday-school teachers to recognize their sacred role as stewards of God's Word. He stresses the solemn responsibility they bear to faithfully teach and care for their classes, reminding them that each must give a personal and exact account before God. Spurgeon encourages humble service motivated by grace and the hope of the Master's commendation, calling all teachers to a sober and prayerful commitment to their divine trust.

Transcript

On behalf of the Sunday School Union

"Give an account of thy stewardship."—Luke 16:2.

WE HAVE HEARD many times in our lives, that we are all stewards to Almighty God. We hold it as a solemn truth of our religion, that the rich man is responsible for the use which he makes of his wealth; that the talented man must give an account to God of the interest which he getteth upon his talents; that every one of us, in proportion to our time and opportunities, must give an account for himself before Almighty God. But, my dear brothers and sisters, our responsibility is even deeper and greater than that of other men. We have the ordinary responsibility which falls upon all professors of religion, to give an account of all we have to God; but besides this, you and I have the extraordinary responsibilities of our official standing—you, as teachers for Christ in your classes; and others of us as preachers for him before the great congregation. The first responsibility is too heavy for any man to fulfill. Apart from divine grace, it is not possible that any man should so use all that God has given him as to be accepted at last with a "Well done thou good and faithful servant;" yet even if that were possible, it would still remain an utter impossibility for us fully to sustain the fearful weight of responsibility which rests upon us as teachers of the Word of God to our fellow immortals. Upon our necks there are two yokes; Sovereign grace can make them light and easy, but apart from that they will gall our shoulders; for they are, of themselves, too heavy for us to bear. Common responsibility is as Solomon's whip; but extraordinary responsibility derived from official standing when not regarded, will be as the scorpion of Rehoboam, its little finger shall be thicker

than its father's loins. Woe unto the watchman who warns them not; woe unto the minister who fails to teach the truth; woe unto the Sabbathschool teacher who is unfaithful to his trust. Now, let us try to stir one another up, upon this seriously important matter. You will pray for me while I preach, that I may utter some things that may do good to all now present, and I will labor that God may, in answer to your prayers, give me words and thoughts which shall be blessed to you.

Now, first, let me show the meaning of our being stewards then let us consider what kind of account we shall have to give; and lastly, let us notice the days of reckoning when we OUGHT to cast up our account, and the days of reckoning when we MUST give in our account.

I. First, then, THE STEWARD—WHAT IS HE?

In the first place, the steward is a servant. He is one of the greatest of servants; but he is only a servant. Perhaps he is the bailiff of a farm, and looks, to all intents and purposes, like a country farmer: he rides over his master's estate, and has many men under him; still he is only a servant, he is under authority, he is only a steward. Perhaps he is steward in the house of some gentleman, who employs him to see after the whole of his establishment, in order that he may be free from cares. In that capacity he is himself a master, but still he is a servant; for he has one over him. Let him be as proud as he pleases, he has little to be proud of, for the only rank he holds in life, is the rank of a servant. Now, the minister, and the Sunday-school teacher specially stand in the rank of servants. Why, we are none of us our own masters; we are not independent gentlemen. who may do as we please, our classes are not our own farms, which we may till in our own manner, and neglect if we please, out of which we may produce any harvest, or none at all, at our own discretion. No, we are nothing better than stewards, and we are to labor for our Master in heaven. What a strange thing it is to see a minister or a teacher giving himself fine airs, as if he were everybody in the world and might do as he pleased. Is it not an anomaly? How is he to talk about the sacrifices that he makes, when he is spending only his master's property? How is he to boast about the time which he expends, when his time is not his own? It is all his Master's. He is a servant, and therefore, do he what he may, he only discharges the duty for which he is well rewarded. He has no reason to be proud, or to lord it over others, for whatever his power among them may be, he is himself neither more nor less than a servant. Let each of us try to recollect that henceforth "I am only a servant." If a superintendent puts a teacher to a class which she does not like, she will recollect that she is a servant. She does not allow her servants at home to stand up and say, they are not going to do scullerywork but will only wait at table; they are servants, and must do as they are bidden; and if we felt that we were servants, we should not object to do what we are told for Christ's sake: though we would not do it at the dictation of men yet for Christ's sake we do it as unto the Lord. We do not suppose that our servants will come to us at night, and expect us to say to them, "You have done your work very well to-day," we do not imagine that they will look for constant commendation. They are servants, and when they get their wages, that is their encomium on their work. They may judge they are worth their money, or else we should not keep them. When you do your work for Jesus, recollect you are only a servant. Do not expect always to have that encouragement, which some people are constantly crying after. If you get encouragement from your pastor from other teachers, from your friends, be thankful; but if you do not get it, go on with your work notwithstanding. You are a servant, and when you receive your reward, that is of grace, and not of debt, then you will have the highest encomium that can be passed upon you, the plaudit of your Lord, and eternal glow with him whose you are, and whom you desire to serve.

But still while the steward is a servant, he is an honorable one. It does not do for the other servants in the house to tell him that he is a servant. He will not endure that: he knows it, and feels it he desires to act and

work as such, but at the same time, he is an honored servant. Now, those who serve Christ in the office of teaching, are honorable men and women. I remember to have heard a very unseemly discussion between two persons, as to whether the minister was not superior to the Sabbath-school teacher. It reminded me of that talk of the disciples, as to who among them was the greatest. Why, we are all of us "the least," if we feel aright, and though we must each of us exalt our office as God hath given it to us, yet, I see not anywhere in the Bible, anything that should lead me to believe that the office of the preacher is more honorable than that of the teacher. It seems to me, that every Sunday-school teacher has a right to put "Reverend" before his name as much as I have, or if not, if he discharges his trust he certainly is a "Right Honourable." He teaches his congregation and preaches to his class. I may preach to more, and he to less, but still he is doing the same work, though in a smaller sphere. I am sure I can sympathize with Mr. Carey, when he said of his son Felix, who left the missionary work to become an ambassador, "Felix has driven into an ambassador;" meaning to say, that he was once a great person as a missionary, but that he had afterwards accepted a comparatively insignificant office. So I think we may say of the Sabbath-school teacher, if he gives up his work because he cannot attend to it, on account of his enlarged business, he drives into a rich merchant. If he forsakes his teaching because he finds there is so much else to do, he drives into something less than he was before; with one exception, if he is obliged to give up to attend to his own family, and makes that family his Sabbath-school class, there is no driving there; he stands in the same position as he did before. I say they who teach, they who seek to pluck souls as brands from the burning, are to be considered as honored persons, second far to him from whom they received their commission; but still in some sweet sense lifted up to become fellows with him, for he calls them his brethren and his friends. "The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Only one more thought here. The steward is also a servant who has very great responsibility attached to his position. A sense of responsibility seems to a right man always a weighty thing. To do a thing where there is no responsibility involved at all, is a very slight matter, and hence we find in ordinary affairs that the labor which involves no trust is but poorly paid. But where there is a large amount of trust reposed the labor is paid in proportion. Now the work of the Sabbath-school teacher is one of the most responsible in the world. It has sometimes staggered me to think how greatly God trusts you and me. You remember the story of the prodigal. It finds a counterpart in each of us, who after long wandering in sin have come home to Jesus. I sometimes think that a prudent father, when the prodigal was restored to his house, could receive him to his heart, would press him to his bosom, and give him a share of all his wealth, but would be very slow to trust him in any matter of responsibility. The next market-day the old gentlemen would say, "Now John I love you with all my heart, but you know you ran away once, and spent your living riotously; I must send your elder brother to market; I cannot trust you with my purse: I love you; I have totally forgiven you, at the same time I cannot yet rely upon you." Why does not God say so to us? Instead of that, when he takes poor prodigals to his heart, he trusts us with his most precious jewels, he trusts us with immortal souls. He permits us to be the means of seeking his lost sheep, and then allows us to feed the lambs after they are gathered. He puts the prodigal into the most important station, and hath confidence in him. Then my brethren and sisters, seeing he hath been gracious enough to repose confidence in such unworthy persons, shall we deceive him? Oh no; let us earnestly labor as stewards that every part of the estate committed to us shall be found in good order when our Master comes; that every jot and tittle of our account shall be found correct when he sums it up in the great day of the audit before his throne. Our office is a very very solemn one. Some think little of it. Some take it upon themselves very lightly. Giddy youths are enticed into the school and not rendered more sober by their connection with it. Let such depart from us. We want none but those who are sober, none but those who solemnly weigh what they are doing,

and who enter upon the work as a matter involving life or death, not as a trivial affair which concerns the interests of time, but an awfully solemn thing which even an angel would be incapable of performing, unless he had the abundant assistance of God the Holy Spirit. I have thus endeavored very simply to set forth the idea couched in the word "stewardship." We are servants highly honored, very responsible, and much trusted.

II. And now, THE ACCOUNT—"Give an account of thy stewardship." Let us briefly think of this giving an account of our stewardship.

Let us first notice that when we shall come to give an account of our stewardship before God, that account must be given in personally, by every one of us. While we are here, we talk in the mass; but when we come before God, we shall have to speak as individuals. You hear persons boasting about "our Sabbath-school." Many persons are wicked enough to call the Sabbath-school "their school," when they never see it by the year together. They say, "I hope our school is flourishing," when they never subscribe a halfpenny, when they never give the teachers a word of encouragement, or even a smile, and do not know how many children the school contains. Yet they call it theirs. Thieves that they are, taking to themselves that which does not belong to them! Well, but we, in our measure, make the same mistake. As a ministry, we often talk of the doings of the "body," and what wonders have been done by the "denomination" Now, let us recollect, when we come before God, there will be no judging us in denominations, no dealing with us in schools and in churches, but the account must be given for each one by himself: So, then, thou that hast the infant class, thou wilt have to give thine own account. It was but the other day thou wast finding fault with the conduct of the senior class, and thou wast told then to look at home. Conscience told thee so. But at last, when thou shalt have to stand before God, thou wilt have no account to give of the senior class, but of that infant class committed to thee. And you, my sister, you have been seven or eight years a teacher—you must give an account for yourself, not for that other teacher of another class, of whom you have often boasted, because she has been the means of bringing six seven children to Christ lately. Remember, her six won't be put with your none at all, in order to make the total at the year's end look respectable; but there will stand your great blank at the end of your labors, and there will remain the dark mark for your negligence, for your unpunctuality, your carelessness in your class, without the relief of the bright side of the diligent teacher's success. You must be judged each of you for yourself, not in parties, but one by one. This makes it terrible work, for a man to be looked at all alone. I have known people who could not bear to stand up in a pulpit; the very fact of so many eyes looking upon them seemed so horrible, but how will it be when we must stand up and hear our hearts read by the all-searching eye of God, and when the whole of our career in the offices which we now hold will be published before the sun, and that, I repeat it, without the salvo of the success of others, without any addition to our labors derived from the diligence of other teachers? Come, Mr. Steward, what is your account? Not that one, sir, not that one; your account. "Lord, I have brought in the account of the Sunday-school books." "No, not that, the account of your own class?" "Well, my Master, I have brought in the account of the class for the last twentyfive years, showing how many were converted." "No, not that; the account of your own class while you were its teacher." "Well, I have brought in the account of the class during the time I was teacher with So-and-so." "No, not that; the account of the class while you were the teacher of it alone, the account of how you taught what you taught, how you prayed, how earnestly you labored, how diligently you studied, and what you sought to do for Christ." Not the addenda of the other teacher who helped you in another part of the duty, but your own personal account alone must be brought in before God. "Give an account of thy stewardship." Putting it in this light, what account will some of you give in at the last and great day? Just let me stop a minute to charge your memories. What kind of account will it be? I trust a very large

number here can humbly in their hearts say "I have done but little, but I did that sincerely and prayerfully; may God accept it through Jesus Christ!" But I fear there are some others, who, if they are true to their consciences, will say, "I have done but little; I did that little carelessly. I did it without prayer; I did it without the help of the Holy Spirit." Then, my brother and sister, I hope you will add after that, "Oh, my God, forgive me, and help me from this good hour to be diligent in this divine business, fervent in my spirit, serving the Lord." And may God bless you in that prayer! Make no resolve, but offer a prayer which is better far; and may you be heard in heaven, the dwellingplace of God.

And note again, that while this account must be personal it must be exact. You will not, when you present your account before God, present the gross total, but every separate item. When thou givest in thine account of thy stewardship, it will be thus. Thou hadst so many children. What didst thou say to this child, and to this, and to this, and to the other? How often didst thou pray for that child with his bitter temper; for that child with his unbending obstinacy, for that child with its quickness, and its sweet affection; for that child, that sulky one; for that child, the headstrong, vicious one, that had learned all the evils of the street, and seemed to taint others? What didst thou do for each one of these? How didst thou labor for the conversion of every one? And to make the account still more particular it will run thus—What didst thou do for each child on each Sabbath? Thou heardest one child utter an ill word: didst thou reprove it? Thou sawest another child oppress a little one: didst thou deliver the less out of his hand and reprove him and teach both children to love each other? Didst thou notice the follies of each and strive to understand the temperament of each, so that thou shouldest fit thy discourse or thy prayer to each? Didst thou travail in birth for the conversion of each one? Didst thou agonise in prayer with God, and then didst thou agonise in exhortation with them, beseeching them to be reconciled to Christ? I believe the account will be far more minute than this, when God shall come to try our hearts and reins as well as our works and ways. My poor way of putting it does but becloud the truth which I seek to bring forth, but nevertheless so shall it be; a special and exact account shall be given. And then there shall be an account given, for every opportunity; not only for every child, but for every opportunity of doing good to the child. Did you avail yourself of that afternoon, when the child was in a peculiarly solemn frame because his little brother lay at home dead? Did you seek to send the arrows home when providence had made a wound in his little heart because he had lost his dear mother? Did you seek to turn every event which occurred in the school to account, whether it was joyous or the reverse? God gave you the opportunity, and he will at last ask you what you did with it. We shall many of us make but a sorry account, for we have neglected much that we ought to have done; and the general confession must be ours as teachers, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done."

And then remember, again, the account will be exact as to everything that we did. We shall not only be examined as to how we addressed the school; we may have had peculiar gifts for that, and we may have done well; it will be, "How did you address your own class?" and not that alone, but "How did you study the lessons?" If thou hadst no time it will not be required of thee to do what thou couldst not do, but if thou hadst much leisure how didst thou spend it? Was it for thy children, for thy Master's good, that thou mightest find polished shafts to shoot forth from thy bow, that God might bless thee, by giving thee strength to send them home into the heart? And then, what didst thou do in thy closet? Wast thou cold and careless there? Were thy children forgotten, or didst thou bring them on thy heart, and in thine arms, and with tears and cries commend them to Christ? Ah, Sunday-school teachers, your closet shall be turned into the open air one day, and the contents of your secret chambers be published before the sun. Oh, ye whose cobwebbed closets witness against you; oh, ye against whom the beam out of the wall explaineth because your voice has not been heard there, against whom the very floor might bear witness, because it

hath never felt the weight of your knees, how will you stand this searching test? How will you endure this day of burning, when God shall try you for everything you did, and everything you did not do which you ought to have done, in connection with the work of teaching your children? The account must be exact and precise, as well as personal. I shall not stop to enlarge upon that; your own conscience and judgment can enlarge upon it at home.

Now, remember, once again, that the account must be complete. You will not be allowed to leave out something, you will not be allowed to add anything. Perhaps some of you would like to begin with to-morrow, or next Sabbathday, and strike out the past. No, Sunday-school teacher, when God says, "Give an account of thy stewardship," you will have to begin with the day when you first were a teacher. Ah, my God, how many there are who profess to preach the Word, who might well beg that thou wouldst let many a year of their ministry be buried in forgetfulness! Ah, might not some of us fall upon our knees and say "Lord, let me give account of my diligent years, not of my idle years?" But we must begin with our ordination, we must end with our death, and you must begin with the first hour when you sat down in your class, and you must end when life ends, and not till then. Does not this put a very solemn aspect upon your account, some of you? You are always saying, "I will be better to morrow." Will that blot out yesterday? "I must be more diligent in future." Will that redeem the lost opportunities which have departed in the years gone by No; if you have loitered long, and lingered much, you will find the hardest running of to-day will not make up for the loitering of yesterday. There have been some men who, after spending many years in sin, have been doubly diligent for Christ afterwards, but they have always felt that they have only done the day's work in the day, and they mourned over those years which the locusts had eaten, as gone beyond recall. Oh! catch the moments as they fly, Sabbath-school teachers; use the days as they come. Do not be talking about making up for the badness of the first part of the account by the brilliant character of the conclusion; you cannot do it, you must give an account for each day separately, for each year by itself; and do what you may to retrieve your losses, the losses still stand upon the book, and the Master will say, at last, "How came these here?" And, though they are all covered up in Sovereign grace, if thou believest in Christ Jesus, yet thou wouldst not wish to have any the more stains for that. Because Christ hath washed thee, thou dost not desire to make thyself filthy; because he hath atoned thou dost not desire to commit sin. No, live, my brothers and sisters, as Sundayschool teachers should live. Live as if your own salvation depended upon the strictness of your fulfilling your duty; and yet recollect your salvation does not depend upon that, but on your personal interest in the everlasting covenant, and in the all-prevailing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Israel's strength and Redeemer.

III. And now, though there are many other things I might say, I fear lest I might weary you, therefore, let me notice some occasions when it will be WELL for you all to give an account of your stewardship; and then notice when you MUST give an account of it.

You know there is a proverb, that "short reckonings make long friends," and a very true proverb it is. A man will always be at friendship with his conscience as long as he makes short reckonings with it. It was a good rule of the old Puritans, that of making frank and full confession of sin every night; not to leave a week's sin to be confessed on Saturday night, or Sabbath morning, but to recall the failures, imperfections, and mistakes of the day, in order that we might learn from one day of failure how to achieve the victory on the morrow, and that washing ourselves daily from our sins we might preserve the purity and whiteness of our garments. Brothers and sisters, do the same; make short reckonings. And it will be well for you every Sabbath evening, or at any other time, if so it pleaseth you, to make a reckoning of what you do on the Sabbath. I do not say this in order that you may be encouraged in any self-righteous congratulation that

you have done well; because, if you make your reckoning correct, you will never have much cause to congratulate yourself, but always cause to mourn that you did your duty so ill compared with what you ought to have done. When the Sabbath is over and you have been twice to the house of God to teach your class, just sit down and try to recollect what were the points in which you failed. Perhaps you exhibited a hasty temper; you spoke to a boy too sharply when he was a little rebellious. Perhaps you were too complacent; you saw sin committed, and ought to have reproved it, and you did not do so. If you find out your own failing, that is half the way to a cure. Next Sabbath you can try and set it right.

Then, there are times which Providence puts in your way, which will be excellent seasons for reckoning. For instance, every time a boy or girl leaves the school, there is an opportunity afforded you of thinking to yourselves, "Well, how did I deal with Betsy? How did I treat John? Did I give William such teaching as will help him in his future life, to maintain integrity in the midst of temptation, and preserve righteousness when he shall be subjected to imminent perils? How did I teach the girl? Did I so teach her that she will know her duty when she goes into the world? Did I strive with all my might to lead her to the foot of the cross?" There are many solemn questions which you may put concerning the child. And when you meet with any of them grown up in after years, you will find that a very proper season for giving an account of your stewardship to your conscience, by seeing whether you really did with that person, when a child, as you could have desired.

Then, there is a peculiar time for casting up accounts when a child dies. Ah! what a host of thoughts cluster around the dying-bed of a child whom we have taught. Next to the father and the mother, I should think the Sabbath-school teacher will take the most interest in the dying one. You will recollect, "There lies withering the flower which my hand hath watered; there is an immortal soul about to pass the portals of eternity, whom I have taught. O God, have I taught this dying child the truth, or have I deceived him! Have I dealt faithfully with him? Have I told him of his ruin? Have I set before him how he was fallen in Adam and depraved in himself? Have I told him about the great redemption of Christ? Have I shown him the necessity of regeneration and the work of the Holy Spirit? or have I amused him with tales about the historical parts of the Bible and pieces of morality, and kept back the weightier matters of the law? Can I put my hand into his dying hand, and silently lifting my heart to heaven, can I say, "O God thou knowest I am clear of his blood?" Ah! that is a thing that stings the minister often—when he recollects that any of his congregation are dying. When I stand sometimes by the dying-bed of any of the ungodly in my congregation, it brings many a tearful thought to me. Have I been as earnest as I ought to have been? Did I cry to this man, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, stay not in all the plain, flee to the mountains! Did I pray for him, weep over him, tell him of his sin, preach Christ simply, plainly, boldly, to him? Was there not an occasion when I used lightness when I ought to have been solemn? Might there not have been a season when I uttered something by mistake, which may have been a pillow for the armhole of his conscience on which he might rest? Have not I helped to smooth his path to hell, instead of putting blocks in his way, and chains across his path that he might be turned out of it and led to seek the Saviour?" Ah! while we know that salvation is all of grace let none of us imagine we are free from the blood of souls, unless we warn them with diligence, unless we preach with faithfulness; for this same Bible which tells me that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, tells me that if I warn them not, their blood, if they perish, shall be required at my hand.

But now, teacher, let me tell you an occasion when you must give in your account. You may put off all these seasons if you like; you may live as carelessly as you please, but if you have a particle of heart in you, you will have to give an account when you are sick, and cannot go to your class. If your conscience is

worth having—which some people’s consciences are not, for they are dead and seared—if your conscience is an awakened one, when you are put out of your work, you will begin to think how you did it. You should read the letters of that holy man Rutherford. If ever there was a man who preached the gospel sweetly and with divine unction, I should think it must have been he; and yet when he was shut up in Aberdeen, and could not get out to his much-loved flock, he begun to say, “Ah, if the Lord will let me go out to preach again, I will never be such a dull drone as I was wont to be. I will preach with tears in mine eyes, so that the people may be comforted, and the sinners converted.” Perhaps when you are lying ill in your bed-room, little Jane comes to see you, and says, “I hope you will soon get well, teacher;” or William, or Thomas calls and enquires about you every Sunday afternoon, and asks the servant to give his love to you, and hopes that teacher will soon come back again. Then is the time when I know you will be sure to cast up your account. You will say, “Ah, when I get back to my class, I won’t teach them as I used to do. I will study my lesson more, I will pray more. I won’t be so hot or so fast with them as I was wont to be. I will bear with their ill manners. Ah, if my Master will give me, like Hezekiah, another fifteen years of labor, and will give me more grace, I will strive to be better.” You will be sure to cast up your accounts when you get sick.

But if you do not do it then, I will tell you when you must; that is when you come to die. What a dreadful thing it must be to be an unfaithful preacher on a dying-bed. (Oh that I may be saved from that!) To be upon one’s bed when life is over; to have had great opportunities, mighty congregations, and to have been so diligent about something else as to have neglected to preach the full and free gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! methinks as I lie in my bed a-dying, I should see spectres and grim things in the room. One would come and stare upon me and say, “Ah! you are dying. Remember how many times I sat in the front of the gallery, and listened to you, but you never once told me to escape from the wrath to come; you were talking to me about something I did not understand; but the simple matter of the gospel you never preached to me, and I died in doubt and trembling. And now you are coming to me to the hell which I have inherited because you were unfaithful.” And when in our grey and dying age we see the generations which have grown up around our pulpits, we shall think of them all. We shall think of the time when as striplings we first began to preach; we shall recollect the youths that then crowded, then the men, and then the grey heads that passed away. And methinks as they come on in grim procession, they will everyone leave a fresh curse upon our conscience because we were unfaithful. The death-bed of a man who has murdered his fellows, of some grim tyrant who has let the bloodhounds of war loose upon mankind, must be an awful thing. When the soldier, and the soldier’s widow, and the murdered man of peace rise up before him; when the smoke of devastated countries seems to blow into his eyes and make them sore and red; when the blood of men hangs on his conscience like a great red pall; when bloody murder, the grim chamberlain, draws red curtains round his bed, and when he begins to approach the last end where the murderer must inherit his dreary doom, it must be a fearful time indeed. But, methinks to have murdered souls must be more awful still—to have distributed poison to children instead of bread, to have given them stones when they asked us for right food, to have taught them error when we ought to have taught them the truth as it is in Jesus, or to have spoken to them with cold listlessness when earnestness was needed. Oh, how your children seem to curse you, when you lie there and have been unfaithful to your charge. Yes, you will have to cast up your account then; and let me tell you, though your hope must all be fixed on Jesus, and that must be the consolation of your life and death, yet it will be very sweetest; remember when you come to die that you have been successful in winning souls to Christ. Ah! that will bring a little life into the cheek of the consumptive teacher, who sickens young when you remind her that there was a little girl who, a year before she was taken ill, kissed her hand, and said, “Good bye, teacher, we shall meet in heaven. Do not you recollect, teacher, telling me the story of Jesus on the cross, and taking me

home one Sunday afternoon, and putting your arms around my neck, and kneeling down and praying that God would bless me? Oh my teacher, that brought me to Jesus.” Yes, teacher, when you are lying on your bed, pale and consumptive, you will recollect that there is one up there beside your Saviour who will receive you into eternal habitations—that young spirit who has gone before you, who by your means was emancipated from the wickedness and bondage of a sinful world. Happy is the teacher who has the hope of meeting a whole band of such in heaven. Such a thought often cheers me. Let the world say what it will, I know when I die there is many a spirit that will think of me in after years as the man who preached the gospel to him; many a drunkard brought to Jesus, and many a harlot reclaimed. And to the teacher it must be the same to think that when he claps his wings and mounts from this lower valley of earth to heaven, he will see a bright spirit coming down to meet him, and he will hear the Spirit saying—

“Sister spirit, come away,”

And when he opens his eyes, he will see that the song came from the lips of one to whom he had been blessed as the means of conversion. Happy you who shall be welcomed at the gates of Paradise by your spiritual sons and daughters, and who shall have beside your Master’s welcome, the welcome of those whom he hath given you to be jewels in your crown of glory for ever and ever.

Now to conclude. We must all give an account to God in the day of judgment. That is the thing which makes death so terrible. Oh, Death, if thou wert all, what art thou but a pinch, and all is over! But after Death the judgment. This is the sting of the dragon to the ungodly. The last great day is come. The books are opened—men, women, and children are assembled. Many have come, and some on the right, and some on the left, have already heard the sentence. It is now your turn. Teacher! what account will you render? In the first place, are you in Christ yourself? or have you taught to others what you did not know yourself? Have I any such here? Doubtless, I have. for alas! there are many such in our schools. Oh, my friend, what wilt thou say when the Master, opening the book, shall ask thee, “What hadst thou to do, to declare my statutes?” Will you look at him and say, “Lord I taught in thy schools, and thou hast eaten and drunk in our streets.” If you should say so, he will say, “Verily, I never knew you, depart from me ye cursed.” Then, what have you to say with regard to your schools—for although our state at last will really be settled according to our interest in Christ, you will be judged by your works, as evidences. The Scripture always says that we are to be judged according to our works. Well, then, the book is opened. You hear your own name read, and you hear that one brief sentence—“Inasmuch as thou hast been faithful over a few things I will make thee a ruler over many things—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!” Oh heaven of heavens! and is this the reward of the little trouble of teaching a few children? Oh, Master, thou givest ingots of gold for our grains of dust—our fragments of service thou rewardest with crowns and kingdoms! But he turns to others, and to you he says, “Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me. Depart from me into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Which of these two shall be said to me? Which of these two shall be said to you? “Oh! as in God’s sight I charge you by him who is the Judge of quick and dead, by the swiftness of his chariot-wheels which now are bringing him here, by the solemnity of his awful tribunal, by that sentence which shall never be reversed, judge yourselves, for then ye shall not be judged. Give an account of your stewardship to your conscience, and to your God. Confess your sins, seek his help, and begin from this hour, by his Holy Spirit, to undertake his work afresh; so shall ye stand before his face, clothed in the righteousness of your Redeemer and washed in his blood. Though not boasting in your works you shall be able to stand accepted in him, and your works shall follow when you rise from your labors, and you shall be among the blessed that die in the Lord.

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