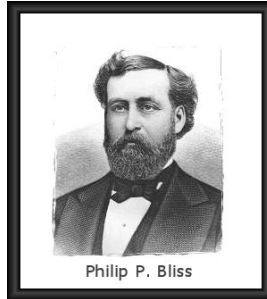


CFBC Hymnology Class 34

Philip Paul Bliss (1838-1876)



"I know not what awaits me. God kindly veils my eyes..."

"On December 29, 1876, shortly after 7 p.m., a train pulling out of Ashtabula, Ohio puffed its way across a trestle. Suddenly the passengers heard a terrible cracking sound. The trestle snapped and eleven rail cars plunged seventy feet down into a watery ravine. Even before the wooden cars slammed into the bottom, they were aflame, set afire by kerosene heaters. Of the 159 passengers in those cars, 92 were killed and most of the rest suffered serious injuries. Snuffed out by the wreck was a young couple whose bodies were never found...Philip Paul Bliss and his wife of 17 years, Lucy.

Ironically, the night before his death, P.P. Bliss had sung "I'm going home tomorrow" while he spent "the happiest Christmas he had ever known" with family. Philip and Lucy left their children with a sister and set off on their doomed journey. Had the children been with them, the disaster would have been worse.

D. L. Moody was among those who mourned the loss of Bliss. "In my estimate, he was the most highly honored of God, of any man of his time, as a writer and singer of Gospel Songs, and with all his gifts he was the most humble man I ever knew. I loved him as a brother, and shall cherish his memory..." Moody arranged for school children to donate pennies to erect a monument to Bliss in Rome, Pennsylvania, the singer's hometown.

After Bliss's death, those who opened his surviving luggage found words of a new song he had written. James McGranahan set this to music and it remains another favorite of the remarkable songwriter:

"I will sing of my redeemer,
And His wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross He suffered,
From the curse to set me free."

<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1801-1900/train-wreck-killed-hymn-writer-bliss-and-wife-11630582.html>

The Life and Ministry of Philip Paul Bliss

Philip Paul Bliss is one of the most famous Christian song writers in history. Had he lived as long as his peers, Fanny Crosby, Charles Wesley and Ira Sankey, he may have surpassed them all, as the greatest song writer of all time and the most widely used singer of all time, but a tragic accidental train wreck snuffed out his life in his 38th year...

Mr. Bliss was born with a melody in his heart, in a log cabin home in a mountain region. His father, Mr. Isaac Bliss, was a dedicated Christian man. The first spiritual recollections that Bliss had of his father were the daily family prayers. These prayers were ingrained upon childhood memory, ever to follow him throughout life. His father was a lover of music and it was through his father that he developed a passion for singing. They attended the Methodist Church.

When Philip was about six the family moved to Trumbull City, Ohio, but three years later returned to Pennsylvania, settling in Tioga City. During the first ten years of his life, the lad had little schooling, save his father's singing and his mother's teachings. The Holy Bible became an ever-growing influence in his life.

At the age of ten, he heard the piano for the first time and it deepened his burden to become a musician.

When Philip was eleven years old, in 1849, he left home to make a living for himself. He was to spend the next five years working in logging and lumber camps and sawmills. Having a strong physique, he was able to do a man's work. The next several years took him to many places and tutored him in many trades.

At the age of twelve, in 1850, he made his first public confession of Christ and joined the Baptist Church of Cherry Flats, Pennsylvania. He does not recall a time when he did not love Christ, but this was the official time of his conversion.

In 1851 he became assistant cook in a lumber camp at \$9 per month. Two years later, he was promoted to a log cutter. The following year he became a sawmill worker. Between jobs, he attended school. Uncertain as to what vocation he wanted, he just planned to be prepared for any opportunity that might arise. He spent some of his money in musical education as well. Young Philip remained strong in the Lord amongst the rowdy, laboring men of the camp, although it was not easy, but the spiritual implants of the godly parents were now bearing fruit. He also began to participate in Methodist camp meetings and revival services.

At age seventeen, in 1855, he decided that he would take the final step in preparation for his life's work. He went to Bradford City, Pennsylvania and finished the last requirements for his teaching credentials. The next year Philip was the new schoolmaster at Hartsville, New York. When school was not in session, he hired out for summer work on a farm.

In 1857 he met J. G. Towner who conducted a vocal school in Towanda, Pennsylvania. Recognizing that young Bliss had an unusually fine singing voice, he proceeded to give him his first formal voice training. Towner also made it possible for him to go to a musical convention in Rome, Pennsylvania, later that year. Here he met William B. Bradbury, a noted composer of sacred music. By the time the convention was over, Bradbury had encouraged Philip Bliss to surrender himself to the service of the Lord. The strong influence of these men in his life helped him to decide to be a music teacher. While still in his teens, Philip discovered that he had ability to compose music. His first composition was sent to George F. Root with this strange request, "If you think this song is worth anything, I would appreciate having a flute in exchange for it." He received the flute.

In 1858 he was appointed a teacher in the Rome, Pennsylvania, Academy. Here he met a fine young lady named Lucy Young, who was to become his bride. She was a poet from a musical family and greatly encouraged him in developing his musical talents. She was an earnest member of a Presbyterian Church, which he then joined. In later years they were to sing beautiful duets in the service of Christ. Not quite 21, on June 1, 1859, he married Lucy who was also his sister's special friend. He had grown to love her deeply and to admire her for her wonderful Christian life. The young groom worked on his father-in-law's farm for \$13 a month while he continued to study music.

He took music pupils in the evening to supplement his income and at 22 had sufficient knowledge of music to become an itinerant music teacher. He went from community to community with a \$20 melodeon and an ancient horse. It was the day of the old-fashioned singing school which was frequently conducted by a teacher traveling from place to place. Mr. Bliss delighted in these exercises and his musical ability began to attract the attention of his friends. As a teacher of one of these schools, he recognized his limitations and longed to study under some accomplished musician.

His wife's grandmother provided that opportunity in the summer of 1860, by giving him \$30 so that he could attend the Normal Academy of Music of New York. This meant six weeks of hard study and inspiration. Upon completion, he took the occupation of professional music teacher in earnest. Within three years, having attended each summer session and studying the rest of the year at home, Mr. Bliss was now recognized as a music authority in his home area, while continuing to travel his circuit. His talent was turning to composition, and his first published number ... Loral Vale ... though not a sacred number, caused him to believe that he could write songs. This number was published in 1865, one year after it was written.

The Blisses moved to Chicago in 1864 when Philip was 26. It was here he began to conduct musical institutes and became widely known as a teacher and a singer. His poems and compositions flowed out with regularity. He collaborated with George F. Root in the writing and publishing of gospel songs. In the summer of 1865, he went on a two-week concert tour with Mr. Towner. He was paid \$100. Amazed that so much money could be made in so short a time, he began to dream dreams. These dreams were short lived.

The following week a summons appeared at his door stating that he was drafted for service in the Union Army. Since the war was almost over, the decision was cancelled after two weeks, and he was released. He then went on another concert tour but this one was a failure. However, during the tour he was offered a position with a Chicago Music House, Root & Cady Musical Publishers, at a salary of \$150 per month.

For the next eight years, between 1865 and 1873, often with his wife by his side, he held musical conventions, singing schools, and sacred concerts under the sponsorship of his employers. He was becoming more popular in concert work, not yet directing his full efforts into evangelical singing. He was, however, writing a number of hymns and Sunday school melodies..

One summer night in 1869, while passing a revival meeting in a church where D. L. Moody was preaching, Mr. Bliss went inside to listen. That night Mr. Moody was without musical help for the singing and Mr. Bliss was aware of it. The singing was rather weak. From the audience, Philip attracted Mr. Moody's attention. At the door, Mr. Moody got the particulars about Mr. Bliss quite quickly and asked him to come to his Sunday evening meetings to help in the singing any time he could. He further urged him to give up his business and become a singing evangelist.

Another chance acquaintance came with Major Daniel W. Whittle, when Mr. Bliss was a substitute song leader in a gospel meeting. Impressed with his voice, Mr. Whittle recommended the young man for the position of choir director at the First Congregational Church in Chicago. This was in 1870. The Blisses moved into an apartment in the Whittle home, and while living there, he wrote two of his most popular hymns... *Hold the Fort* and *Jesus Loves Even Me*. Yearly, new songs were published with many of Bliss's songs included. His fame began spreading...

Early in 1873 Moody asked Bliss to be his music director for some meetings in England. Bliss declined and Sankey was then asked to go. Little did Bliss realize the opportunity he had turned down, for it might have been "Moody and Bliss" instead of "Moody and Sankey," for that tour bought Moody into international prominence.

During the winter of 1873, Moody again urged him in a letter from Scotland to devote his entire time to evangelistic singing. Mr. Bliss was facing a time of decision. At a prayer meeting, Mr. Bliss placed himself at the disposal of the Lord, and he decided to lay out a fleece. He would join his friend Major Whittle, a good evangelist, in Waukegan, Illinois, and see what would happen. That was March 24-26, 1874. At one of the services as Mr. Bliss sang *Almost Persuaded*, the Holy Spirit seemed to fill the hall. As he sang, sinners presented themselves for prayer and many souls were won to Jesus Christ that night. The following afternoon, as they met for prayer, Mr. Bliss made a formal surrender of his life to Jesus Christ. He gave up everything — his musical conventions, his writing of secular songs, his business position, his work at the church, so that he would be free to devote full time to the singing of sacred music in evangelism, in particular to be Mr. Whittle's song evangelist and children's worker.

At the same time, Mr. Whittle dedicated his life to full-time evangelism. A gospel team was born. Little did Mr. Bliss know that he only had two and one-half years to live. Depending upon the Lord to take care of his wife and two children, he joined Whittle in a successful evangelistic career. Mr. Bliss compiled a revival song-book for use in their campaigns entitled *Gospel Songs*. It was a tremendous success, bringing royalties of \$30,000, all of which he gave to Whittle for the development of their evangelistic efforts. Another source mentions \$60,000 was made and given to charities....Mr. Bliss especially enjoyed working with young people and often conducted his own "praise meetings." where he would preach and sing.

On Friday, November 24, 1876, Mr. Bliss sang at a ministers' meeting conducted by D. L. Moody in Chicago's Farwell Hall. Over 1,000 preachers were present. A favorite song that was sung, was *Are Your Windows Open Toward Jerusalem*. Also, he introduced to the gathering a new song that he had just written the music for ... *It is Well with My Soul*. He now had one month to live.

Next, he conducted a service for the 800 inmates of the Michigan State prison. In genuine repentance, many of them wept as he spoke of the love of God and sang, *Hallelujah, What a Saviour!* The last hymn that he ever sang in a public meeting was one of his own, called *Eternity*.

Mr. Bliss spent the Christmas holidays with his mother and sister at Towanda and Rome, Pennsylvania, and made plans to return to Chicago for work with Moody in January. A telegram, however, arrived asking him to return sooner, in order to take part in meetings advertised for the Sunday following Christmas. He wired a message. "Tickets for Chicago, via Buffalo and Lake Shore Railroad. Baggage checked through. Shall be in Chicago Friday night. God bless you all forever." He decided to leave his two little children, Philip Paul age 1 and George age 4, with his mother.

Then, the day that was to stun the Christian world arrived, December 29, 1876. The train, the Pacific Express, was struggling along in a blinding snowstorm and was about three hours late on a Friday afternoon. Eleven coaches pulled by two engines were creeping through the huge drifts, approaching Ashtabula, Ohio. Passing over a trestle bridge that was spanning a river, the first engine reached solid ground on the other side but everything else plummeted 75 feet into the ravine below into the icy water. Later, it was determined that flood waters had weakened the bridge.

Five minutes after the train fell, fire broke out. Fanned by gale like winds, the wooden coaches were ablaze. Mr. Bliss succeeded in extricating himself and crawling to safety through a window. Finding his wife was pinned under the ironwork of the seats, he returned into the car, and bravely remained at her side, trying to extricate her as the flames took their toll. No trace of their bodies was ever discovered. For days it was not known who were among the dead, as there had been no passenger list. It was tabulated that out of 160 passengers there were only 14 survivors. Later official sources said 92 died. In most cases, there was nothing to recover.

Mr. Bliss's trunk reached Chicago safely. When it was opened, it was found that the last song that he had written before his death, began as follows: "I know not what awaits me. God kindly veils my eyes..." The trunk contained many hymn-poems which he had not yet written the music for. One such was *My Redeemer*, which became world famous, when music was added by James McGranahan.

The funeral was held in Rome, Pennsylvania, where a monument was erected bearing the inscription, "P. P. Bliss, author... *Hold the Fort!*" Memorial services were held throughout the nation for the beloved couple. No private citizen's death brought more grief to the nation. On December 31st, D. L. Moody spoke at a memorial gathering in Chicago. On January 5th, a song service was held to honor Mr. Bliss there and 8,000 filled the hall, and another 4,000 were on the outside.

Here are the stories of a few of his hymns:

Almost Persuaded... Outside of *Just as I Am*, this has been the most successful gospel invitation song ever written. In the early 1870's, Mr. Bliss was listening to a sermon by Rev. Brundage, a friend of his, in a little church in the east. The preacher closed his appeal with, "He who is almost persuaded is almost saved. But, to be almost saved is to be eternally lost!" These words impressed Bliss so deeply that it led him to write this great hymn.

Jesus Loves Even Me... One night, MR. Bliss, weary after many days of labor in downtown Chicago, was resting at the Whittle home at 43 South Street. His heart was overflowing with joy and he sat meditating upon Romans 5:5. As he meditated and prayed, with tears in his eyes, he took pencil and paper and wrote, "I am so glad that our Father in heaven, Tells of His love in the Book He has given..."

We end this sketch noting *It is Well with My Soul* whose words were written by Horatio G. Spafford. On November 22, 1873, this preacher and good friend of Mr. Bliss lost his four children in the depths of the Atlantic Ocean, as a result of a collision. Mr. Spafford had sent his wife and children ahead, promising to meet them in France, shortly. He wrote the verses in mid-Atlantic on his way over to join his bereaved wife. He asked Mr. Bliss to write the music for his verses. It was introduced publicly for the first time at the previously mentioned ministers' meeting in Chicago in November, 1876. One month later, it *was well* with Mr. Bliss's soul, as he was reunited with the Spafford children.

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<https://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biobliss.html>

Sermon on the Death of Mr. P. P. Bliss by D. L. Moody

Preached by D. L. Moody in Chicago, December 31, 1876

Text: "Therefore be ye also ready." Matt. 24:44

I expected to enjoy, this afternoon, coming around here and hearing our friend Mr. Bliss sing the Gospel and our friend Mr. Whittle preach. I cannot tell you what a disappointment it has been to me. I have looked forward to those two men of God coming to this city.

I had arranged and made my plans to stay over a few days, in order to hear and enjoy their services. Ever since I heard that I would have to take their place this afternoon, there has been just one text running in my mind. I cannot keep it out: "Therefore be ye also ready." You who have heard me preach the past three months, I think I will bear witness to this, that I haven't said much about death. Perhaps I haven't been faithful in this regard. I'd always rather tell about life; perhaps there's not been warning enough in my preaching. But I feel that, if I should hold my peace this afternoon, and not lift up my voice and warn you to make ready for death, God might lay me aside and put some one else in my place; I must speak and forewarn you.

Today has been one of the most solemn days in my life. The closing hours of every year, for the past ten or twelve years, have been very solemn to me. I think I never spent such a day as I have today. This world never seemed so empty, and men never looked so blind away from God, as they do today. It seems, as never before, that I cannot understand how life can go on in madness, how a man can keep away from Christ, when in just a stroke he is gone to eternity, and there is no hope. Those men I mean that really believe, intellectually, that the Bible is true; that if they die without regeneration, without being born again, they cannot see God's kingdom. How it is they can believe, and yet they can still stay away from Christ when such judgments are brought near to them, is a mystery to me. I hope the words of the Lord Jesus will find their way to your hearts, as they have to mine; I hope you will hear him this afternoon saying: "Therefore, be ye also ready." He had been warning them; for in the verse preceding this text he said, "As in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and took them all away." It came suddenly. How often the judgments of God come suddenly upon us. I want to call your attention to a few words we find in the Old Testament, in the 6th chapter of Jeremiah, at the 10th verse: "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken; behold the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." Also in the 33d chapter of Ezekiel, 4th, 5th and 6th verses: "Then whosoever hear the sound of the trumpet and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hands." Do you ask me, now, why I am so anxious to warn you? Because, if I don't, the blood of your soul will be required at my hand.

I want to warn you to-day; I want to plead with you today. And it is because I love you that I come to plead with you. I am sure there is nothing else that could induce me to speak this afternoon. I felt rather like going into my room and locking the door, and trying to learn what this providence means. I don't expect to find out yet; I'm not sure I'll ever know. But—(the speaker paused in deep emotion), I just felt I'd got to come down here this afternoon and cry out: "Therefore be ye also ready!"

Make ready before the close of this sermon! Just ask yourselves this question, "Am I ready to meet God this moment?" If not, when will you be? God would not tell us to be ready, if he did not give us the power, unless it was something within our reach.

The thought is put into some of your minds that I am trying to take advantage of the death of this good man to frighten you and scare you; and I haven't any doubt Satan is doing this work, at this moment. Right here let me notice that some say I'm preaching for effect. That's what I am doing. I want to affect you; I want to rouse you out of your death-sleep, when I warn you to prepare to meet your God; for "in such hour as you think not the Son of man cometh." It is just from pure love, pure friendship to you, that I warn you; the thought that I am trying to frighten you from selfish motives is from the pit of hell. You take a true mother; if she does not warn her child when playing with fire, you say she's not what she professes to be, not a true mother. If a father sees his boy going to ruin and don't warn him, is he a true father? I say, it is the single power of love that makes me warn you. Suppose I walk by a house on fire, with a man and woman in it, and their seven children. If I don't call out, hammer on the door, smash in the windows if necessary, and cry out, "Escape if you can," what would you say? You would say, I ought not to live. If souls are going down to death and hell all around me—I verily believe such live today, and some are in this building—how can I hold my peace, and not cry out at the top of my voice: "Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

...Death has come very near to many of us. What warnings have come to us all. The preacher's calls to repentance, how again and again they have rung in our ears. We may have but one or two more calls yet, this year, in the next few hours; but I doubt it. Then how many of us in the last twelve months have gone to the bedside of some loved friend, and kneeling in silent anguish unable to help, have whispered a promise to meet that dying one in heaven. Oh, why delay any longer! Before these few lingering hours have gone, and the year rolls away into eternity, I beg of you, see to it that you prepare to make that promise good. Some of you have kissed the marble brow of a dead parent this year, and the farewell look of those eyes has been, "Make ready to meet thy God." In a few years you will follow, and there may be a reunion in heaven. Are you ready, dear friends?

When visiting the body of my brother, just before he was put in the grave, I picked up his Bible, of the size of this in my hand, and there was just one passage of Scripture marked. I looked it up, and I found it read: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." As I read it that night, the hand that wrote it was silent in death. It was written in '76. Little did he think, when he wrote it, that in that same year he would be silent in the grave. Little did he think that the autumn wind and the [winter] snow would go roaring over his grave. Thank God, it was a year of jubilee to him! That year he found salvation; it was a precious year to his soul. That year he met his God. How often have I thanked God for that brother's triumphant death! It seems as though I could not live to think he had gone down to the grave unprepared to meet his God, gone without God and hope.

Dear friends,—dear unsaved friends,—I appeal to you that you will now accept Christ. Seize the closing hours of this year; let not this year die till the great question is decided. I plead with you once more to come to the Lord Jesus. Oh, hear these blessed words of Christ, as I shout them again in your hearing: "Therefore be ye also ready."

Now death may take us by surprise. That's the way it has taken our dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bliss. Little did they know, as they rode toward Cleveland last Friday night, what was to be the real end of the journey. About the time I was giving out notice, last Friday night, of their being here this afternoon, they were then struggling with death. That was about the time they passed into glory-land. It was a frightful death, by surprise. But, in that time of gloom, darkness and death, they both were ready. They were just ripened for the kingdom of God. I do not think I ever saw two persons who have grown more in Christ than these dear friends have in the past four or five years. I do not think a man walks the streets of Chicago today who has so few enemies as P. P. Bliss. He was a man we will love in another world. When the summons came, it must have been terrible; it must have brought cruel pain for a few minutes. But it lasted only a few minutes, and—they were in glory. Only a few minutes—and they were all together in that world of light, perhaps raising the shout of praise, "Alleluiah, what a Savior!" I think the heavenly choir has had a great accession today. I doubt whether many around the throne of God sing sweeter than P. P. Bliss. I doubt whether many have loved the Son of God more than he. With that golden harp of the glorified, how sweetly shall he sing!

But, my friends, while we are mourning here, are we ready? We cannot call them back. We may mourn for them; we may mourn for the sad misfortune that has befallen ourselves. But what is our loss is their gain. It is better for them there than here; it is better to be "absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Shall you join him in that blessed land? Say, are you ready?

Now there are three things which every man should be ready for in this world: ready for life, ready for death, and ready for judgment. Judgment after death is as sure as life; judgment is as sure as death. There are three sure things. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment." It is of very little account how we die, or where we die, if we are only prepared, if we are only ready. We don't know what may happen any day. It seems to me, we ought to be ready any hour, any moment; we know not what may happen any moment. Oh, let us get ready! It seems the sheerest folly to delay this matter a single moment. Look at that train, where great numbers were ushered into eternity unexpectedly. Little did they think that their time was so near at hand. Little did our friends, Mr. Bliss and wife, think that they were going to be ushered into eternity, as they stepped light-hearted on that railway train. It would seem that people ought to resolve never to step aboard a railway train again, until they're ready to meet their God. It would seem as though no one would lie down and go to sleep tonight, until he knows he is ready to meet the bridegroom.

Dear friends, are you ready? This question this afternoon, it seems to me, ought to go down into all our hearts. And then, if we are ready, we can shout over death and the grave; that death is overcome, the sting of death is gone, and the grave opens terrorless.

Suppose we do go on and live thirty or forty years; it is all only a little moment. Suppose we die in some lone mountain, like Moses on Pisgah; or like Jacob, in the midst of our family; or like Joshua, with the leaders of Israel around us; or suppose God lets us die surrounded with the comforts and luxuries of home; or suppose death comes on unexpectedly and suddenly, as it did on Stephen; it may be we shall be called to die the death of the martyr, and be put to death unexpectedly; but if we are only ready, what care we just how our summons comes. If I am ready, I would as soon die like Stephen, or Moses on Pisgah. I would as soon die like our friend Mr. Bliss, as like Jacob with all his sons around him, if only I am ready for my glorious inheritance beyond the grave. That is the main question. It is not how we die. It is not where we die. At the worst, it may be but the sudden shock of a few minutes, and all will be over; and we enter upon eternal joy, joy for evermore. Millions and millions and millions of years in this world will not yield the joy of one minute of heaven. O my friends, shall you have a place in that heavenly home? Oh! will you not each one ask this question just now, "Am I ready, am I ready?"

I believe that every man in this Christian land has had some warning; some John the Baptist to warn him as Herod had, some Paul as Agrippa and Felix had, some friend like Nathan, sent to warn him, as David had; some friend to warn him such as Ahab had in Elijah. And, my friends, I think this is a day of warning to you. Are you not coming to God to-day? Will you not hear the Savior's loving voice to-day, "Come unto me"? God will forgive your sins and blot them out, and give you a new heart. Oh, let not the sun go down to-night without being reconciled to God.

Little did those people on that train, as it neared Cleveland Friday night, little did they think the sun was going down for them the last time, and that they should never see it rise again. It is going down tonight,—as I am speaking, the last sun of the year; and some of you in this assemblage may never see it rise again. Dear friends, are you ready for the call, if it comes to you between now and tomorrow morning? This very night you may be called away; your soul may be required by God your Maker. Are you ready to meet the King and Judge of all the earth? Let me put, urgently but kindly, these questions to every soul here to-night. Can you say: "I have Christ; I have eternal life through Jesus Christ my Savior"? If not, dear friends, let me ask you, what will you say when he shall come to judge you? If, this very night, he should summon you to stand before him, what would you say?

Oh, how deceitful death is! Something may fall on us as we walk home tonight, or we may fall down and break some part of our body, and be ushered into eternity. We may be seized by some fit, and we're gone. We may have some disease around the heart, that is hidden from us and that we know nothing about, and this may be our last day on earth. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow;" we don't know what will happen, even before tomorrow. And then, another deception. A great many people, you know, because their parents have outlived the allotted years, because their parents were long-lived people, think that they're going to live long also. How many are deceived in that way. Then there is that lying deception: "Oh it is time enough to be a Christian,—time enough to cry to God—when he calls us."

Look at that wreck! Look at those people being dashed down that frightful chasm to frightful deaths! That is no time to get ready; that is not the time! How many in eternity in five minutes! How many instantly! No time for prayer in such chaos as that. I would not say God is not merciful; he may have heard even then, the penitent cry; but I would not dare to say, "Put it off till some calamity overtakes you." The word comes, now, at this moment, "Prepare to meet God," "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Oh, that is the first duty and pleasure of life, not its last! It is more important that you seek the kingdom of God today—just now, this very hour—than anything else, than everything else, in life! It is more important than going home to look after the highest earthly affairs; more important than if you could win the wealth and honors of the universe! Let business be suspended and everything be laid aside, until this greatest question of time and eternity—is settled, "Prepare to meet thy God." Oh, prepare!

My friends, I call upon you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, I call upon you to prepare this day and this hour to meet your God. I lift up my voice, in warning, to all of this assembly. Would you not rather be in the place of Mr. and Mrs. Bliss, and die as they did, in that terrible wreck, by that appalling accident—would you not rather choose that, than to live on twenty-five years, or a hundred years, and die without God, and go down in despair to dark rivers of eternal death! Oh, it was appalling! But I would rather, a thousand times, have been on that train that dark night, and taken that awful leap and met my God as I believe Mr. and Mrs. Bliss have met him, than to have the wealth of worlds and die without God and hope! Oh, if you are not ready, make ready just now! I think a great many tears should be shed for the sins of the past year. If you take my advice, you will not go out of this Tabernacle this night until you have tasted repentance, and the joy of sins forgiven. Go into the inquiry-room and ask some of the Christian people to tell you the way of life, to tell you what to do to be saved. Say, "I want to be ready to meet my God tonight; for I don't know the day or the hour he may summon me."

I may be speaking to some this afternoon who are hearing me for the last time. In a few days, I will be gone. My friends, to you I want to lift up my warning voice once again. I want to speak as to brethren beloved, hastening on to judgment: "Prepare to meet thy God," I beg of you, I beseech of you, this moment, don't let the closing hours, these closing moments of '76, pass, until you are born of God, born of the Spirit, born from death. This day, if you seek God, you shall find him.

This day, if you turn from sin and repent, God is ready to receive you. Let me say, he never will be more willing than to-day; and you'll never have more power than today. If you are ready, he is ready now to receive and bless you forever!

Oh, may the God of our fathers have compassion upon every soul assembled here! May our eyes be opened; and all flee from the wrath to come! May the divine warnings take hold on every soul! May we profit by this sad calamity, and may many be raised up in eternity to thank God that this meeting was ever held.

From *"The Gospel Awakening"* Chicago: Fairbanks and Palmer Pub. Co., ©1883.
<https://www.wholesomewords.org/etexts/moody/moodybliss.html>



Lucy Young Bliss (1841-1876): Born March 14, 1841 in Rome, Bradford County, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Married Philip Bliss June 1, 1859. They had two children. She and her husband died in a train disaster in Ashtabula, Ohio, Friday evening, December 29, 1876, when a bridge gave way and the passenger cars plunged to the ravine below.

Man of Sorrows!

Man of Sorrows! what a name
For the Son of God, who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned he stood,
Sealed my pardon with his blood:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Guilty, vile, and helpless, we;
Spotless Lamb of God was he;
Full atonement! can it be?
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

Lifted up was he to die,
"It is finished!" was his cry:
Now in heav'n exalted high:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

When he comes, our glorious King,
All his ransomed home to bring,
Then anew this song we'll sing:
Hallelujah! what a Saviour!

I will sing of my Redeemer

I will sing of my Redeemer
And his wondrous love to me;
On the cruel cross he suffered,
From the curse to set me free.

Sing, O sing of my Redeemer!
With his blood he purchased me;
On the cross he sealed my pardon,
Paid the debt and made me free.

I will tell the wondrous story,
How my lost estate to save,
In his boundless love and mercy,
He the ransom freely gave.

I will praise my dear Redeemer,
His triumphant power I'll tell,
How the victory he giveth
Over sin and death and hell.

I will sing of my Redeemer
And his heav'nly love to me;
He from death to life has brought me,
Son of God, with him to be.

It is well with my soul

Words by Horatio Spafford, Music by P P Bliss

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well with my soul;
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And has shed his own blood for my soul.

My sin—O the bliss of this glorious thought!—
My sin, not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more;
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

O Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend;
"Even so"—it is well with my soul.