

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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## MIRACLES OF LOVE.

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### A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4TH, 1873, BY

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“Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.”—Isaiah xxxviii. 17.  
(Marginal reading).

THE means used for the restoration of Hezekiah's body to health was a lump of figs laid as a plaister upon the boil, but the means used for the renewal of his soul from the disease of despondency was something equally effectual and far sweeter. What if I say that the Lord laid to the sore of Hezekiah's heart some of the leaves of the tree of life which are for the healing of the nations. The fact is that Hezekiah, under such a mass of troubles, had sunk very low in doubts and fears, and dark forbodings, until he almost despaired, and, therefore, the Lord shed abroad in his heart a sense of divine love—deep, true, and mighty; and, as Hezekiah's body recovered, so Hezekiah's spirits also rose, and instead of chattering like a crane he began to sing the praises of the Most High. The remedy for his soul's sickness was love. His heart was fetched up from the grave of its despair by love; love was the hand of power that drew him up, and love the cords by which he was uplifted.

Now, what was true of Hezekiah with regard to his sickness and depression is true in the fullest sense of all believers. See, dear brethren, where we lay by nature—in the grave of death; yes, and more—in the pit of corruption. We were so destroyed by sin that we were like men who had rotted in a pit and were corrupt, for sin is a foul putrefaction of our nature, and it has worked in us to the most dreadful degree. Like the slain upon the battle field, rotting with foul decay are we—obnoxious to God, corrupt and abominable. At this present moment by sovereign grace those of us who have believed in Jesus have been brought up out of the horrible pit; our standing now is a blessed one, for our feet are upon the Rock of Ages: immutable promises and eternal purposes are now the bases of our confidence. Now shall our head be lifted up above our enemies round about us, therefore with joy will we offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;

we will sing, yea, we will sing praises unto the Lord. It is hardly needful that I remind you that it was the love of God which moved him to have compassion upon us when we were in the pit of corruption. The Lord loved us even when we were in that loathsome condition. This is a deep mystery of love. Well does the apostle speak of "his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." To love us when there was no good in us, but every evil in us ; to love us when we were unloveable, and even hateful—this was not after the manner of man, but is worthy of the infinite heart of God. Now we know that this ancient, primeval love, which had no cause except itself, devised the way of lifting us up out of the pit. We were to be brought up by substitution, by the sacrifice of another in our stead ; we were to be brought up by the operations of the divine energy—that same power which brought our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead was to bring us up from our death in sin. Love planned this admirable method of mercy ; and we are equally ready to admit this morning, and to exult as we admit it, that it was love which supplied all the provisions necessary for carrying out the plan. Love brought the Saviour to the cross ; love made him bear our sins in his own body on the tree ; love led him to give up his precious life on our behalf, and to become a hostage in the tomb. Love sent the Holy Ghost to quicken us, to illuminate us, to strengthen us, and to dwell in us for ever. Love found the materials for our redemption, and love applied the redemption when it was completed. Love led us to the Saviour's cross ; love regenerated us. Love has supported us till this day, and will keep us to the end.

I shall not, however, call your attention to that great truth, but to one of the same order. The text sets forth a charming fact, which I desire to insist upon as God's Spirit shall help me. It is this, not merely that love desired our salvation, planned it, provided it, and so on, but that the instrument which love has used has been *love*. In order to get us out of the pit we have not been drawn out of it by power, nor driven out of it by terror, but we have been loved out of it. "*Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.*" The other Sabbath morning I spoke to you upon our loving souls into Christ, and tried to show in a few sentences the power of love to lead sinners to Jesus. Now that is what the text means—that God's love has loved us out of the pit of corruption : it has been the energetic means which has brought the saved ones to be what they are. This subject has carried my own soul away in my private contemplations, but I fear I cannot set it forth to you as I would wish. I am like the child which said to its mother, "Mother, I will bring the sea to thee," and the little one went down to the shore and filled its little palm with the water, but before it reached its mother it had spilt ten times as much as it had carried, and if it had carried all it had taken up, it would only have brought a few drops, and left behind it the great and wide sea altogether undiminished. I am hopeless of being able to convey to your souls a tithe of what I feel. I could have danced with David before the ark while I was drinking the new wine out of the golden cup of the text. I am hopeless of transferring my joy to you ; and if I could succeed in it, I should have accomplished little compared with the glory of the text

before me. I pray that many of you may, however, get enough out of this sermon to make you sing—

“In the heavenly Lamb  
Thrice happy I am,  
And my heart it doth dance  
At the sound of his name.”

May the Spirit of God love you this morning into a sense of the Saviour's love, love you into a ravishing enjoyment of the love of God. We shall consider first of all that we were loved into an *entrance into grace*; we are loved into *advance in grace*; and we shall be *loved from grace into glory*.

I. We were in the beginning LOVED INTO GRACE. What brought us to be converted men and women? We know it was the power of the Holy Spirit, but of that we shall not now speak: our question is,—what instrumentality did the Spirit use? The answer is, in most cases—in mine, certainly, and I do not doubt in the case of you all, in some degree—love was the constraining power. The love of Christ to sinners was the topic which *arrested our solemn attention* to the gospel. That Jesus Christ should die, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” is a thought which commands attention and compels men to hear. As the ancient mariner laid hold upon the wedding guest and held him spell-bound by his strange story, so have myriads of men been fast held by the wondrous news of the love of God in Christ Jesus. If we desire attention from sinners we must preach Christ to them; all else will be flat and vapid compared with Christ crucified. The first missionaries to Greenland thought that the natives were too debased to understand at once the doctrine of atonement, therefore they began to tell them of the existence of a God, and so on. No effect was produced by such stale information, but when translating the chapter of John in which the passage occurs, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”; a Greenlander said, “Is that true?” and when the missionary affirmed that it was, “Why then,” said he, “did you not tell us that at first, for that is good news indeed.” That there is a God, the heavens are telling it; that God will punish injustice and wrong, conscience affirms it. The visible creation and the inner consciousness of man sufficiently declare that there is a God, and that he is just; but that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, this is a novelty, a thing which never was spelt out yet by the wisdom of human nature; and so, if attention is to be arrested, it must be through the news, the blessed news, of redeeming love. It was so with many of us. We were loved out of indifference; loved into attentive hearing; love won our ears to her sweet tale.

Having come to listen with interest, we were nevertheless but little anxious to become doers of the word. To be saved did not seem to us to be very important, but when we heard again and again from our minister and from our Bibles, of the “great love wherewith he loved us,” we began to feel *aroused*. Love touched our hearts, as well as our ears. When the sun visits the flowers which have hid themselves

away in the cold earth to escape from hungry winter, he begins to call them out of their hiding-places by shining upon them, and then by-and-by they say unto themselves, "Let us break our bands of sleep asunder; let us uplift the mould which covers us; and let us peep forth that we may see the blessed sun, for full surely he is calling us:" even so, when the warm beams of love began to fall upon us in the form of invitations, expostulations, entreaties, and instructions, we felt their sweet influence, and at last we said, "We will arise, and seek him who loves our souls, if haply we may be saved by him." The Lord loved us out of our neglect of salvation. Our face was set towards sin, and our back was towards himself; but he loved us right round, till we could not help turning our faces towards Jesus and our backs upon our sins.

You recollect, brethren, when you began to seek the Lord. Love had brought you as far as that, but you were hampered with the idea that it was of no use to hope for mercy—doubt hung like a heavy pall upon you: you sat in the region of the shadow of death, and you would have remained there had you not been loved into *faith*. You were bidden to believe in Jesus: it was the gospel's standing message: "Believe and thou shalt be saved"; but how did you come to believe, my brother? I know your answer will be, "He loved me into faith." As for myself I saw the great Lover of men hanging on a tree in agonies and blood—they told me it was love to miserable sinners, love to those who hated him, love to his murderers, which made him bleed; and as I understood that it was God who hung there to die a felon's death for unworthy men—I know not how it was, my brethren, but on a sudden I felt that I could not help believing. Love compelled me to believe. Unbelief in the presence of a dying Saviour, if that dying Saviour's love be really understood, must surely be impossible. He, the Lord of heaven, without whom was not anything made that is made, humbling himself to become a servant unto God and man, and then laying down his life a substitute for the ungodly, and all out of love! What a miracle is here! Who can disbelieve in the presence of such love? Saviour, we must believe thee! It is inevitable that we do so! Thy love has loved us into faith, and at the cross's foot we hope and trust in thee.

At the time when faith came into our hearts, there came with it the sister grace which always attends it, namely, *repentance*. Beloved, you must remember, I think, the days of your hardness of heart. Some of us were very hard; adamant itself is wax compared with what our nature was. A mother's tears could not melt us, nor a father's careful anxiety. How could we repent of sin? How could a millstone feel, or a flint weep? Why, when we heard the gospel say to us, "Repent, and be converted," that command might as well have been spoken to dry bones or to marble statues. We could not repent. We were enamoured of our sins; we thought them sweet: we could not turn from them. But, oh, do you remember when you did repent? Can you tell how it was brought about? I recollect when my soul was like the rock in Horeb, for it gushed with living streams; yet it was not because Moses's rod had smitten it, but because Christ's voice of love spake to it, and the rock dissolved into floods at once!



See the summer's sun assail and vanquish the iceberg which has floated from its northern home. Winter's rudest storms could not dissolve the monstrous mountain of ice, nor could a thousand hurricanes and storms break it in pieces ; but the sun shot a strange tremor through its heart as soon as he smiled thereon, and every beam that fell from the fair orb of day shot through it like a dart, till at last, yielding to the mysterious glow, the iceberg lost its hardness of heart, bowed itself from its chill loftiness, fell into the warm gulf stream, and was no more to be found. Was it not so with you when the eyes of Jesus darted love into your heart ? How irresistible were his blissful arrows ! How deadly to your sins ! How mortal to your pride ! You were soon vanquished ! Well does John Newton describe our case in his hymn—

“ Lord, Thou hast won, at length I yield ;  
 My heart, by mighty grace compell'd,  
 Surrenders all to Thee ;  
 Against Thy terrors long I strove,  
 But who can stand against Thy love ?  
 Love conquers even me.

If Thou hadst bid Thy thunders roll,  
 And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,  
 I still had stubborn been ;  
 But mercy has my heart subdued,  
 A bleeding Saviour I have view'd,  
 And now I hate my sin.”

Truly we were loved into repentance. There were other agents used, of course ; the law thundered and conscience smote us, but still the master weapon in all the armoury of God against our unregenerate hearts, was love. We own that it is more than a match for us—we confess that we are conquered by its might. The Lord has loved our souls out of the pit of corruption into that state of salvation in which we are now found.

II. Secondly, let us consider that we have been LOVED INTO GROWTH IN GRACE. The great motive power, urging us onward has always been the self-same love of God.

Let us turn aside for a few minutes to meditate upon the love of God to us. Our hearts will burn within us while we think upon it. It is quite certain, my dear brethren, that you who believe in Jesus are personally the objects of the love of the Triune Jehovah. You are loved as much as you love your children, or as the bridegroom loves his bride—nay, those are very feeble images, for you are loved by God infinitely. The heart of God never does anything weakly ; his love is strong and powerful, for it is the affection of an omnipotent spirit. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus—“ As the Father hath loved me even so have I loved you.” Do you know how much the Father loves his Son ? Can you form any conception ? Are you not baffled in the attempt ? “ Even so,” saith Jesus, “ have I loved you.” There is another text from which I never expect to preach till I get to heaven, and I would like to preach from it there if a pulpit might be had. It is this : “ That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” O, you are not dealing with trifles when you are dealing with the love of God to you. It is not a spare

corner of the heart of God that he gives to you, as you may give a little love to the poor Arabs of the street or the criminals in the jails ; but the great, inconceivably vast heart of God belongs as much to every Christian as if there were not another being in the world for God to love ! Even as Jehovah loves his Only-begotten, so does he love each one of his children.

Remember, too, for this is sweet to think of, the Lord always did love you. It is no novelty for God to love his people. He loved you before you were born : in the glass of his purposes he saw you ; in his book all your members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them. Is it not written, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" ? Divine love had no beginning. Yon stars are babes whose eyes but yesterday were opened to the light, and yonder mountains are infants newly born ; but as for God's love, it is co-eval with his own existence, and the objects of it are always the same. Beloved, the love of God to you has never changed. He could not love you more, he will not love you less. The Lord's love will never vary. O, believe it, my brethren, it is still the same. Whatever may happen to you, or through whatever trials you may pass, with the self-same love wherewith he hath loved you he will love you world without end. In life, in death, and in eternity, ye are the beloved of the Lord who changes not. That same love which had no beginning shall never know an end. If it were in my power only to make my brethren realise the fact that they are thus loved it would elevate them, comfort them, and set them all in a blaze with love to God. Think it over, and then say each one to himself, "Jehovah, the Eternal, Self-existent One, loves me ; Jesus, the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, loves me ; the Holy Spirit, the Wonder-worker, the Comforter, the Illuminator, loves me ; what bliss is this !" O, you would not want a sermon if you realised this ; you would far rather need a place wherein to weep and to sing, and mix tears and songs together as you bathed in unspeakable delight !

Having thus brought the love of God to your remembrance, I want to come back to the text, and consider again that a sense of this love has hitherto been the cause of all our advances in the divine life, for first, after we were saved, we were still in the pit of corruption, in the sense that our natural depravity struggled with us for the mastery, and would have made us captives to the love of sin if grace had not stepped in. Our hearts were tempted by vanity and wantonness, and the pleasures of sin like Sirens tried to fascinate us to our sure destruction. Have you never been in such a condition as a Christian man that you were compelled to doubt whether you were a Christian at all, because of the seething and raging of your innate depravity ? It may be you have never looked yet into the crater of that volcano of sin which, believe me, is not extinct in anyone of us ; but if you have ever peered into its horrid depths, and seen the blackness, and heard the boilings up of murders, envyings, and lustings, you have said, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Now, I ask you, how have you hitherto escaped from the love of sin and its enchantments ? I think I can

tell you. God has loved you out of them, loved you right away from sin's beauties and temptations. When the dear love of God comes into the soul, the man has no more heart for sin—"Sin! how can I love thee? I cannot endure thee, thou hateful thing! My God, I want perfection; I pine after holiness, now that I know that I am thy child, thy blood-bought one, a member of the body of thy dear Son, as dear to thee as he is—I feel that I hate every false way. Away ye sins: I cry revenge against you: I would fain slaughter you all."

"When the wounds of Christ exploring,  
Sin doth like itself appear:"

sin becomes black and hideous and abhorred in proportion as Jesus becomes lovely in our eyes. If you love sin, it is because you do not feel the love of God, for when that love fills your soul you must hate sin. Thus the Lord loves you out of that love to sin.

Again, we get into the pit of corruption through the tendency of our souls to go after idols. Who among us has not been tempted to idolatry? It may be the partner of our bosom or a dear child has engrossed our hearts. Sometimes our life's ambition or the pursuit of our business has almost become our God. Our feet have almost gone: we have set up Dagon or Mammon in our heart. It is not easy to live in this world, and especially to enjoy prosperity, and yet be clear from worshipping idols. How have you and I been saved from idols? Not always by having them broken: that is a remedy which God is slow to use, though he will use it if we are obstinate: but the most effectual, as well as the most delicious medicine to cure idolatry, is to have the love of God shed abroad in the heart by Jesus Christ. Get a sight of the glory of God in the face of Christ, and then you will say—

"Farewell all ye meaner creatures,  
For in Him is every store;  
Wealth, or friends, or darling beauty,  
Shall not draw me any more;  
In my Saviour.  
I have found a glorious whole."

"He is the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." We cannot see the stars when the sun is shining. Our dear ones are dear still, but Christ is dearer far. I am not afraid of you, dear brother, that you will get worldly if you know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. I am not afraid of you, dear sister, that the marriage bond will lead you away from holiness, or that your maternal love will ever rival your love to Jesus, if you know how sweet and dear he is. Relationships are precious things, but they are nothing compared with him. We love them, but as compared with him we could hate father and mother, and sister and brother, for his name's sake. When a certain martyr was about to be burned, they brought out his wife and his eleven little children, and bade them kneel in one long row to ask their father for their sakes to consent to deny the faith and live, but as he kissed them one by one and lingered longest over the dear mother of them all, he said, "I would do anything for your sakes, my dear ones, that I might live with you, but since it is for Christ, my

Lord's sake, I must tear myself away even from you." When Jesus is in the soul, the idols leave their thrones. He loves us out of the pit of idolatry.

There is another pit of corruption into which children of God sometimes fall, namely, that of sluggishness. We do not always feel equally alive towards the Lord and divine things. Indifference is very apt to steal over us. There is a portion of the road to heaven which John Bunyan describes as the Enchanted Ground, where a tendency to sleep is very strong upon all pilgrims. Some pilgrims of my acquaintance are pretty constantly traversing that part of the road, and are never quite awake. Very few Christians are quickened into diligence and fervour by the scourge ; I do a little bit of whipping sometimes, and I think I do right, for my Master would not clear me if I suffered believers to sleep without warning them ; but I am certain that the only effectual cure for a slumbering Christian is to let him have the love of Christ shed abroad in his heart ; and herein I speak by experience, for I have found that it is the only thing which can quicken me. I think over my duties, but I am none the more in love with them : I look over my responsibilities, but I am scarcely the more impressed by them : but when I feel that my Lord has chosen me from before the foundation of the world, loved me, and given himself for me, then am I aroused. When I have a sight of his thorn-crowned brow, when I see his majesty of misery, when he shows me his hands and feet and side, and saith, "I have done all this for thee, and I am prepared to do yet more, for thou shalt be with me where I am, that thou mayest share my glory," then I want neither scourge nor spur to arouse me : then for the love I bear his name my heart becomes like the chariots of Ammi-nadib, swift in duty, with axles red hot with fervour—my soul would fly like the chariot of God when he rideth on the wings of the wind. Have you not felt it so ? What blessed preaching it is when the heart glows with a sense of love ! What happy Sunday school teaching it is when you know that Jesus loved you ! What a delightful thing it is to make sacrifices, to give your substance, to bear and to suffer, if once you feel the love of Christ burning within your soul !

The same is true of that abominable pit of selfishness, and self-esteem, and pride, and self-seeking, into which our feet so easily glide. Beloved, we are always something when Christ is nothing ; we are always nothing when Christ is all-in-all to us. We cannot do Christ's meaner work when our base hearts are puffed up with conceit ; but when we once see his beauty, then we feel that the latches of his shoes we are not worthy to unloose. We know right well that we have no business to be proud, nor yet to shirk hard work and seek our own ease ; we know that, and we condemn ourselves for this wrong ; but we go on with it till the moment the love of God enters the soul, and then we are rid of it—then we do, indeed, hate ourselves for ever having imagined that anything that could be done for Christ was hard. I am ashamed to be speaking to you coolly on a theme which is like fire within my own bones. I pray the Master, however, to make it like fire in your souls also. The love of Christ is the very best cure for selfishness.

And it is equally a cure for despondency and unbelief. What a pit



of corruption unbelief is, a pit wherein we hear strange noises of terrors to come, while unseen fears as to the present rush to and fro, with horrible sound. "I cannot believe, I cannot trust," saith the man ; but when God's love is shed abroad in his heart it is easy enough to believe. He asks himself, "How can I distrust ? I know what Jesus did for me upon the cross, how can I doubt ? The Lord cannot be unkind to me in providence ; for it is impossible that he can forsake those whose names are graven upon the palms of his hands." God does not chide his people out of their unbelief, but loves them out of it : he indulges them with such sweet festivals in the banqueting house of communion, he doth so sweetly stay them with flagons and comfort them with apples, that they soon shake off the sickness of unbelief.

Many a child of God can bear witness that the Lord has loved him out of his impatience. When he has been full of pain he has thought that God dealt hardly with him ; but when love has told him that all things work together for good he has endured pain with cheerfulness and gloried in his infirmities. In one word, are any of you suffering to-day under any spiritual malady ? Is any sin too strong for you ? Does any virtue appear to be so high that you cannot attain to it ? Behold I will be a guide to you this morning, and point you out a path by which you may escape from your sin and rise to the greatest heights of grace. Do you see that narrow line, that blessed pathway ? It is a path which love has made, follow it, and you shall come where you would be. Not there, not there, where Moses says you *must* ; not there, not there, where fear says if you do not you will be destroyed ; not there, where conscience alarms and terrifies, but here, where Jesus shows himself to you and says, "I am married unto you : thou art my spouse, thou art all my own : I love thee better than I love myself, for I did not spare myself, but I died for thee. I will love thee whatever thine infirmity and sin may be : I will love thee till I have washed thee and made thee clean ; and then I will present thee to myself without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. I am drawing thee, but thou dost not come as thou shouldst ; however, I will still draw thee till I have drawn thee away from thyself, and thy sin, and thy folly. I will draw thee, and draw thee, and draw thee till I draw thee up to my right hand, and there thou shalt be with me for ever ! Beloved, you can do anything when you feel this : you can do nothing if you do not feel it. Lose your sense of Jesus' love, and the power of your religion is gone. You have stolen the life if you have taken away the love. Oh, believe it ; know it ; pray for it ; Spirit of God, make them feel it, and anything shall be possible, whether of sin slain or duty wrought. I have often felt myself to be a mere expanse of foulness, like the mud-flats by the sea shore when the tide is out. See you not as far as the eye can carry a continent of mud, with black rocks, rotting sea-weeds, pieces of wreck, creeping things innumerable, and such foul matters as the eye might never wish to see again. What is to be done with this dismal region ? Here lie the fisher boats embedded in the mud, what shall float them ? It would be impossible to drag them down to the sea, must they lie there and decay ? What is to be done with this mud and weed ? Wait ; and lo, at the appointed time the sea advances from its bed,

ripple by ripple, wave by wave it rises, spreading out itself like a molten looking-glass, where just now all was foul ; and lo, yonder ships are lifted—they walk the waters like things of life, while all that rotted in the noon-day sun is forgotten, and the waves follow each other with continuous flashes of silver sheen. O Lord, thou art that sea of love—thy mercies are thy waves of lovingkindness, let them come up and flood my soul ; with infinite power of love, arise thou and cover all my nature. I hope the Lord will deal so with all of you, if not by means of this sermon, yet by some other agency. Never rest until you enjoy this love, and, when you do enjoy it, keep it. If you find my Beloved, hold him, and do not let him go till you bring him into his mother's house among his brethren. When it is well with you, I pray you speak for me to the King, that he would keep me his servant for the sake of his people to whom I minister, living ever in the light of his countenance, for there is strength and there is power for ministry and everything else beside.

III. That love which loved us out of nature into grace, has yet another work to do. The Lord will LOVE US OUT OF GRACE INTO GLORY. I know what troubles you in your quiet moments. You are thinking about the passage of that "narrow stream of death," as we call it in our hymn. You are advanced in years, and you know that death must come very soon. The thought of death depresses you, and you need not be surprised that it should, for God has planted a law of self-preservation in us all which makes us love life. Nature shudders at the grave ; but whenever thy nature starts back from dying, bethink thee of thy faithful God, and be assured that he will love thee through death. Thou shalt be carried through it by the force of love. One of the points about death which alarms you is this : you dread pain. Now, recollect there is no pain in death, the pain is in life : when a man dies there is an end of life's pain : death is the pain killer, not the pain maker. Do you fear the pains associated with death ? Have you not already endured pain, and been made to forget it through being divinely sustained by love ? The love of God, I do avow it, has often acted as a sovereign remedy for anguish. The bitter has been forgotten in the sweetness of fellowship with God. Who says that there is no God, no Christ, no heaven ? We have seen them all. Our eyes have seen them ;—not these poor optics, which were only meant to spy out a few things in this dark world ; but our inner eyes, which see best in the blessed sunlight of eternity—with these eyes we have seen God, and the enjoyment of the ravishing vision has subdued all the feebleness of the flesh and removed the pangs of the body. Now Christian, that is what God will do with you when you come to die : he will bear you up on eagles' wings, so that you will say with one of the old saints, "Is this dying ? Why it is worth while to live only to

enjoy the pleasure of such a death as this," and yet he was not free from pain—he was loved above pain.

But you say, "My trouble is about parting from dear friends." You think it will be a very sharp pinch to be separated from the wife and from the friend. So it would be ; but when Jesus shall stand at your bedside, and reveal himself in a more apparent manner than he has ever done before, you will turn away from wife and children and friends, and say, "O Lord, let me be with thee where thou art, for my soul is taken up with thee rather than with these." You had a little medicine to give your boy the other night, and it had a bad flavour, but you mixed it with some sweet confection and he never tasted the bitter. Thus the pangs of separation will be mixed up with the sweetness of seeing Christ, so that you will not mourn. That is a blessed passage, "Death is swallowed up in victory," as though it were dropped like one black, cruel drop into the cup, and then victory was poured in as generous wine, and you drank the bitter drop right up before you knew it. Saints shall not know that they die, but only that they have gained the victory !

"O, but I am afraid of death itself," says one, "it is not parting with friends, or the pain, but I dread death itself." O, soul, when Jesus comes to meet thee thou wilt know nothing at all about death. He will love thee into heaven. In a moment he will embrace thee, and thou shalt be with him. Those dear lips which are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh shall kiss thee away, and thou wilt be among the songs of angels in an instant ! You shall not see death, you shall only see your Master ! There shall be no skeleton with a scythe to cut you down ; but a dear hand of love to gather you and place you in the Father's bosom—

"One gentle sigh, the fetter breaks,  
We scarce can say he's gone,  
Before the ransomed spirit takes  
Its mansion near the throne."

The Rabbis say that God took Moses' soul away with a kiss. So was it I doubt not, for so he doth with all his saints : he kisses them into heaven. "Thou hast loved my soul out of the pit of corruption."

Now, when you and I stand in heaven, with these poor heads enriched with the crown, and waving the palm branch in these hands, what bliss will be ours. Here let us stand upon this crystal rock a moment, and gaze adown the precipice of light. There, lean over, my brother spirit, and look steadily down. See where stars and suns are glistening like glow-worms far below ; how small their grandeur compared with ours in these sublime abodes ! Look further down and peer into that awful darkness, that abyss profound, across which flash the flames of

infinite wrath, kindling evermore afresh the fires of punishment. Oh, as we stand upon these heavenly heights, and gaze upon the Eternal without fear, and then see far below us the outer darkness and the fire unquenchable, shall we not sing aloud unto him who has "loved our soul from the pit of corruption;" yes, we will sing louder and louder and louder and louder, and no cherubim or seraphim shall ever excel us in the fulness of our grateful praise. Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him whose name is love, who has poured forth all his love upon us his chosen, and saved us from the abyss of woe. To his name be praise for ever and ever. O, sirs, will you all know this love? Will you all sing of it? Will you all be able to say, "He loved me out of the pit of corruption"? You may say it: you shall say it if you believe in Jesus. Amen.

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### PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah xxxviii.

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"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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