

Love's Medicines and Miracles

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but You have, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption: for You have cast all my sins behind Your back" [Isaiah 38:17](#).

HEZEKIAH'S recovery is a notable encouragement to prayer. If ever there was a case in the world where it seemed impossible that prayer could be of any use, it was that of Hezekiah. It was perceivable by everybody around him that he was sick unto death. Why, then, think of prayer? The case was fatal. Would it not expose prayer to derision if such a matter were taken before the Mercy Seat? Moreover, God's own Word, spoken by His servant the Prophet, had been given—"Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live." What could be the use of prayer after that? Might it not be regarded as an impertinent interference with the known will of the Lord?

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, the proverb says that hunger breaks through stone walls—and so the desire to live, on the king's part—drove him to pray! Through all arguments and reasonings did Hezekiah's prayer break its way to the Throne of God. He turned his face to the wall in more than one sense on that occasion, for it seemed as if a wall stood in the front of him and shut out all hope of life. Yet he turned his face to it and prayed his way through it! Mark well his success. Fifteen years longer did he live in answer to his entreaties!

Brothers and Sisters, pray if you are between the jaws of death and Hell! Pray, Brothers and Sisters, if all hope seems to be utterly slain! Yes, and if you can put your finger on passages of God's own Word which apparently condemn you, still pray! Whether your fears have contorted those threatening passages or not, though many of them frown upon you, still pray! Perish with your hands on the horn of the altar even if you must perish! Never believe your case to be utterly hopeless so long as you can plead with God! There can be no hurt come of your supplication, but good must come of it in some form or other.

If God does not prolong life in answer to prayer, as He often may not or nobody would ever die, yet still He may give a greater blessing than continued earthly existence! And if it is a greater blessing, in God's judgment, it is better for us to receive it than to have the precise thing we have craved! In all cases, "pray without ceasing." The Mercy Seat once stood within the veil where none could approach it except at one set season in the year—but now the veil is torn from top to bottom and you may come to it when you will! Therefore I charge you come boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace in every time of need!

Yes, draw near in the darkest night and in the most wintry season! Draw near when God seems to have forgotten to be gracious and when you think He will no more be favorable.

"Men ought always to pray and not to faint." Pray in the teeth of difficulty. Pray though impossibility seems to stand in the way. Pray against death and the devil. Pray like Manasseh in the low dungeon and like Jonah out of the belly of the whale! Pray against conscience and carnal reason—I was going to say even pray against your terrifying interpretation of God's Word, itself—for you must surely have misread it if you have thought that it forbids you to pray!

It cannot be so, since Jehovah's glorious memorial is that He is the God that hears prayer! He has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face in vain." He may say and He knows His own meaning when He says it, "You shall die, and not live," and yet He may afterwards declare, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears: behold, I will add unto your days 15 years." He will be favorable unto the voice of your supplication! That lesson having been learned, we shall now proceed to consider Hezekiah's prayer in detail. God grant that from his experience we may derive instruction and, if in its bitterness we have already had fellowship with the royal suppliant, may the Lord grant unto us to have communion with him in the sweeter part of it, so that we, also, may feel our souls brought up from the pit of corruption to celebrate the praises of our pardoning God!

I see in the text three things to think about at this time—the first is a healthy bitterness—"Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." The second is delivering love—"But You have in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption." And the third is absolute pardon—"You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

Before, however, I divided my text, I ought to have given you another translation of it. Not that I would readily find fault with our version at any time, for it is, as a rule, marvelously correct and singularly forcible. But I am afraid when the new translation of the Bible comes out, it will be better to light our fires with it than to give up the old version, which is so dear to us and so interwoven into all our religious life. I trust our grandfather's Bible will maintain its hold on the mind of the English public against all comers, for it is so simple and yet so sublime, so homely and yet so heavenly in style.

The translation which I shall now submit to you is, however, more exactly literal according to the Hebrew—"Behold, to peace my bitter bitterness," or, "Marah, Marah," "and You have loved my soul from the pit of destruction, because You have cast all my sins behind Your back."

I. Our first head is HEALTHFUL BITTERNESS and you have it in the first sentence, which runs in Hebrew very nearly as follows—"Behold, to peace (or to health) my bitter bitterness." Our translators have given us, as it were, an interpretation of it rather than a translation. I do not dispute their interpretation, but yet it does not embrace all the meaning which the words convey to the instructed reader. The Hebrew is abrupt, sententious, and full of teaching—"Behold, to peace my bitter bitterness."

This means, first, that he underwent a great, sad and unexpected change. His peace, according to our version, was taken away and for it he had great bitterness. The city of Jerusalem had been surrounded by Rabshakeh's armies. Sennacherib had sent his lieutenant to demand immediate surrender and that commander had written a letter full of blasphemy and contempt. Hezekiah, having but little faith, was terribly cast down. But though he had not sufficient Grace to be at ease in his mind, he had wisdom enough to go to his God in prayer. He spread the letter of Rabshakeh before the Lord and, in due season, he obtained an answer which more than satisfied him!

"The king of Assyria shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor build a siege mound against it." The angel of the Lord smote the armed men of the king of Assyria in their thousands! And the tyrant, hearing a rumor, fled to his own capital, where his sons killed him with the sword. That was the end of Sennacherib—and one would have said, and doubtless Hezekiah did say—"Now I shall have a long season of quiet. I shall reign in power over my country, watch over its interests, promote the happiness of my people, discharge justice, build up an empire and then, by-and-by, when I grow gray in years, in the fullness of time, I shall be gathered to my fathers in peace, as a shock of corn comes in its season."

Instead of this, while he was in the meridian of his age and had, as yet, no heir to his crown, he finds himself smitten with a painful, debilitating and depressing disease—and he understands that he must die! Hear him as, to the music of sighs and groans, he sings a mournful song—"I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, let us never boast ourselves of tomorrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth! The promises of the opening morning are not often fulfilled—clouds gather and the sun which rose in splendor sets in showers. We reckon that now we have made our nest as downy as it can be and we who ought to know better, yet we say, "Soul, take your ease: my mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved."

But ah, how soon the mountain shakes, the nest is filled with thorns and the joy vanishes! The great Master of the feast comes in, clears the tables, takes away the fat things full of marrow and the wines on the lees well-refined! And instead, thereof, bids His servitors bring forth the wine of astonishment and the bread of sorrow! Ah, what changes may come! What changes have come to some here present! You have gained the object of your life and then have been disappointed in it! You have, after many a struggle, reached the position you sought for so eagerly, but now you find it a hard, uncomfortable ledge of rock overhung with thorns and briars!

You thought that when a certain trial was surmounted—the one which had so long been the "hill difficulty" of your way—you would come to a level plain where your willing feet should joyfully trip towards Heaven. But now fresh mountains rise before you! Unexpected Alps lift up their frowning battlements and your spirit is filled with heaviness at the dreary

prospect—for peace you have great bitterness. Now, if this is so with you, count it no strange thing and do

not imagine that an uncommon experience has happened to you. It was so with Hezekiah and has been so with tens of thousands of others whom the Lord has loved!

Notice, further, that Hezekiah's condition was one of emphatic sorrow, for he says, "Behold to peace, Marah Marah—bitter bitter," or "bitter bitterness." We read that when the children of Israel came to Marah they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter. Nobody knows, unless they have experienced it, what parching thirst is and how cruel is the disappointment when, seeing water before you, you discover it to be so brackish that you cannot drink it. It tantalizes a man when he is least able to exhibit patience and so it intensifies the previous pain of the thirst. Marah was a notable spot in the journeys of the children of Israel and Hezekiah had come spiritually to a double Marah, a Marah Marah.

Have you, dear Friends, ever passed that way and drank of double bitterness—the wormwood and the gall? Beloved, some of us know what it means, for we have had, at the same time, a body racked with pain and a soul full of heaviness. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Perhaps the double Marah has come in another form—it is a time of severe trouble and just then the friend in whom you trusted has forsaken you—this is sorrow upon sorrow. Or perhaps you are in temporal difficulties and, at the same time, in great spiritual straits. Here, also, is Marah, Marah! The flying fish is pursued by a fierce enemy in the sea and when it flies into the air, birds of prey are eager after it. In like manner both in temporal and spiritual things we are assailed.

Paul notes in his famous voyage that he came to a place where two seas met—have you ever sailed through such a dangerous part of the sea? I doubt not that you have and have, at the same time, found both trouble and sorrow. Well, then, again I say unto you, count it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as though some strange thing had happened to you—for the like affliction has happened to many of your Brethren—yes, it has so often happened as to become a proverb that, "ill things seldom come alone."

Lo, on the heels of the first of Job's messengers there hastens another! If the Sabeans have taken away the oxen and the asses, we may be sure that the fire of God will be upon the sheep and the Chaldeans are already after the camels! No, do not wonder if the wind from the wilderness has smitten the four corners of the house and buried the children in the ruins, for adversities usually hunt in packs! Deep calls unto deep! Like countless birds which fly over our heads, migrating to distant lands, so do trials pass over us in clouds and we are startled as we hear strange and mysterious voices threatening grievous ills.

Now, notice, that the meaning of our verse is not at all exhausted by this explanation. We find in it a better meaning by far. "Behold to peace bitter bitterness," that is to say, the king's double bitterness worked his peace and health. Take the word in the sense of health, first. The illustration of the text is well known. Many a time, when a man has been exceedingly

ill, the medicine which has met his case has been intensely disagreeable to the taste. It has been as gall to his palate, but it has operated as a strengthening tonic—it has chased out the fever and purged away the cause of the malady—and the man has recovered. Hezekiah bore witness that God had sanctified his bodily sickness and his mental sorrow to his spiritual health.

Is it not often so with us? "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word." Hezekiah had time, during his sickness, to consider his disorderly house. While he lay with his face to the wall, he read a great deal upon that wall which he had seen nowhere else. A handwriting flamed forth in burning letters before his conscience and this was the interpretation—"Set your house in order." This writing would remain before his eyes even after he was respited. The death warrant was cancelled, but the mandate was not retracted—"Set your house in order." It needed setting in order and his first order of business was to look into home affairs, uncover family abuses and search into personal errors.

In his quiet chamber, the king would look over the administration of his kingdom and note the many mistakes he had made, the wrong acts which he had permitted in his subordinates, and all the abuses of the times. Among the rest, his own personal unbelief would rise before him. He would remember his fear and distrust and he would mourn over them. He had evidently been far more daunted by Rabshakeh, at the first, than he ought to have been, for Isaiah, to comfort him, said, "Be not afraid of the words which you have heard." He would think his whole life over and, beginning with himself, would search out all errors of the State and of the Church.

Self-examination is a great benefit to us, Brothers and Sisters, and anything which brings us to it does us real service. Brother, go over the whole of your spiritual farm, be diligent to know the state of your flocks and look well to your

herds. Break up the fallow ground and clear out the thorns. Take the little foxes which spoil the vines and chase away the birds which devour the seed. Let all things be in the best condition—thus will your sickness work your health by discovering the secret source of your malady. The king's bitterness of soul then led him to repent of his wrongdoing, as he saw where he had sinned. He mourned His folly before God and humbled himself because of the inward sinfulness of nature out of which the outward transgression had come.

I am sure that very often sickness reveals a man to himself. We seldom see ourselves till sorrow holds up the glass before our eyes. Self is an unpleasant subject for study! Anatomy is nothing to it—to dissect a corpse is not half so disagreeable as to examine your own character! Have you ever laid yourself upon the table, cut deep with the dissecting knife, laid bare the inward parts and opened up the hidden things of the heart? Have you taken yourself to pieces, bone by bone? When you have got as far as your heart, have you not earnestly wished that you could avoid making any pre-mortem examination of that desperately diseased organ?

Ah, me! What a humiliating piece of business is the anatomizing of the natural heart—that heart which is deceitful above all things and out of which come envy and murder! We flinch from this till sickness and despondency strap us down and work away with the surgical knife. And yet this is one of the most beneficial of operations, for, "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit." Ah, this bitter bitterness which makes us look within and see ourselves in our true colors is of far more use to us than those dainty repasts which make us like the Israelites with the quails, full of meat but also near to cursing!

I can well imagine that this bitter bitterness made Hezekiah see the need of his God more than ever he had seen it before. He knew in whose hands his breath was and felt his entire dependence upon the Divine will. He saw himself to be absolutely in God's power as much as the thread is under the hand of the weaver who breaks it whenever he pleases! Or as the prey is under the power of the lion who can break all its bones! Now he learned to cling to the Lord his God and to cry, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." Now he knew that the Lord was ready to save him and, while his heart was filled with joy because of the promise of prolonged life, he was also full of shame that he had ever doubted the power and Grace of God in his hour of trouble!

He would, from now on, feel that the Almighty Lord who could bring back the shadow upon the sundial ten degrees could as readily check the wrath and power of the most terrible invader! He who could deliver him from the gates of the grave could assuredly save him from the rage of mortal man! And He who used a poor lump of figs to disappoint death of its prey could also employ the weakest means to overthrow the most potent foe of Israel! From now on he would lean upon the Eternal and bid the virgin daughter of Zion despise her adversary and laugh him to scorn! After that schooling, Hezekiah would exhibit greater spiritual strength, more confidence in the promises, more power with God, more zeal in the Divine service and his peace would come back to him and would be even deeper than at the first.

That joy which had fled because of sin and God's visitation on account of it, returned to him once more! He felt himself happier because he was holier. He felt himself strengthened because the blessed purgative, though bitter, had removed a constant source of weakness. And he rose from his bed, not merely a new man in bodily health, but a renewed man as to his entire spiritual nature! How sweet are the uses of adversity when the Holy Spirit uses His sacred art upon the soul and turns the brine of tears into a sacred salt to season the spirit!

Before I leave this point I would express my prayerful desire that this may be the result of every drop of bitter which any of you may ever taste throughout your future lives. If you are not the Lord's people, your bitterness has no blessing in it. On the contrary, you may look upon it as a foretaste of that endless Marah by whose brackish fountain the impenitent

must sit and weep forever! But if you are the Lord's child, believing in Christ Jesus, all is well, "for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose."

II. Now we come to the second part of our text, which is peculiarly sweet to our souls, for it sets forth **LOVING DELIVERANCE**. The original runs thus—"And You have loved my soul from the pit of destruction." Taken in its first sense, the king ascribes to the love of God his deliverance from death and the grave. And he praises God for his restoration to the land of the living. But the words of inspired men frequently have a deeper significance than appears upon the surface and, indeed, they often conceal an inner sense which, perhaps, they themselves did not perceive and, therefore, the king's words are as dark sayings upon a harp full of meaning within meaning.

At any rate, taking the language out of the mouth of Hezekiah, we will use it for expressing our own emotions and give it a wider sense if such is not the original range of its meaning. Let us notice three things. First the deed of Grace, "You have brought my soul from the pit of corruption." Secondly, the power by which it was performed, "You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption." And thirdly, the *modus operandi*, which is indicated by another and equally good translation, "You have embraced my soul from the pit of corruption."

First, then, the deed of Grace of which you and I can sing. "The Lord delivered us from the pit of corruption." First, from the pit of Hell. Ah, there I should have gone long, long ago if mercy had not interposed. "A platitude," says one. Ah, Brother, God save you from thinking the acknowledgment of God's choicest mercies to be a platitude! I reckon that those in Hell would think it no platitude for us to bless God that we are not in their torments! Our sins, like millstones about our neck, might have sunk us in the sea of Divine wrath 20 years ago. And is it not a thing to be spoken of again and again, a mercy to bless God for, that we are not in the abode of condemned souls? Is it not even more a reason for gratitude that we shall never be there?

Believing in Jesus Christ and resting in the atoning blood, "there is therefore now no damnation," as the older version used to run, "to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that has risen again." The dreadful gates of Hell shall never be passed by a soul that believes in Christ Jesus! For us there is no undying worm! For us no unquenchable fire! For us no wrath to come! Glory be to God for this amazing Grace! But next, He has also delivered us from the pit of sinfulness which is, to my mind, as horrible a pit as Hell, itself! Indeed, under some aspects it is the same thing, for sinfulness is Hell—and to live under the power of sin is to be condemned.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, years ago sinfulness was our master and we loved it! We hated the ways of God and loved the wages of unrighteousness. But at this present moment, although we mourn because we are not perfectly rid of sin, yet sin shall not have dominion

over us! We see sin in our nature, but we loathe it. It is no more a home-born citizen of our soul, but an alien to be expelled, an outlaw to be hunted down! No more do we consent to sin—"It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." Blessed be God, although we are, sometimes, brought into captivity to the body of this death, yet He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord. We are driving out the Canaanites of sin, little by little, by force of arms and by the might of Grace. And soon, by God's Grace, shall every Jericho fall flat to the ground and every Amorite be slain! Let us rejoice in being delivered from this pit of corruption!

Equally has the Lord delivered us, at this time, from the awful consciousness of wrath under which we once groaned. Brothers and Sisters, you have not forgotten, have you, the time when you felt the hand of God heavy upon you under conviction of sin? I do not know what the pangs of damned souls may be, but I think I have been almost able to guess their horror in my hours of deep distress, when my soul chose strangling rather than life because of my misery, for I was drunk with wormwood and filled with sore anguish! This I know, that if my horror could have been greater, my life must have expired!

It is not always that awakened souls suffer so much, but any man who has felt his own sinfulness has seen that which might make every individual hair upon His head stand upright with horror, since to be a sinner is the most dreadful thing conceivable. To have God's wrath revealed in the spirit is to have a seething Hell within one's conscience! But, blessed be His name, He has loved us out of that pit of despair! No longer are we burdened with a sense of sin, for we are pardoned! Our conscience is purged from dead works. The precious blood has made us happy in God. We are reconciled to Him by the death of His Son and all our trespasses are forgiven forever! Therefore our heart is glad in the Lord and to Him will we sing our songs upon our stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord—

"In a dungeon deep He found me,
Without water, without light,
Bound in chains of horrid darkness,
Gloomy, thick, Egyptian night!
He recovered there my soul with price immense.
And for this let men and angels,
All the heavenly hosts above,
Choirs of seraphim elected,
With their golden harps of love,
Praise and worship,
My Redeemer without end."

Since that first dark hour of conviction, I dare say you have passed through other fearful depressions of spirit, very similar to this which is recorded of Hezekiah. You have not des-

cended quite so deep into the pit as you did at first, but yet you have known bitter sorrows and have been delivered from them. Are you, this morning happy in the Lord? Are you again rejoicing? Then say with the king—"You have in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption. The Lord was ready to save me, therefore we will sing my songs on the stringed instruments in the house of the Lord." There comes speedily a time when we shall sing this song more sweetly in a better land than this, where there shall be none of these mists to hang about us, but changeless, everlasting noonday without a cloud!

In Heaven how sweetly shall we sing this song upon our stringed instruments—when there shall be no corruption left in us—but we shall be pure as the soul of God, Himself, perfect as Christ our Redeemer! What hymns of gratitude shall we chant before the Throne of God when, standing on the heights of Heaven, we gaze into the deeps of Hell! How grateful we will be, when, from our perfection, we remember the Fall and all the ruin of it from which almighty Grace lifted us up! Glory be unto the Lord forever, for, "In love to my soul You have delivered it from the pit of corruption." Hallelujah! This is the deed which Grace has done!

Now, we have to notice the power which performed it. To my mind the Truth of God herein set forth is the delicious food for meditation, but it is not readily to be brought forth in preaching. Listen to the words—"You have loved my soul out of the pit of corruption." Love worked the rescue. Love did it all! Let Love wear the crown! I was asleep in my sin, but you, O Love, did awaken me with a kiss. Only when I began to hear that Jesus loved poor souls unto the death and, therefore, came to seek and save sinners, did I begin to wake from my deadly lethargy. Do you, my Brothers and Sisters, remember when the first thought entered into your minds that, after all, there was hope, for God was full of love?

Did not that thought bestir you? Did not the Lord love you out of the sleep of sin? Moreover, you loved sin and the wages of it—and the world looked very pleasantly upon you while it enthralled you. At last you came to know that the love of God was far sweeter than the love of sin. You had a glimpse of Jesus' dear marred visage, all bedewed with spit and with blood—and He appeared so much more fair and lovely than your sin, that you began to feel that sin and you must part. Thus the Lord loved you out of your love of sin! His sweet love made sin nauseous to you! You were weary of it and would have no more of it.

Do you remember that when you fell into despair and said, "I have been such a sinner that I must die in my sin," you were lifted up from the pit of unbelief? I know that I was borne out of it upon the eagle wings of Love! The Lord loved me out of it! He shed abroad such love in my soul that I could not be an unbeliever any longer. Just as an iceberg must surely melt when once it is borne along by the Gulf Stream, so my unbelief was compelled to dissolve in the warm stream of His dear love! Believe Him? How could I disbelieve Him

when I saw His love to sinners and heard of His death for the very chief of them, even for such as I was! He loved me out of my unbelief!

But then I felt so weak I could do nothing. I was afraid to unite with His people and afraid to make confession of my faith for fear I should dishonor Him. Then He came and loved me out of my anxiety! He shed His love abroad in my heart so powerfully that I became strong with strength of His giving and knew myself to be safe because I was in His keeping. Then did I come forward and confess His name and unite with His saints, for I felt that I could trust my Lord to keep me even unto the end, for His love had loved me out of my weakness. I am telling the story as though it were about myself, but, Brothers and Sisters, I mean it about you, as well.

You have wandered, sometimes, since then. You have gone away from your Lord into worldliness and much that you unfeignedly deplore. And who is it that has led you back to peace and holiness? Who has been the Good Shepherd and restored your soul? My loving Lord has driven me back, sometimes, with sharp words of rebuke, but more often He has loved me back with attractive tenderness. What a wonderful magnet love is! It draws our iron hearts to itself. Its sway is kindly but irresistible! We wander here and there, in the instability of our minds, till a memory of the days of love comes over our spirit, and straightway we can rest no longer in the things of earth after which we have so wickedly gone astray, but we say, "I will return unto my first husband, for it was better with me then than now."

A moment's memory of the days of our espousals makes the heart sick with longings to return to her home in the bosom of Jesus. He loves us out of our backslidings! Perhaps you have fallen into lukewarmness and are chilly and lifeless. And what is the way to raise you out of that horrible state? Is it not a way of love? When the Laodicean Church was

neither cold nor hot, and even her Beloved was ready to spew her out of His mouth, how was she bid to rise out of her condition? Did not the Lord say, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Christ's coming to commune with the Church was the cure of her indifference!

When the love of God is shed abroad in the soul you feel no longer sleepy and indifferent, but your spirit girds herself with zeal as with a cloak and your heart glows with vehement flames of affection. How truly does our poet sing—

"O Jesus, King most wonderful,
You Conqueror renowned,
You sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!
When once You visit the heart,
Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love Divine."

The ever-gracious Lord means to perfect that which concerns you by the action of this same love. His gentleness has made you great and His love will make you glorious! Divine love is the most sanctifying agency in the world—it is that which checked us before we knew the Lord when we ran so greedily after sin. And it is that which constrains us now that we live unto His name, for, "the love of Christ constrains us ." Behold, then, the love of the Spirit! Is not this most blessed medicine?

We spoke of bitter draughts under our first head, and truly these have their virtue, but here the Lord's love uses medicine like itself! Yes, it becomes, itself, the medicine and the Lord seems to say, "Here is My dear child, sick, and I will restore him by giving him more love." Divine love is a catholicon, a universal medicine. No spiritual disease can resist its healing power. The love and blood of Jesus, applied by the Holy Spirit, will raise up the saints from pining sickness and restore them from the gates of the grave. No heart, however like granite it becomes, can long resist almighty love. The rebel may stand up in bold defiance and stand out in daring obstinacy, but when he begins to feel God loves him he cries—

"Lord, You have won. At last I yield!
My heart, by mighty Grace compelled
Surrenders all to You!
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me!
If You had bid Your thunders roll,
And lightnings flash, to blast my soul,
I still had stubborn been.
But mercy has my heart subdued,
A bleeding Savior I have viewed,
And now I hate my sin."

We must briefly notice the *modus operandi* of this love. "You have embraced my soul out of the pit of corruption." Yonder is the child in the pit and the father, wishing to save it, goes down into the pit and embraces his beloved one and so brings him up to life and safety. After this manner did Jesus save us! He embraced us by taking our nature and so becoming one with us. It is by embraces that He regenerates converts and sanctifies us, for He comes into union with us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit! All our lives He communes with us and embraces us with arms of mighty love and so lifts us up from the pit of corruption.

In this way, also, He will bring us right up out of our fallen state into perfection of holiness, by continuing the Divine embrace, pressing us nearer and nearer, and nearer, still, to His dear, loving heart till all sin shall be pressed out of us! He will by one eternal embrace of unchanging love lift us out of the pit of corruption into a state of absolute perfection

where we shall dwell with Him forever! Glory be unto God for all this! He who has tasted of this cannot but sing as Hezekiah did upon his stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord!

III. We have now, with much delight, to consider the promise of ABSOLUTE PARDON. "For you have cast all my sins behind Your back." This, King Hezekiah mentions as the cause of his restored peace and health. He could not be

healed and cheered till the cause of disease was gone—and that was sin. Sin was the foreign element in his spiritual constitution and as long as it was there it caused fret and worry and spiritual disease. But when the sin was gone, health and peace came back. Now let me take the words before us and set them forth in a few brief sentences and bid you notice, first, the burden—sin. A heavy load, a weighty curse.

Observe the owner of this burden—Hezekiah says not sin, only, but my sin. If any sins in the world are heavier than others they are mine. Brothers and Sisters, you feel yours to be so, do you not? Then take the next word, which is a word of multitude and note the comprehensiveness of that burden. All my sins! "You have cast all my sins." Let us spell that word, ALL my sins. What a row of figures it would take to number them all! As to the record of them, surely it would reach round the sky—all my sins! In what balance shall they be weighed? What must the wrath be which is due to me on account of them? Think long and humbly of the words—all my sins.

Now, see the Lord comes to deal with them! He takes them all and what does He do? He casts them. "You have cast all my sins." What a deed of Omnipotence! What a Divine cast! None but Jehovah Jesus, Himself, could ever have lifted all my sins, but He did lift them and, like another Atlas, He bore them upon His shoulders! And having done that, even till He sweat great drops of blood and bled to death, He then took the whole mass of my sins and cast them as far as the east is from the west! No, more! He cast them behind Jehovah's back. Where is that? Behind God's back? Where can that be?

Men throw things behind their back when they cannot bear the sight of them. Our sin is loathsome and abominable to God. He will not look upon it and so He casts it behind His back! But then He is a just God and He must punish iniquity! It must come before the eyes of His Holiness to be avenged. We have not, therefore, seen, as yet, the full meaning of the passage. No, it means that the Lord becomes oblivious of His people's sins. Somebody said, the other day, concerning a certain piece of business, "I shall never think of it again. It is gone as though it had never been." The Lord means all that concerning His people's sins—"I shall never think of them again. They are quite gone as far as I am concerned, I have thrown them where I shall never see them again. Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

What a gracious mode of pardoning sin! God Himself passes an act of oblivion and declares, "I will not remember their sins." He looks upon His people who have been so

provoking and are still so prone to sin, and yet He beholds no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel! He sees His people washed in the blood of the Lamb, robed in the righteousness which is in God by faith—and He beholds in them neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing—for He has cast their sins so far away that they are out of sight of Omniscience and out of mind of Omnipresence!

Again, I would remind you of the words, "behind Your back." Where is that? All things are before God's face—He looks on all the works of His hands and He sees all things that exist. Behind His back! It must mean annihilation, non-existence and non-entity! O my Soul, your God has flung your sins into non-entity and effectually made an end of them! He treats you as though they never existed and, as far as His justice is concerned, through the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, they are to the Lord as though we had never transgressed at all! "You have cast all my sins behind Your back." I do not think I need preach any longer upon this subject. Go home and turn it over in quiet meditation under the overshadowing of the Divine Spirit. Dear child of God, endeavor to get a grip of this great privilege of perfect pardon and never let it go! May the Holy Spirit seal it home to you.

You are right in bringing your sins before your own face and mourning over them. That is where they should be, but do not, at the same time, forget that they are forgiven. When a man casts his sins behind his back, God will put them before His face—but when, in penitence, a Believer sets his sins before his own face to mourn over them, then the Lord, in mercy, declares that He will cast them behind His back. Oh Believer in Jesus, Your sins are gone forever! Be restful, happy, secure, for you are accepted in the Beloved! Your sin has ceased to be! The longest lines can never reach the bottom of that sea into whose depths Jehovah has cast them!

The utmost industry of the devil can never travel into that land which does not exist, even the land which lies behind Jehovah's back into which He has cast Your sins! Who would not be a Believer in Jesus? Even if he were sorely sick and had to lie like Hezekiah, on the bed of death, who would not be a Believer? Even though he had to cry out, "Marah, Marah, bitterness twice over," who would not be a Believer and be embraced out of his misery by that mighty Love which abolishes the sin of the penitent?

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O Sinner, and this shall be your portion, also, by God's abundant mercy. Amen.