

away from the sight, though it sinks from our view, it still presses on to the desired haven. To the bosom of its father and its God, the happy soul wings its flight, though the eye of mortals cannot pierce that ascent. As the eagle that soars up to the region of light—

Up, up, through the tempest, journeying,
The world's zahara, a sandy wreath,
Its clouds and colds behind, beneath;
The inner eye upturned, away
From the mists of time to the God of day.
Drinking the light of the golden throne,
Where the waters of life flow on, still on,
Till the soul is bathed in the deep excess
Of the warmth and beauty of holiness;
When earth on the pilgrim's eye grows dark,
The bosom of God is the home of the heart."

To die in the Lord,—from that springs the gain; the blessedness flows from being found in him. This refers to a union and fellowship existing between the soul and Christ. The soul in Christ is united to him by a living faith; the glories and the worth of Jesus attract the soul. Every dependence for salvation is disowned, except trust in the merits of the Lamb of God. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Trust in Christ unites the soul to him, and his righteousness becomes ours. As the branch is united to the vine, so the soul abides in Jesus. This being *in him* further shows the existence of fellowship. My beloved is mine and I am his. Dying in the Lord takes place when thus the soul is connected with Christ: it is union in existence; it is fellowship experienced; the soul that goes after Jesus; the longings of the mind are for him; when he is seen and his voice in gentle utterances is heard,—

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are."

In the Lord, no evil can overwhelm, for his rod and his staff give comfort. In him we have strength, and joy, and hope, and love. Amid the strife and pain of dying, the billows do not come over our frail bark, for Christ is in the vessel, and then "we smile at the storm."

The text shows that not merely are the righteous blessed in their death, but "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord,—blessed in the state of the dead. This blessedness arises from what their Lord has done. Christ has died; he entered the portals of death's domain. Without the death of Jesus there had been no blessedness in the state of the dead. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; by his death on the cross, he achieved his purpose, and gave death his death-blow there. He has been in the grave and left a sweet odor of his presence. Since in his hand are the keys of hell and of death, possession is taken of the sleeping dust of saints. The righteous rest in the bed of the grave, under the promise of a joyful resurrection. The sleep of death shall terminate in a joyful morn, but "blessed ARE the dead who die in the Lord." There is a present blessedness. It is not the far distant, though joyous morning. They have not gone to endure purgatorial fires, they are blessed, in the Lord, with the Lord. Blessed in his presence, where there are fulness of joys, at his right hand where there are blessings for evermore. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. "I am," said the apostle Paul, "in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." To die is gain. It were no gain to die, if that were to exchange our being in the Lord, to our being in purgatory; earth were better, if on earth we had the joys of fellowship with the Lord, than the endurance of misery in alternate fire and cold. Nor can we see the blessed-