

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,  
And many Explanatory Notes.

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JOHN XIX. 38–42.

38 And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave *him* leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound *weight*.

40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.

42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation *day* for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

THERE is a peculiar interest attached to these five verses of Scripture. They introduce us to a stranger, of whom we never heard before. They bring in an old friend, whose name is known wherever the Bible is read. They describe the most important funeral that ever took place in this world. From each of these three points of interest we may learn a very profitable lesson.

We learn, for one thing, from these verses, that *there are some true Christians in the world of whom very little is known*. The case of Joseph of Arimathæa teaches this very plainly. Here is a man named among the friends of Christ, whose very name we never find elsewhere in the New Testament, and whose history, both before and after this crisis, is completely withheld from the Church. He comes forward to do honour to Christ, when the Apostles had forsaken Him and fled. He cares for Him and delights to do Him service, even when dead,—not because of any miracle which he saw Him do, but out of free and gratuitous love. He does not hesitate to confess himself one of Christ's friends, at a time when Jews and Romans alike had condemned Him as a malefactor, and put Him to death. Surely the man who could do such things must have had strong faith! Can we wonder that, wherever the Gospel is preached, throughout the whole world, this pious action of Joseph is told of as a memorial of him?

Let us hope and believe that there are many Christians in every age, who, like Joseph, are the Lord's hidden servants, unknown to the Church and the world, but well known to God. Even in Elijah's time there were seven thousand in Israel who had never bowed the knee to Baal, although the desponding prophet knew nothing of it. Perhaps, at this very day, there are saints in the back streets of some of our great towns, or in the lanes of some of our country parishes, who make no noise in the world, and yet love Christ and are loved by Him. Ill-health, or poverty, or the daily cares of some laborious calling, render it impossible for them to come forward in public; and so they live and die comparatively unknown. Yet the last day may show an astonished world that some of these very people, like Joseph, honoured Christ as much as any on earth, and that their names were written in heaven. After all, it is special circumstances that bring to the surface special Christians. It is not those who make the greatest show in the Church, who are always found

the fastest friends of Christ.

We learn, for another thing, from these verses, that *there are some servants of Christ whose latter end is better than their beginning*. The case of Nicodemus teaches that lesson very plainly. The only man who dared to help Joseph in his holy work of burying our Lord, was one who at first “came to Jesus by night,” and was nothing better than an ignorant inquirer after truth. At a later period in our Lord’s ministry we find this same Nicodemus coming forward with somewhat more boldness, and raising in the Council of the Pharisees the question, “Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?” (John vii. 51.) Finally, we see him in the passage before us, ministering to our Lord’s dead body, and not ashamed to take an active part in giving to the despised Nazarene an honourable burial. How great the contrast between the man who timidly crept into the Lord’s lodging to ask a question, and the man who brought a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes to anoint His dead body! Yet it was the same Nicodemus. How great may be a man’s growth in grace, and faith, and knowledge, and courage, in the short space of three years.

We shall do well to store up these things in our minds, and to remember the case of Nicodemus, in forming our estimate of other people’s religion. We must not condemn others as graceless and godless, because they do not see the whole truth at once, and only reach decided Christianity by slow degrees. The Holy Ghost always leads believers to the same foundation truths, and into the same highway to heaven. In these there is invariable uniformity. But the Holy Ghost does not always lead believers through the same experience, or at the same rate of speed. In this there is much diversity in His operations. He that says conversion is a needless thing, and that an unconverted man may be saved, is undoubtedly under a strange delusion. But he that says that no one is converted except he becomes a full-blown and established Christian in a single day, is no less under a delusion. Let us not judge others rashly and hastily. Let us believe that a man’s beginnings in religion may be very small, and yet his latter end may greatly increase. Has a man real grace? Has he within him the genuine work of the Spirit? This is the grand question. If he has, we may safely hope that his grace will grow, and we should deal with him gently, and bear with him charitably, though at present he may be a mere babe in spiritual attainments. The life in a helpless infant is as real and true a thing as the life in a full-grown man: the difference is only one of degree. “Who hath despised the day of small things?” (Zech. iv. 10.) The very Christian who begins his religion with a timid night-visit, and an ignorant inquiry, may stand forward alone one day, and confess Christ boldly in the full light of the sun.

We learn, lastly, from these verses, that *the burial of the dead is an act which God sanctions and approves*. We need not doubt that this is part of

the lesson which the passage before us was meant to convey to our minds. Of course, it supplies unanswerable evidence that our Lord really died, and afterwards really rose again; but it also teaches that, when the body of a Christian is dead, there is a fitness and meetness in burying it with decent honour. It is not for nothing that the burials of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses are carefully recorded in holy writ. It is not for nothing that we are told that John the Baptist was laid in a tomb; and that “devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.” (Acts viii. 2.) It is not for nothing that we are told so particularly about the burial of Christ.

The true Christian need never be ashamed of regarding a funeral with peculiar reverence and solemnity. It is the body, which may be the instrument of committing the greatest sins, or of bringing the greatest glory to God. It is the body, which the eternal Son of God honoured by dwelling in it for thirty and three years, and finally dying in our stead. It is the body, with which He rose again and ascended up into heaven. It is the body, in which He sits at the right hand of God, and represents us before the Father, as our Advocate and Priest. It is the body, which is now the temple of the Holy Ghost, while the believer lives. It is the body, which will rise again, when the last trumpet sounds, and, re-united to the soul, will live in heaven to all eternity. Surely, in the face of such facts as these, we never need suppose that reverence bestowed on the burial of the body is reverence thrown away.

Let us leave the subject with one word of caution. Let us take care that we do not regard a sumptuous funeral as an atonement for a life wasted in carelessness and sin. We may bury a man in the most expensive style, and spend hundreds of pounds in mourning. We may place over his grave a costly marble stone, and inscribe on it a flattering epitaph. But all this will not save our souls or his. The turning point at the last day will not be how we are buried, but whether we were “buried with Christ,” and repented and believed. (Rom. vi. 4.) Better a thousand times to die the death of the righteous, have a lowly grave and a pauper’s funeral, than to die graceless, and lie under a marble tomb!

#### NOTES. JOHN XIX. 38–42.

- 38.—[*And after this Joseph, of Arimathæa.*] This verse begins St. John’s account of our Lord’s burial. The manner of that burial was one of the things predicted by Isaiah (ch. liii. 9), in a verse which is not correctly translated. It should be, “His grave was appointed with the wicked: but with the rich man was His tomb.” The details of His burial are carefully recorded by all the four Evangelists. Each of them names Joseph as the prime agent in the transaction, and, singularly enough, each mentions something that the other three Gospel-writers do not mention. St. Matthew alone says that he was “a rich man.” (Matt. xxvii. 51.) St. Mark alone says that he was “an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God.” (Mark xv. 43.) St. Luke alone says that he was “a good man and a just,” who

had “not consented to the counsel and deed of them, . . . who himself waited for the kingdom of God.” (Luke xxiii. 50, 51.) St. John alone says here that he was “a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews.” It is another singular fact about Joseph, that we never hear a word about him in Scripture, except on this occasion of our Lord’s burial. Both before and after this interesting event, the Bible, for some wise reason, is entirely silent about him. Nor can we explain how an inhabitant of Arimathæa happened to have a new tomb at Jerusalem. We must either suppose that, as a rich man, he had two residences, or else that, though born at Arimathæa, he had lately removed to Jerusalem. The utmost we know is that the article in the Greek before “Joseph,” and before “of Arimathæa,” seems to indicate that he was a person well known by history to the readers of St. John’s Gospel.

About the place whence Joseph came, “Arimathæa,” nothing certain is known. Some think that it is Rama, where Samuel dwelt. (1 Sam. vii. 17.) The Septuagint Greek translator certainly calls Ramah “Armathaim,” which looks like it. St. Luke calls it a “city of Judæa.” Nothing certain seems to be known about it.

[*Being a disciple...secretly...Jews.*] The Greek word rendered “secretly,” is literally “a concealed” disciple,—a past participle. The expression teaches the interesting fact that there were Jews who secretly believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and yet had not courage to confess Him before His crucifixion. We are distinctly told in John xii. 42, that “many of the chief rulers believed, but did not confess Christ, because of the Pharisees.” But the character given of them, that “they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,” is so condemnatory, that we may well doubt whether Joseph was one of these. Want of physical or moral courage was probably the flaw in his character. It is only fair to remember that, as “a rich man and a counsellor,” he had far more to sacrifice, and far more opposition to encounter, than poor fishermen or publicans would have. His backwardness to confess Christ cannot of course be defended. But his case teaches us that there is sometimes more spiritual work going on in men’s minds than appears. We must not set down every one as utterly graceless and godless, who is not bold and outspoken at present. We must charitably hope that there are some secret disciples, who at present hold their tongues and say nothing, and yet, like Joseph, will one day come forward, and be courageous witnesses for Christ. All is not gold that glitters, and all is not dross that now looks dirty and makes no show. We must be charitable and hope on.—His case should also teach us the great power of that mischievous principle, the fear of man. Open sin kills its thousands, but the fear of man its tens of thousands. Let us watch and pray against it. Faith is the grand secret of victory over it. Like Moses, we must ever live as those who “see Him that is invisible.” (Heb. xi. 27.) And to faith must be added the expulsive power of a new principle,—the fear of God. “I fear God,” said holy Col. Gardiner, “and there is none else that I need fear.”

[*Besought Pilate...take...body...Jesus.*] The conduct of Joseph deserves our praise and admiration, and his name will be held in honour by the Church of Christ, in consequence of it, as long as the world stands. Whatever Joseph was at first, he shone brightly at last. “The last are first” sometimes. Let us see what he did.

(a) Joseph honoured Christ, when our Lord’s own apostles had forsaken Him. He showed more faith and courage than His nearest and dearest friends.

(b) Joseph honoured Christ, when it was a dangerous thing to do Him honour. To come forward and avow respect for one condemned as a malefactor, for one cast out by the High Priests and leaders of the Jews,—to say practically, “I am Christ’s friend,” was bold indeed. St. Mark particularly says, “He went in boldly unto Pilate” (Mark xv. 43), showing plainly that it was an act of uncommon courage.

(c) Joseph honoured Christ, when He was a lifeless corpse, and to all appearance could do nothing for Him. It was not when Jesus was doing miracles and preaching wonderful ser-

mons, but when there remained nothing of Him but a dead body, that he came forward and asked leave to bury Him.

Why Joseph's "fear" departed, and he acted with such marvellous boldness now, is a question which we have no means of settling. But reason points out that in all probability he had been an eye-witness of much that had happened this eventful day. He had possibly stood within a short distance of the cross, and seen all that took place, and heard every one of our Lord's seven sayings. The miraculous darkness for three hours, and the earthquake, must have arrested his attention. Surely it is not presumptuous to conjecture, that all this must have had a mighty effect on Joseph's soul, and made him resolve at once to cast fear away, and avow himself openly one of Christ's friends. It is almost certain that he must have been near the cross at three o'clock, when our Lord gave up the ghost, or else how could he have known of His death, and had time to think of burying Him?

After all it is a deep truth, that circumstances bring out character in an extraordinary way. Just as the developing liquid brings out of the dull grey glass in the photographer's hands, a latent image which you never suspected before, so do circumstances bring out in some men a decision and power of character, which before you would have thought impossible.

Rollock remarks, "When Christ was working wonders, and speaking as never man spake, all this moved not Joseph to come forth and show himself. But now, Christ being dead and in shame, he comes out. Whereunto do I ascribe this? I ascribe it to the force that comes from the death of Christ. There was never a living man in the world that had such power as that dead body had. More mighty was His death than His life."

[*And Pilate gave him leave.*] The entire absence of difficulties in Joseph's way is, at first sight, rather remarkable. We may easily believe that Pilate was willing enough to grant Joseph's request. He did not grant it till the centurion certified that Jesus was actually dead, and the ends of justice (so called) attained. Then at once he gave permission. It is fair to remember that he had regarded our Lord as guiltless all along, that if left to his own free will he would have released Him. It is probable, moreover, that he was vexed and annoyed at the obstinate pertinacity with which the Jews pressed for our Lord's death against his wish, and that he would be glad enough to pay them off, and spite them, by gratifying any friend of our Lord. But we must also remember that to the burial of our Lord's body the Jews themselves had no objection, and had even asked that the death of the criminals might be hastened and the dead bodies got out of the way. What they would have done with the body of our Lord, if Joseph had not come forward, we cannot certainly tell. Lightfoot says there was a common grave for the bodies of malefactors. In any case Joseph's request was not likely to meet with objection either from Gentile or Jew. But, for all that we must not forget that it made him a marked man, as a friend of Christ, and utterly ruined his character with Caiaphas and the high priests.

[*He came therefore...took...body...Jesus.*] The word rendered "took" here, is the same that is rendered "took away" just above.—Some think, as Tholuck and Ellicott, that the Roman soldiers took the body down from the cross. But I see no certain proof of this, and I think it unlikely they would take the trouble to do it, if others were willing to undertake the task. The meaning, in my opinion, is that Joseph came up to the cross, raised and lifted from it the lifeless corpse of our Lord and took it away for burial. Whether this was done by rearing a ladder against the cross, as Rubens' famous picture represents, and so letting down the body after drawing out the nails; or, whether by taking up the cross out of the hole in which it was fixed, laying it on the ground, and then taking out the nails, is a question which we have no means of deciding. To me it seems far more probable that the latter plan would be adopted than the former, and that as the cross was most likely reared up with the

body on it, so it was taken down again with the body on it. But every reader must judge for himself.

In whatever way the body was taken down, or taken off the cross, everything seems to me to indicate that Joseph was the person who did it with his own hands. This is the more remarkable, when we consider that to touch a dead body made a Jew ceremonially unclean, and that this was the afternoon preceding the passover Sabbath. There seems, however, no reason why we should suppose that no one helped Joseph. He could hardly lift the cross, or reverently lift off the body of a full-grown person in the prime of life, without some aid. Why should we hesitate to believe that John and Nicodemus helped him?

It is a curious coincidence, though perhaps only a coincidence, that it was a "Joseph," who probably first touched and received our Lord's body when He was born into the world at Bethlehem, and again a "Joseph," who was the last to hold, and lift, and handle the dead body of the same Lord, when He was buried.

39.—[*And there came also Nicodemus...night.*] The fact here recorded is quite peculiar to St. John's Gospel. For wise reasons, neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke, ever mention the name of Nicodemus. John mentions him three times,—first as a secret inquirer (John iii. 1); secondly, as a timid advocate of justice towards our Lord in the Jewish Council (John vii. 10); and lastly, in this place. Both here and on the second occasion, he emphatically inserts the explanatory comment, that it was the same Nicodemus which "at first came to Jesus by night."

The verse before as seems to show that Nicodemus came forward as a volunteer, and helped to bury our Lord. and did not shrink to take part with Joseph in his good work. I can hardly think that he went with Joseph to Pilate. There is not a word to show this in any of the four Gospels.

Some think that by agreement Nicodemus went to fetch the hundred pounds' weight of spice (no slight burden to carry), while Joseph went to Pilate.

I should rather conjecture, that when Nicodemus saw Joseph coming boldly forward and showing anxiety to honour our Lord's body,—Joseph, whom doubtless as a Pharisee and counsellor, he knew well,—his own heart was stirred within him, his own timidity fell to the ground, and he came forward and offered to aid. In so doing he deserves praise and honour, though in a lower degree, like Joseph. He showed more reverence and love to our Lord when dead than he had ever done when alive. Once more we see that circumstances bring out character in very unexpected ways. The man that began seeking Jesus by night, at last confesses Jesus openly before the world, in the full light of day.

The case of Nicodemus is deeply instructive. It shows us how small and weak the beginning of true religion may be in the soul of man. It shows us that we must not despair of anyone because he begins with a little timid, secret inquiry after Christ. It shows us that there are wide differences and varieties in the characters of believers. Some are brought into full light at once, and take up the cross without delay. Others attain light very slowly, and halt long between two opinions. It shows us that those who make the least display at first, sometimes shine brightest and come out best at last. Nicodemus confessed his love to Christ when Peter, James, and Andrew, had all run away. What need we have for patience and charity in forming an estimate of other people's religion! There are more successors of Nicodemus in the Church of Christ than we are aware of. We may see some marvellous changes in some persons, if we live with them a few years. The strongest, hardiest trees, are often the slowest in growth. He that sets down men and women as graceless and godless, if they do not profess full assurance of hope the first day they take up religion and hear the Gospel, forgets the case of Nicodemus, and exhibits his own ignorance of the ways of the

Spirit. All God's elect are led to Christ, undoubtedly, but not all at the same speed, or through the same experience.

Calvin remarks on the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus, "Here we have a striking proof that Christ's death was more quickening than His life. So great was the efficacy of that sweet savour which the death of Christ conveyed to the minds of these two men, that it quickly extinguished all the passions of the flesh."

Quesnel observes, "Wonderful is the power of Christ's death, which gives courage to confess Him in His deepest humiliation, to those who, when He was doing miracles, came to Him only in secret."

Henry observes that Joseph and Nicodemus showed weak faith, but strong love. "A firm faith in Christ's resurrection would have saved them this cost and expense." But they showed their deep love to our Lord's person and teaching.

[*And brought...myrrh...aloes...weight.*] The mixture here mentioned was probably in the shape of powder. The two ingredients were strongly aromatic and antiseptic. The large quantity brought shows the wealth and the liberal mind of Nicodemus. It also shows his wise forethought. A dead body so torn and lacerated as that of our blessed Lord, would need an unusually large quantity of antiseptics or preservatives, to check the tendency to corruption which such a climate would cause, even at Easter. Considering also that everything must have been done with some haste, the large quantity of spices used was probably meant to compensate for the want of time to do the work slowly and carefully.

40.—[*Then took...body...wound...clothes...spices.*] Here we are told the precise manner of the preparation of our Lord's body for burial. As always in that time and country; He was not put into a coffin. He was simply wrapped up in linen cloths, on which the preparation of myrrh and aloes had been laid. Thus the powder would be next to our Lord's body, and interpose between the linen and His skin. How the linen clothes were provided, we are told by St. Mark. Joseph "bought fine linen." (Mark xv. 46.) Joseph, being a rich man, had no difficulty in supplying funds for this purpose.

The word "wound" means literally "bound."

The sentence before us supplies one more strong evidence of the reality of Christ's death. Joseph and Nicodemus could not possibly be deceived. When they touched and handled the body, and wrapped it in linen clothes, they must have felt convinced that the heart had ceased to beat, and that life was extinct. There is no mistaking the feel of a dead body.

[*As the manner...Jews...bury.*] This is one of those occasional comments or explanatory remarks, which St. John sometimes makes in his Gospel, supplying strong internal evidence that he wrote for all the Church of Christ in every land, Gentiles as well as Jews, and that he thought it wise to explain Jewish customs. The reference appears to be to the wrapping of the body in linen, rather than to the use of the spices. Lazarus at Bethany came out of the grave wrapped around with cloths.

The wise foresight of the Spirit of God appears strongly in the details here given of our Lord's burial. The quantity of spices used was so great, that it anticipates the objection that our Lord's body might possibly "see corruption" in some degree before His resurrection. At the same time the special mention of Joseph being "a rich man," and Nicodemus "a ruler" helping him, completely stops the mouths of those who would have said that the followers of our Lord could never have found means to prevent the wounds of His body corrupting. By God's superintending providence, inclining rich men to come forward, the difficulty was obviated, and the means provided.

Besser says, "Twice was Jesus Christ rich in the days of His poverty. Once, immediately after His birth, when the wise men from the East offered Him gold and frankincense, and

myrrh; and now, after His ignominious death, when a rich man buries him, and a distinguished man provides spices to anoint Him. Yea, a rich Joseph has taken the place of that poor Joseph who stood by the manger.”

- 41.—[*Now in the place...crucified...garden.*] This verse tells us the place where our Lord was buried. It was in “a garden” close to the spot called Golgotha, where He was crucified. This fact alone seems to dispose of the theory, that the “place of a skull” meant a place where the skeletons and bones of executed criminals were lying about! Reason and common-sense point out, that, even if there were no argument against the theory from the Jewish customs about bones, it is very unlikely that “a garden” would have been near such a loathsome place. Golgotha could hardly be a place of execution, or a place where criminals were frequently crucified, if there was a garden near! The pictures that commonly represent the scene of the crucifixion as a bleak desolate-looking rocky hill, are manifestly quite incorrect. It was a place near to which, or where “there was a garden.”

The curious coincidence that the fall of the first Adam, the agony, the cross, and the sepulchre of the second Adam, were all alike connected with a garden, can hardly fail to strike a reflecting mind.

[*And in the garden...new sepulchre...laid.*] Here we have the very receptacle described in which our Lord’s sacred body was laid. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, all tell us it was “hewn out of a rock,”—the limestone rock, which is the rock of the place. John tells us that it was “new;” and, like St. Luke, adds that “never man was laid in” it before.

It is curious that Matthew alone tells us that this tomb was Joseph’s own, “which he had hewn out of a rock.” (Matt. xxvii. 60.) Theophylact remarks, that it is a striking proof of our Lord’s poverty, that while He lived He had no house of His own, and when He died He was buried in another’s tomb.

It is almost needless to say that both the conditions of the sepulchre above mentioned are of great importance, and deserve careful notice. (a) Our Lord’s tomb was hewn out of a hard limestone rock. This made it clearly impossible for any one to say, that the disciples made a subterraneous entrance into the tomb by night and stole the body away. By the entrance that it was carried into the sepulchre, by the same it must be carried out.—(b) Our Lord’s tomb was a new one, in which no one had ever been laid. This made it impossible for anyone to say, after the resurrection, that there was no proof that Jesus rose from the dead, and that it might possibly be someone else. This could not be, when His body was the first and only body that was ever laid in this grave. Wonderful is it to see how at every turn the overruling wisdom of God has stopped, obviated, and frustrated, by wise provisions, the objections of infidels.

- 42.—[*Then laid they Jesus, etc.*] In order to see the full meaning of this verse, we should slightly invert the order of the words, and paraphrase them in some such way as this:—“In this new rock-hewn tomb, therefore, Joseph and Nicodemus laid the body of Jesus, because it was conveniently nigh at hand, and because the Jews’ preparation day, or day preceding the passover Sabbath, left them little time, and made it necessary to hasten their proceedings.”—We may well believe that these two holy men had but little time, when we consider that our Lord did not give up the ghost till three o’clock, that the day ended at six, and that only three hours were left for Joseph to go to Pilate and get leave to remove the body from the cross, for Joseph and Nicodemus to take the nails out and lift the body from the tree, for wrapping the body in linen with a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and for finally carrying it to the tomb and rolling a huge stone to the mouth of the tomb. When we remember, besides this, that the body of a full-grown man wrapped in linen with a hundred pounds of additional weight in myrrh and aloes, would be a most awkward and difficult burden for

two men to carry, we may well believe that nothing but severe exertion could have enabled Joseph and Nicodemus to finish their labour of love before six o'clock. The wonder is that they managed to do it at all. It certainly could not have been done if they had not got a sepulchre nigh at hand. Again the Holy Ghost appears to me to foresee the objection that there was not time to bury our Lord, and mercifully supplies the words which answer it: "the sepulchre was nigh at hand." Even then we can hardly doubt that John and the women from Galilee must have lent some help. At all events it is distinctly recorded that the women were present, and that they were sitting by and beheld where the body was laid.

Thus ended the most wonderful funeral the sun ever shone upon. Such a death and such a burial,—so little understood by man and so important in the sight of God,—there never was, and never can be again. Who need doubt the love of Christ, when we consider the deep humiliation that Christ went through for our sakes. To tabernacle in our flesh at all, to die after the manner of a man, to allow his holy body to hang naked on a cross, to suffer it to be lifted, handled, carried like a lump of cold clay, and shut up in a dark, silent, solitary tomb,—this was indeed love that passeth knowledge. What true believer need fear the grave now? Solemn as is the thought of our last narrow bed, we must never forget that "it is the place where the Lord lay." (Matt. xxviii. 6.) "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor, xv. 56.)

Henry observes, "Christ's death should comfort us against the fear of death. The grave could not long keep Christ, and it shall not long keep us. It was a loathsome prison before, it is a perfumed bed now. He whose Head is in heaven, need not fear to put his feet into the grave."

Every Bible reader knows that Isaiah's famous prophecy contains the words, "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death." (Isa. liii. 9.) But not everyone knows the interesting fact that the more correct translation of the Hebrew words would be, "His grave was appointed to be with the wicked; but with the rich man was His tomb." This is the opinion of such eminent scholars as Capellus, Vitringa, Bishop Lowth, and Bishop Horsley.