

Death Works in Us

by J.B. Stoney

The sermon emphasizes the importance of accepting the tunnel of death and darkness in order to experience transformation and growth, and to have the light on the other side.

Scripture: Genesis 22:1, Genesis 50:15, 1 Kings 17:8, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 1:21, Hebrews 12:5

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Faith And Surrender"

Description

J.B. Stoney preaches on the importance of accepting the tunnel of darkness in order to experience the light and glory of God. Using the story of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice, he emphasizes the need to surrender all earthly attachments and trust in God's provision. Stoney highlights the concept of death as a means to deepen our faith and reliance on God, drawing examples from biblical figures like Hezekiah, Jonah, and Paul. He stresses the necessity of embracing suffering and trials as a way to draw closer to Christ and experience the joy and eternal life He offers.

Transcript

GENESIS 22:1-14

IT has been remarked before that the life of Abraham is properly divided into three parts. The first is the land; the second, the heir; and here we come to the last, which is the greatest; and, though consecutive historically, they are nearly parallel typically. It is not simply the place, neither is it the Lord in the place, but we are now brought in to learn what it is practically to have our "faith and hope in God."

In speaking of Abraham here, I will first recite the simple case, and then how it is doctrinally true, and lastly how it is practically true.

First, here is Abraham entitled to everything that God had given him, but he is called to put all the lights out, with his own hands. There is nothing wrong in what he has, but he is to throw himself into darkness on this side, that he may have the light on the other side. He offered up his son, counting upon "God who raises the dead." He threw himself into darkness in this present scene, so that he might have the light in that. You must accept the darkness on this side if you are to have the light on that. When I present the fact that we have to do with the Man in heaven, that involves your placing yourself in darkness as to the man here : that is a tunnel.

The more we are in the tunnel, the more we are leaving the darkness behind us, and coming to the light on the other side. The darkness is connected with what we are passing through. I do not want you simply to take hold of the fact that you are united to a Man in heaven, but I want your soul to accept the resource of my heart; but, on the other hand, what do I accept in this present scene, but that all goes into darkness here in order that I may more enjoy the brilliancy of the light that is on the other side ? You will find that practically we are all brought into the tunnel on this side. That is what Abraham was called to do, and he finds that it is God, as Jehovah-Jireh, that he has to do with: it is that same word that he says to Isaac as they are going up the hill; when he has reached the point he can say. The Lord will see to it; God will provide Himself a lamb.

Now let me just note one or two matters connected with it. I suppose even the youngest child could not read this chapter without being struck with the thought that it was no easy matter, this man going up day after day to reach a point where, with his own hand, he was to put out all that was cheering to him on earth. What sustained him, as with measured tread he advanced up the hill ? He says, I count upon God as I pass into the tunnel; I have to find my way through this impenetrable darkness. He does not run at the thing; he does not hastily accomplish it; but it was day after day, step by step, and he reached it with his heart deepening in the fact, I have to do with God.

Oh, it is a wonderful thing! And, believe me, when you come to speak of practice, the measure of your strength is the measure of the strait you go through with God. You say, I have gone through deep sorrow; but the question is whether you have gone through it with God--as counting upon Him. The strait you have passed through with God is the real measure of your strength; that is what it is in every case. Therefore the scripture says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." It is trying, not trial. It is no trial to a horse to jump over a fence; he only really makes manifest what is already there. And your faith will be put to the trial, if you use the word in that way, but it is only trying, not trial-- it is putting it to the test.

Abraham had this faith forty years before it was tried. There is forty years between Paul and James. James says he was "justified by works," when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar.

Have you faith about a certain thing ? Do you say, I have seen it and know it ? Well, I say, you will be tried certainly; it may be thirty or forty years before you are, but it will come out in the end; you will certainly be tried. The children of Israel were accustomed to earthly blessings, and the Lord showed them that they were learning more by trial in the wilderness, where for forty years He suffered them to hunger and fed them with manna, that they might know "that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live " ; they found out thus what God was, the One who was to be their Succour in it.

So with Abraham here; it was the faith that he had before that is now being put to the test. He had seen the star-spangled sky, and had said, I believe that. And now, says God, here is the heir, and a great many years ago you said you believed me ; now I am putting you to the test : put him to death.

Death is that for which we have no remedy; and, what is more, there is no law of nature about death. It takes anybody, young or old-- anybody; it does not come after a certain number of years ; it is arbitrary. It is not a question of a thing that is mendable ; it is not a thing within the compass of man; that is the reason it brings in God with it. He was to put him to death ; he was to offer him up ; he expected God to raise him from the dead; but, as far as he himself was concerned, he was to put himself into complete darkness.

When death comes in, there is no remedy; God says, I stand there; death is a thing beyond you; you cannot touch it. The reason I speak of it.

now is that this was the thing that was called for in Abraham. When we come to practice we find it is darkness, but the moment our eye rests upon Christ we get light in it.

Abraham here went into the tunnel; indeed he was more like a contractor making a tunnel for himself. He found a way through it to God; the way that faith penetrated through to get to the light on the other side. He could say. Well, I can take the darkness, I can bring it in with my own hand, because I count upon God who raises the dead. How this was fulfilled in the Lord!

The heart is not sufficiently honest about it. Did you not bring death into the world ? You have brought it in, for death was the judgment for sin. And yet people seem so surprised when death overtakes them: and we all have felt it. Well, who brought it in--this terrible thing--this anomalous thing? What is the character of it? Why, that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward "; so much so that the poet says, " Every great thought is allied to melancholy." That is what we have brought in ourselves. We are not only suffering from the judgment of God, but we cannot look at the dearest object we have on earth without thinking: Death may lay its finger on it, death may sweep it away. We have brought it into the world ourselves, so we ought not to be surprised at its overtaking us. Thus it is that the man who possesses most in this world is the most miserable. Solomon says, " Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them."

Now the Lord has come in and what He has done is this. He was the Son of the Father--He was the perfect Man who answered to the mind of God, but He says, I am not going to abide alone. I do not think we estimate what a terrible thing it was for Christ to die; He, the Creator, the Prince of Life! We do not estimate what it was for Him to be brought into the dust of death; He says, " Father, save me from this hour," and " Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

On the Lord's day morning, when the saints are gathered round the Lord's table, the heart is sad and grieved as one sees their demeanour and their dress. If it were one of their own relations that had died, their whole demeanour would be different; so would their dress be different. And we go there not only to remember the death of our greatest Benefactor, but that He died for me. I say nothing shows the unfeeling nature of our hearts more than the way we take the death of Christ. You cannot meet a greater death than the death of Christ. Death has done its worst; the greatest death I can ever have to meet is the death of the Lord. I often prepare myself for the death of friends in thinking of this. Christ's death has thrown the whole of this scene into a new order of things ; it threw man out, and cast the terrible shade of His own death over all here. I am in the scene where Christ has died, and the table of the Lord is the avowal of this, that I have passed from the man that is here, to the Man that has died for me. I " show the Lord's death till he come."

It is the wonderful centre-point of Christianity. In baptism I renounce myself because of the death of Christ; but the Lord's supper is the avowal that I not only touch Him in His death, but that I have communion with His body, and with His blood. I am like the very Man that was here upon earth; I have His very nature. I have reached Him through His death. " Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour."

He is the antitype of both Abraham and Isaac. He was the One who met all the mind of God, but He says, I will give it all up; with My own hand I will put out the light. It was His own action, and therefore at the

Supper He "gave thanks" He was the most wonderful impersonation of divine beauty as a Man, but He says, I will let it all go; and, not one shade of regret, I will give thanks; this is My body which is for you; this is My blood which is shed for you.

The characteristic expression of the Lord's supper is that we have passed from the man that is here. So says the apostle to the Corinthians : I have shown you your folly; now I speak as to wise men. " The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? " It is through Christ's death that I reach the Man that is there, and thus I am referred back to John 6, and eat His flesh and drink His blood.

They all bungled about this from the beginning. Every one says. We like to be like Jesus, and I agree with it, but how do you work it out ? I say, I never can reach Him but through His death-- death of judgment, and death of calamity, too. I have communion with the blood of Christ, and I have communion with the body of Christ. I make a way through; I go down into the darkness that I may find Him at the other side. He goes down into it. When is the Son of man glorified ? When He goes down under all the weight of our judgment.

He is more careful to maintain the glory of God-- what is due to Him-- when He takes that place, than to secure my deliverance. He answers so completely to the requirements of God, He will not weaken any of them; for indeed He is more occupied, if I may so say, with maintaining the glory of God, than with the benefit that will accrue to me from it. He has entered into this; He has gone down into the judgment, and made a way through it; He has been raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, and has brought in the light of another day.

He is now the One to impart eternal life-- life that was now to be imparted with a new order of things. Life was connected with blood; now it is connected with the Holy Spirit: " Receive the Holy Spirit." I have a life now that is on the other side of death, on the other side of the tunnel, a life that can go through it, because the Life that has gone through it is our life. As you get in the third of John: the Son of man must be lifted up. He has opened the way through, and now He imparts life to us; death is on our side, but life on His.

And He has given me the light of the eternal day to enjoy that eternal life-- divine capacity to enjoy God without any languor whatever. It is an entirely new thing imported; He has broken the power of death and abolished it, and He has brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. It is not that I get a man like Lazarus coming out of it, for he was bound with grave clothes; but the Lord has broken the whole power of death; the napkin about His head was laid aside.

What I want now definitely to bring before you is this : that the Lord Jesus Christ has gone into death, and you have really to accept the fact. You all know the benefit of His death, but will you go the road ? Will you take the tunnel ? You say. Oh! I will have all the benefit of it, soon. No doubt you will; but what about it now ? Look at the apostle ; he says, Always bearing about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in me.

God will never let any soul be able to say that he is neglected. He gives you a blow sufficient to make you understand His will, and, if you do not bow to that blow. He will not give you another for perhaps four or five years. He says. Well, if you will not bow, I will let you alone. But, if you do bow. He says, I will never take my hand off you. " We which live are always delivered unto death." He never takes His hand off.

I know I used to think. Well, the Lord will take His hand off after this ; I shall have good times when once this trial is over; I will just live this out, and then I shall have a run of fine weather! And so it was for a time; but, the moment I began to bend, down came another stroke, and I came to understand that it is, "We which live are always delivered unto death "; I found out that it is. If you bend, I will give you another stroke, but I will help you through it. It is " always delivered," and you brought it in; there is a justice in it.

The leader of a forlorn hope says, " Death or glory " ; the Christian says. Death and glory. There are only two true things, death and glory-- not death or glory. It is not only that Christ has answered to my sins, but He has entitled me to the inheritance of glory. It is plain no person can appreciate glory except as he knows death. I see many people who know little or nothing of it, and I say, you have never yet tasted what death is, I do not mean bereavement, so much as a true sense of what the death of Christ is.

Now you believe in the benefit, but are you enjoying it? I do not believe you ever will, until you take the tunnel, and get the light on the other side.

But, you say, will you tell us what is the tunnel? Why, throw everything here into the dark, that you may have the light there. I walk right into it; I am looking for the light at the other side; but then, if I do, I must throw the light here into darkness. " Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." What loss if I gain the sense of eternal life--eternal brightness ? I have my heart comforted by that blessed One with the joys that accompany that life which He has brought in, and it is then a small thing to throw all here into the shade. Any man who is trying to enjoy this present life is not enjoying the other.

You say. Am I to give up this or that ? It is not a question of what I am going to give up; that is surrender, and I am not saying anything about surrender. Jephthah was as wrong as Abraham was right; if you do such things you will be made weak. But I accept death; that is the great thing; it is all darkness here; the true character of this scene is death. The greatest One who was ever on this earth died from off it; He entered into death and thus He throws a shade over all this scene, and I do not expect anything but death here.

Then am I to be melancholy ? Not at all! I pass from it into a scene of settled enjoyment-- of perennial brightness ; not the coming and going. Saints have not the sense of perennial brightness; they are not sensibly united to Christ; and, as a consequence, they are often unhappy and dull if the meeting is not a happy one. I am often happier at an unhappy meeting than at a happy one, because then I rise from circumstantial to the One who is the source of brightness, and I say, I am happy in the Lord, though I am not at all happy in the way you are going on. Instead of finding the " joints and bands," I have to fall back to the Lord, the source of them. The state of the bride in the Canticles, is just that; when He is present all is right. But I am never dissociated from Him; I am united to Him; I have to do with Him. Instead of finding that I am contributed to by the scene through which I am passing, I seek for nothing from it; I am satisfied with Himself; my most blessed and happy time is to be in solitude with Himself; all my power to enjoy is in Himself.

Well, it is in proportion as you accept the tunnel now you will enjoy the glory afterwards-- the light of the day that is coming. It is not always necessarily bereavement; the apostle's "death"-- that to which he was delivered-- was, I think, persecution; it does not always mean bereavement.

I pass on now to the effect of the doctrine. Doctrinally we must accept the fact that we have to do with death; you must bring death before your soul in order to enhance what Christ has done for you. I take

three aspects of this. First the passover in Egypt; then the Red Sea; then Jordan.

First, the blood was shed. The person was to go in and shut the door, and eat the lamb roast with fire. Had not he to do with death ? I say that all the loss of souls is that they have not to do with death. Oh, I am saved by the blood! you say. Very true, but staying thus you will never get out of Egypt.

Then I come to the Red Sea, where all the enemies were drowned; and I walk through it with all the assurance that Christ has first walked through it for me. You have touched it; you have been made conversant with it; it is not that you can, as it were, pass it lightly from you.

And then I come to the Jordan, and I have to walk across it, with this difference as compared with the Red Sea, that I do not see a drop of water at all. And there I am over the tunnel.

Now what is a dead man really ? A dead man is one who has neither a hope nor a fear. Have you done with prospects ? Prospects are far harder to get rid of than possessions, because possessions you have, and know the value of, but prospects you do not. It is a grand thing if you are done with prospects.

Now I do not believe that simple ability will ever rise to any eminence; there must be ambition also. Many men have ability who have not ambition; but it is your aspirations which mark your destiny. It is a great loss to the natural character not to have ambition ; if you have no ambition, you will not apply yourself to a thing; but, if you have, you are sure to apply yourself. You will find that the most eminent men are the most laborious. The higher the bird goes, the more strain there is upon his wing.

You say. What are you going there for? I am going because the Spirit of God leads me. But He will lead you through Jordan! Ah, never mind that! I have lost everything, I have neither a hope, nor a fear.

I find most people cannot give up their expectations; you have not lost attractions here-- links to the scene. It will not do for you to say, I will stand and look over, they had to walk across Jordan. I have traversed the place where I have been dead myself; I have traversed it with my eye upon the One who has abolished it. I do not " Stand shivering on the brink afraid to launch away." I have the enjoyment before me of that land that is mine. I have got onto the ground of God, and that land is mine-- mine before I enjoy it. It is not that I get it before I go in, but it is mine before I realise it.

So much for it doctrinally. Now I come to it practically, what it is to express it; what it is to a person when he really accepts it.

How differently we all view things here! I say to a person. What are you looking forward to in this world? He tells me, I am looking forward to the time when I shall be able to give up my business, and have some quiet little country place to which I can retire with my family. Oh, then you are not looking for the tunnel! Paul says, I see the martyr's course and the stake before me ; the fellowship of his sufferings, and being made conformable unto His death.

I say to a man who has friends. What would you do if they were all to go? How would you stand if everything went ? I have One who never can go-- One who has won my heart; and that One will group round Himself every single worthy object of my heart in that bright morning of resurrection; there they are! If my heart is wrenched when the calamity of death befalls me, it is there I learn to know the One who will walk beside me, as surely as He walked beside Mary. And He does not do it like the benevolent man of this world, who would do anything to relieve a hungry man, but who does not at all know what his feelings are. There are very few who would say, I will suffer hunger so that I may know what a hungry man feels.

But this is what the Lord has done; He has made Himself familiar with my circumstances that He might be able to sympathise with me in them.

If you only accept the Lord's supper all comes easy. The fact is I have changed my man. I desire to cultivate the knowledge of this more. I often come from the Lord's table with a sort of a shudder at the thought that I have to deal again with the man of the earth, that I have to go out again into the midst of men to be jostled and pushed by the man for whom Christ died. It is " the communion of the blood of Christ." It is to me one of the solemn thoughts that surround the soul at the Lord's table, that He walks into the midst Himself, to see how His people are remembering His death. The angels look on with wonder, as they see His people gathered together in solemn conclave to remember His death.

I will take now an example in Genesis 50, to show you how you really have to learn practically the tunnel in order that you may know the value of Christ. There is one thing that is as clear as daylight, and that is, that a great many people have gone through trials that have not done them a bit of good. A person goes into trial, but God only knows how that man will come out; in most cases they come out of it worse than they went in. If you become occupied with your sufferings, if you get full of yourself, you will come out worse than you went in; but if you are exercised by it, " afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness," as if you had not done anything wrong at all. But, if you do not get the sympathy of Christ with you in the trial, you will come out worse than you went in. It is a well-known thing, that going through the world without sympathy makes the hardest of men ; the favourite of the family, is always the most lovable; it often makes them selfish, but still they are loving.

Joseph was the best of the brothers. Never was such a brother! I ask every person in this room. Do you know Him-- the true Joseph ? Are you intimate with Him ? Joseph's brethren never knew his heart. When did they learn it ? When death came in-- when " their father was dead." Then they said, Joseph will hate us. You have not yet learned what Christ is! Now Joseph wept, and he spake to their hearts : " I will nourish you and your little ones." And when does this happen ? After they had been living seventeen years upon his bounty: then they entered the tunnel; light comes in, and brings out these two things ; Joseph wept, and his brethren spoke to him.

But now look at what happened. Seventeen years had transpired, so that there was no question as to his being their saviour. But has the death of your father so come in that there is no screen between you and the Lord Jesus Christ ? I am then practically brought into such close quarters with Him, that I have discovered His heart at the very same time that I have discovered my own enormity. Thus the two things come out together. And how do they come out ?-- Simply by death coming in, and never could they come out any otherwise.

I next take the widow of Sarepta in I Kings 17. Elijah is here a figure of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now looking out for a home with a poor Gentile. He says. Her misery has touched my heart; I will go to her, and there I will find a home. She is seeking two sticks that she may make a meal for herself and her son, that they may eat it and die. And what can any of us speak of more than one meal ? If even that! Here was a heart that was trying to make the best of life while it lasted, and that was only for one meal. I am going to die, so I may as well make the best of it while it lasts ; a short life and a merry one!

But Elijah knocks at the door: May I come in ? Yes, come in, and very glad. He comes in, and she, and her son, and the prophet eat many days; a full year goes by; a spring, a summer, an autumn, a winter go over them-- every variety of season before the trial comes; they had a very enjoyable time. But what happens

now ? Death comes in; the tunnel. And you find she is really not clear about anything; she says. You are come to call my sin to remembrance. Elijah stretches himself upon the child-- Christ's own action in joining Himself to the dead; the child's soul returns to him again, and Elijah comes down and says. There is your son alive! And now she can say, I have been in the tunnel, I have learned in it that you are a man of God; I have learned what your heart is ; I see that life is come out of death.

Let me say, in passing, that the chastening spoken of in Hebrews 12 is not in connection with wrong doing, but with right doing. It will do you good, you will think less of yourself in future, but it is those who are suffering for righteousness; it is resisting unto blood striving against sin. "My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." Neither be. a duck that does not mind the rain, nor a hen that is miserable in it, but say, I am looking for the benefit that is to accrue to me from this very painful circumstance.

When the widow of Nain lost her only son, she lost her last link to earth. We are so constituted that if the heart has twenty-one links, and twenty of them are broken, it will still hang on to the twenty-first; and this is where the trial comes in; lose the twenty-first and all is over. The meaning of the word Nain is beautiful; it means pleasantness. The Lord comes in at Nain at the most solemn time that you can conceive ; the last prop of the broken heart-- of the widowed heart has failed. Well it was now that life was to come in. Life and incorruptibility have been brought to light.

I see people shrinking from it, but the word is, " Count it all joy," for I have got the strength of Christ in it; I have faith in what He is to me there.

Now I pass on to take Jonah as an example of another kind. Jonah is a servant who will not do the Lord's will. Well, says the Lord, I will bring him down to death; I will bring him down to where he cannot do one single thing; nothing but death before him, and death, too, with a bad conscience. Then Jonah prays to God, and says, " I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." And now Jonah comes up again, having learned death upon himself.

But he has to learn death in a double way. Sometimes I know death only in myself, and then I learn to be devoted. When I learn that God is absolutely for me, then I am absolutely for Him; it brings out devotedness to God in me when I have learned that God is for me. But many a devoted man is like Jonah when he comes up ; he is full of God's work, but he is not soft. He must be softened. God will soften me here; I have a double death to learn.

Now Jonah rests under the gourd, and finds his consolation in it, and his affections drawn out towards it; and God says, I have drawn out your affections; now I will take it all away. Jonah is a plain, honest man, and he says, I do well to be angry.

And it is ever thus. It is double death-- double suffering; one connected with the circumstances, the other with the person. When you are suffering from sickness it has a different effect upon you from what it has when you are suffering in your surroundings. It is like Gideon's fleece; at one time death only on the individual; at another, death all around us. It is a terrible thing to have to learn that we can survive the death of everything here; but then. death has come in, not to bring this out, but that it may cast you upon God. This is the virtue of it, and death has come in that it may bring it out.

Well, one more example. Hezekiah had been the servant of God for fourteen years-- twice seven; and then God said to him. Now you are to set your house in order, for you are to die and not to live ; now you

are to go into the tunnel. And Hezekiah is the most abject picture of misery. He says. Like a crane or a swallow so do I chatter. Why ? Because all his links were here.

And do not imagine that this is a peculiar case. At many persons' death-beds there is often a wonderful loosening from all here. At first the work may be very slow, but as soon as they come to the point. It is all gone here, then it is all bright there. There are often those who have a physical fear of death, but the nearer they come to it the less they care about it. The sad part of many death-beds is, that, instead of being happy at the prospect of going to be with Christ, they are at first quite inconsolable at the thought of death. I think the death-beds of most of the saints in this day are lamentable exhibitions; no joy; just quiet peace at the most; showing how little they know of the One they are going to.

Let me take another example: that of Paul in Philippians i. He says, I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. I can take the tunnel with cheerfulness. I have not got a single link here upon earth; Jerusalem was my gourd, and a very strong link it was; but that is gone, and I can take the tunnel cheerfully.

I find many persons will talk of the Lord's coming who cannot look at their own side of it at all. Are you quite ready to go? I will look at that side. I long to depart, I have nothing to stay for; all the strings are cut, and the balloon is ready to go. Well, if you are ready to go, you were never so fit to stay; you are not fit to stay until you are ready to go. The man who has ties here must be warped. Surrounded with family ties and links, he feels how hard it would be to have to leave them, not only on his side, but on theirs. The apostle says, I am ready to go; I have not one single thing to detain me, it is better to be with Christ, far better.

Then, when you come to the moral dealing, do not shrink from it. The only thing that can make the glory true to your heart is death here. The proper setting for the diamond here is death. As I walk through the tunnel I am learning the blessedness of that One who has brought in the glory to be my light in it. The true place morally for us is, as Peter says, that of death. " As Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."

If Christ suffered for you in the flesh, what are you going to do ? Are you going to minister to the flesh? It is a most monstrous thing to say, I will minister to the flesh for which Christ died. I, who am Christ's member! But you say, my spirit is all right. Yes, but your body is a member of Christ. Would you put on it an ornament that Christ would not put on ? Would you go to a flower show? It is your body that is a member of Christ. Am I to put the members of Christ in an unholy position ? I am going to melt my body into glass, that I may be so transparent that the life of Christ only may shine out in it.

If you were thus faithfully going on, instead of finding things to invite and attract you, you would find that they were cut down, and that you were shut out from them. What your taste is in most, you suffer in most; so that where you are naturally most alive, is the very place you will find most death. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12, goes into the third heaven, and he comes down and finds: I am made nothing of; I am cut short in the very thing I was eminent for. I am made little in humanity where I am made most in Christ. Where I had my natural power, there death has come in. Paul was a very energetic man; he ended by being shut up in prison.

I close with that as the moral. We know not when we may meet again, but we know Him who has made the way through the tunnel; we know the brightness of that scene where Christ is-- the brightness of that eternal day; but, if you want to deepen your sense of it, you must accept the tunnel-- accept all here as a

waste; throw all the light here into darkness, that you may have the light beyond you.

I often see that while people talk of making Christ their object they do not make Him their mark. Now a mark is a thing that I see; you cannot have a mark unless you can see it. If you take Christ as your mark you cannot get a higher. If you can take the highest fence, of course you will be able to take the next, which is lower. Christ, " for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Then what place do you expect ? Nothing but a place of suffering; and I do not expect any mitigation of it.

Then do I steel my heart against everything that is beautiful ? Not at all; but I accept what is true of myself. I am brought now into a path where there is "fulness of joy"; but the joy is at His "right hand." You have to refuse to indulge yourself here; the smallest indulgence in a certain sense is mischief. The world neglects the body at one time and indulges it at another; but the body is the Lord's, and I take the proper care of it-- methodical care of it-- because it is His ; but I do not indulge it ; " Christ suffered in the flesh."

When a person argues. What harm is there in doing anything ? I say. Stop, that is the flesh! there is no use saying any more about it. I have to do with Him who is all the source of life and power, and in whose presence is " fulness of joy."

The more I go into the tunnel-- the more I cast everything into the shade here-- the more I know of the glory beyond. The Lord lead our hearts to know what a real thing it is to walk through this world in all the joy of Him, who has opened up a way through this wilderness into the light, and joy, and blessedness of the living God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jb-stoney/death-works-in-us/>

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