

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST

BY THE
REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

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*In this edition some obsolete or defective forms of expression
are altered without changing the thought.*

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Formatted, modernized, corrected, and annotated by
William H. Gross www.onthewing.org Sep 2019

Benjamin Fawcett (1715–1780), was a dissenting minister, born at Sleaford, Lincolnshire. In 1741, He became minister of Paul's Meeting, Taunton, where he was ordained in 1742. In 1745 he moved to Kidderminster, where Baxter had preached. For the use of his people, he published abridgments of many of Baxter's practical writings, and edited some other religious works.

Editor's Note

Richard Baxter was an English pastor and writer in the 17th century. He was a Puritan; or at least he was a *nonconformist*. Unlike many other Puritans, he rejected some key doctrines of Reformed theology. This is especially evident in chapter IX. A couple of my footnotes mark his departure from those doctrines. Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson summarize Baxter's theology this way:

“Baxter’s writings are a strange theological mix. He was one of a few Puritans whose doctrines of God’s decrees, atonement, and justification were anything but Reformed. Though he generally structured his theology along Reformed lines of thought, he frequently leaned towards Arminian thinking. He developed his own notion of universal redemption, which offended Calvinists, but retained a form of personal election, which offended Arminians. He rejected reprobation. He was greatly influenced by the Amyraldians and incorporated much of their thinking, including hypothetical universalism, which teaches that Christ hypothetically died for all men, but his death only has real benefit to those who believe. For Baxter, Christ’s death was more of a legal satisfaction of the law than a personal substitutionary death on behalf of elect sinners.”

“Baxter’s approach to justification has been called neonomianism (that is, ‘new law’); he said that God has made a new law offering forgiveness to repentant breakers of the old law. Faith and repentance – the new laws that must be obeyed – become the believer’s personal, saving righteousness that is sustained by preserving grace. Baxter’s soteriology, then, is Amyraldian with the addition of Arminian ‘new law’ teaching. Happily, these erroneous doctrines do not surface much in Baxter’s devotional writings, which are geared mainly to encourage one’s sanctification rather than to teach theology.”¹

Even so, as you’ll discover in the *Introductory Essay* and the *Compiler’s Preface*, this is too important and influential a book to ignore. And it is too inspirational to miss out on its many blessings, just because portions of it are not purely “reformed.” Baxter writes as a pastor, not as a theologian. He wrote it first for himself, convicted by God’s Spirit; and he then directed it to the needs of the church. As a minister of the Gospel, he was duty-bound to provoke his listeners to respond to the Gospel, and to let themselves be sanctified by it. Baxter cries out as a watchman to the people of God, to seek their true rest in the world to come, not in this world. He does that powerfully, and lovingly. The final chapter is a marvel, letting the believer catch a glimpse of that third heaven which Paul couldn’t put into words.

I’ve added scripture citations as an aid to the reader, superscripting them to keep them out of the way. Where that interfered with the flow of reading, I footnoted them as a group. The sheer number of verses lends credence to what Baxter writes here. He skillfully weaves them into a holistic narrative. He adapts them to the reader in such an engaging way that he leads us, as though by the hand, into that heavenly realm we long to see.

For me, the *Saints’ Rest* is, in part, a disturbing book. It shakes me from my slumber, challenges my complacency, and rattles my cage. And yet, with each reading I gain increased blessing and joy as I contemplate the eternal rest that awaits me. I’ve tried to smooth the language, even resorting to contractions (don’t, isn’t, shouldn’t), to allow it to flow conversationally, as a homily should.

I pray that this book blesses you as it blessed me, and has blessed generations before us. May it bring you great joy and wonder as you contemplate that coming day when you see our Lord face to face.

William H. Gross

Sept. 2019

¹ [Joel Beeke and Randall Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* \(Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006\), p. 66.](#)

Contents

Editor's Note	i
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY	1
THE COMPILER'S PREFACE	3
CHAPTER I.....	7
THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE SAINTS' REST.....	7
CHAPTER II.	15
THE GREAT PREPARATIVES FOR THE SAINTS' REST.....	15
CHAPTER III.	19
THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE SAINTS' REST.	19
CHAPTER IV.	27
THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS REST IS DESIGNED.....	27
CHAPTER V.....	35
THE GREAT MISERY OF THOSE WHO LOSE THE SAINTS' REST.....	35
CHAPTER VI.	43
THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, LOSE THE ENJOYMENTS OF TIME, AND SUFFER THE TORMENTS OF HELL.	43
CHAPTER VII.	51
THE NECESSITY OF DILIGENTLY SEEKING THE SAINTS' REST.	51
CHAPTER VIII.....	61
HOW TO DISCERN OUR TITLE TO THE SAINTS' REST.....	61
CHAPTER IX.	71
THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO EXCITE OTHERS TO SEEK THIS REST.	71
CHAPTER X.....	81
THE SAINTS' REST IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED ON EARTH.	81
CHAPTER XI.	91
THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.....	91
CHAPTER XII.	101
DIRECTIONS HOW TO LEAD A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.....	101
CHAPTER XIII.....	111
THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION; WITH THE FITTEST TIME, PLACE, AND TEMPER FOR IT.....	111
CHAPTER XIV.	119
WHAT USE HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION MAKES OF CONSIDERATION, THE AFFECTIONS, SOLILOQUY, AND PRAYER.	119

CHAPTER XV. 129
HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, AND GUARDED AGAINST A
TREACHEROUS HEART.....129

CHAPTER XVI. 139
HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION EXEMPLIFIED, AND THE WHOLE WORK CONCLUDED.139

CONCLUSION..... 149

EXTRACTS
from an
INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

By THOMAS ERSKINE, Esq. ²

We do not arrogate to ourselves so much as to suppose that our commendation can add anything to the authority of such a name as that of Richard Baxter. He belonged to a class of men whose characters and genius, now universally venerated, seem to have been most peculiarly adapted by Divine Providence to the circumstances of their age and country. We do not speak only of those who partook in Baxter's views of ecclesiastical polity; but of those who, under any name, maintained the cause of truth and liberty during the eventful period of the seventeenth century. They were made of the same firm stuff as the Wickliffs, and the Luthers, and the Knoxes, and the Cranmers, and the Latimers, of a former age. They formed a distinguished division of the same glorious army of reformation; they encountered similar obstacles, and they were directed, and supported, and animated by the same spirit. They were the true and enlightened crusaders, who, with all the zeal and courage which conducted their chivalrous ancestors to the earthly Jerusalem, fought their way to the heavenly city — and rescuing by their sufferings and by their labors, the key of knowledge from the unworthy hands in which it had long lain rusted and misused, generously left it as a rich inheritance to all coming generations. They speak with the solemn dignity of martyrs. They seem to feel the importance of their theme, and the perpetual presence of Him who is the great subject of it.

There are only two things which they seem to consider as realities: the favor of God and the enmity of God — and only two parties in the universe to choose between: the party of God and the party of his adversaries. Hence that heroic and noble tone which marks their lives and their writings. They had chosen their side, and they knew that it was worthy of all they could do or suffer for it.

The agitated state of surrounding circumstances gave them continual proof of the instability of all things temporal, and inculcated in them the necessity of seeking a happiness which might be independent of external things. They thus *practically* learned the vanity and nothingness of life, except in its relation to eternity; and they declared to their fellow-creatures the mysteries of the kingdom of God, with the tone of men who knew that the lightest word which they spoke outweighed, in the balance of reason as well as of the sanctuary, the value of all earth's plans, and politics, and interests. They were upon high and firm ground. They stood in the midst of that tempestuous ocean, secure on the Rock of Ages. And as they uttered to those around them their invitations, or remonstrances, or consolations, they did not think of the tastes, but of the necessities of men—they thought only of the difference between being lost and being saved; and they cried aloud, and spared not. ^{Isa 58.1}

There is no doubt a great variety of thought, and feeling, and expression to be met with in the theological writers of that class; but deep and solemn seriousness is the character of them all. They seem to have felt much. Religion was not allowed to remain an unused theory in their heads; they were forced to live on it as their food, and to have recourse to it as their only strength and comfort. Hence their thoughts are never given as abstract views; they are always deeply impregnated with sentiment. Their style reminds us of the light which streams through the stained and storied windows of an ancient cathedral. It is not light merely, but light modified by the rich hues, and the quaint forms, and the various incidents of the pictured medium through which it passes. So these venerable worthies do not give us merely ideas, but ideas colored by the deep affections of their own hearts; they do not merely give us truth, but truth in its historical application to the various struggles, and difficulties, and dejections of their strangely checkered lives.

² Thomas Erskine of Linlathen (1788-1870) — He was an Episcopalian, self-taught in theology. With his friend, the Reverend John McLeod Campbell, Erskine emphasized God's love, supported universal atonement, and was critical of the federal theology of Scottish Calvinism.

This gives a great interest to their writings. They are real men, and not books, that we are conversing with. And the peace, and the strength, and the hope which they describe, are not the fictions of fancy, but the positive and substantial effects of the knowledge of God on their own minds. They are thus, not merely waymarks to direct our journeyings; they seem themselves to be pilgrims traveling on the same road, and encouraging us to keep pace with them. In their books, they thus seem *still* to journey, *still* to combat. But O, let us think of the bright reality! Their contests are past, their labors are over; they have fought the good fight, and they are now at rest, made perfect in Christ Jesus. They are joined to that cloud of witnesses of whom the world was not worthy; and their names are inscribed in the rolls of heaven — yet not for their own glory, but for the glory of him who washed them from their sins in his own blood, and whose strength was made perfect in their weakness.

These are the great men of England; and under God, England is indebted to them for much of that which is valuable in her public institutions, and in the character of her people. They were, indeed, a noble army. They were born from above to be the combatants for truth; they were placed in the gap and they held their ground, or fell at their posts.

In this army, Richard Baxter was a standard-bearer. He labored much, in preaching as well as in writing, and with an abundant blessing on both. He had all the high mental qualities of his class in perfection. His mind is inexhaustible, and vigorous, and vivacious, to an extraordinary degree. He seizes irresistibly on the attention, and carries it along with him. And assuredly, we do not know any author who can be compared with him for the power with which he brings his reader directly face to face with death, and judgment, and eternity; and compels him to look at them, and converse with them. He is himself most deeply serious; and the holy solemnity of his own soul seems to envelope the reader, as with the air of a temple.

The Saints' Everlasting Rest was written on a bed of sickness. It contains those thoughts and feelings which occupied, and fortified, and animated the author, as he stood on the brink of eternity. The examples of heavenly meditation which he gives, really breathe of heaven. And the importance of such meditation as a duty, and as a means of spiritual growth, is admirably set forth and most powerfully enforced. And is it not a most pernicious madness and stupidity to neglect this duty? Isn't it strange that such prospects should excite so little interest? Isn't it strange that the uncertainty of the duration of life, and the certainty of its sorrows, do not compel men to seek refuge in that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which does not fade away? Isn't it strange that the offers of friendship and intimate relationship, which God continually holds out to us, should be slighted, even in competition with the society of those whom we cannot but despise and reprobate? Isn't it strange that we should, day after day, allow ourselves to be duped by the same false promises of happiness, which have disappointed us just as often as they have been trusted? O let us be persuaded that there is no rest in created things. No, there is no rest except in Him who made us. Who is the man that can say he has found rest elsewhere? No man says it. May God open our hearts, as well as our understandings, to see the truth; that we may practically know the insufficiency, and hollowness, and insecurity of all earthly hopes; and that we may be led in simplicity and earnestness, to seek, and so to *find*, our rest in Him.

T E.

Edinburgh. February, 1824.

THE COMPILER'S PREFACE

Mr. RICHARD BAXTER,³ the author of *the Saints' Rest*; so well known to the world by this and many other excellent and useful writings, was a learned, laborious, and eminently holy divine of the last age. He was born near Shrewsbury in 1615, and died at London in 1691.

His ministry, in an unsettled state, was for many years employed with great and extensive success both in London and in several parts of the country; but he was nowhere fixed so long, or with such entire satisfaction to himself, and such apparent advantage to others, as at Kidderminster. His abode there was indeed interrupted, partly by his bad health, but chiefly by the calamities of a civil war. Yet, on the whole, it amounted to sixteen years. Nor was it by any means the result of his own choice, or that of the inhabitants of Kidderminster, that he never settled there again after leaving in 1660.

Before his coming there, the place was overrun with ignorance and profaneness. But by the Divine blessing on his wise and faithful cultivation, the fruits of righteousness sprung up in rich abundance. He at first found but a single instance or two of daily family prayer in a whole street; and on his going away, but one family or two could be found in some streets that continued to neglect it.

And on Lord's days, instead of the open profanation to which they had been so long accustomed, a person in passing through the town in the intervals of public worship, might overhear hundreds of families engaged in singing psalms, reading the Scriptures and other good books, or such sermons as they had taken down while they heard them from the pulpit. His care of the souls committed to his charge, and the success of his labors among them, were truly remarkable. For the number of his stated communicants rose to six hundred, of whom he himself declared there were not twelve concerning whose sincere piety he did not have reason to entertain a good hope. Blessed be God, the religious spirit which was thus happily introduced, is still to be traced in the town and neighborhood in some degree (O that it were greater!). And in proportion as that spirit remains, the name of Mr. Baxter continues in the most honorable and affectionate remembrance.

As a writer, he has the approval of some of his greatest contemporaries who best knew him, and were under no temptation to be partial in his favor. Dr. Barrow said, "His practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted." With a view to his casuistical writings,⁴ the honorable Robert Boyle declared, "He was the fittest man of the age for a casuist, because he feared no man's displeasure, nor hoped for any man's preferment." Bishop Wilkins observed of him, "that he had cultivated every subject he had handled; that if he had lived in primitive times, he would have been one of the fathers of the church; and it was enough for one age to produce such a person as Mr. Baxter." Archbishop Usher had such high thoughts of him that by his earnest importunity he put him upon writing several of his practical discourses, particularly that celebrated piece, his *Call to the Unconverted*. Dr. Manton, as he freely expressed it, "thought Mr. Baxter came nearer the apostolical writings than any man in the age." And it is both as a preacher and a writer that Dr. Bates considers him, when he says in his funeral sermon,

"In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart. All the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses, without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous facility and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style, for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words. He despised flashy oratory, but his expressions were clear and powerful — so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those who were not charmed by so wise a charmer, were as deaf as

³ Baxter rejected the Protestant doctrine of salvation *sola gratia, sola fide* (by grace alone, through faith alone). Some portions of this work are Arminian. Fellow nonconformist John Owen (1616–83) devoted an entire volume of his works to refuting some of Baxter's teachings here. See *Faith and Its Evidences* (Works of John Owen, ed. Wm. Goold, 1853, Vol. 5). — WHG

⁴ *Casuistry*: here it means the process of answering practical questions by the interpretation of [biblical] rules or principles, or by using cases which illustrate such rules — especially as applied to ethical and moral issues.

Compiler's Preface

adders. He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in their frozen tomb. His books, for their number (which it seems were more than one hundred and twenty) and variety of matter in them, make a library. They contain a treasure of controversial, casuistical, and practical divinity. His books of practical divinity have been effectual for more numerous conversions of sinners to God, than any printed in our time. And while the church remains on earth, they will be of continual efficacy to recover lost souls. There is a vigorous pulse in them, that keeps the reader awake and attentive.”

To these testimonies, may not improperly be added that of the editors of his practical works, in four folio volumes. In the preface, they say,

“Perhaps there are no writings among us that have more of a true Christian spirit, a greater mixture of judgment and affection, or a greater tendency to revive pure and undefiled religion — that have been more esteemed abroad, or more blessed at home — for awakening the secure, instructing the ignorant, confirming the wavering, comforting the dejected, recovering the profane, or improving those who are truly serious, than the practical works of this author.”

Such were the apprehensions of eminent persons who were well-acquainted with Mr. Baxter and his writings. It is therefore less remarkable that Mr. Addison, from an accidental and very imperfect acquaintance — but with his usual pleasantness and candor — should mention the following incident:

“I once met with a page of Mr. Baxter. Upon the perusal of it I conceived so good an idea of the author’s piety, that I bought the whole book.”

Whatever other causes might concur, it must chiefly be ascribed to Mr. Baxter’s distinguished reputation as a preacher and a writer that, shortly after the Restoration, he was appointed one of the chaplains in ordinary to King Charles II, and once preached before him in that capacity — and also, that he had an offer made to him by Lord Chancellor Clarendon, of the bishopric of Hereford, which in a respectful letter to his lordship, he saw proper to decline.

The *Saints’ Rest* is deservedly esteemed one of the most valuable parts of his practical works. He wrote it when he was far from home, without any book to consult but his Bible, and in such an ill state of health as to be in continual expectation of death for many months. And therefore, merely for his own use, he fixed his thoughts on this heavenly subject “which,” he says, “has more benefitted me than all the studies of my life.” At this time he could be little more than thirty years old. He afterwards preached over the subject in his weekly lecture at Kidderminster, and in 1650 he published it. Indeed, it appears to have been the first he ever published of all his practical writings. Of this book, Dr. Bates says,

“It was written by him when languishing in the suspense of life and death, but has the signatures of his holy and vigorous mind. To allure our desires, he unveils the sanctuary above, and reveals the glories and joys of the blessed in the Divine presence, by a light so strong and lively that all the glittering vanities of this world vanish in the comparison; and a sincere believer will despise them as one of mature age does the toys and baubles of children. To excite our fear, he removes the screen and makes the everlasting fire of hell so visible, and represents the tormenting passions of the damned in such dreadful colors, that if duly considered, it would check and control the unbridled, licentious appetites of the most sensual wretches.”

Heavenly rest is a subject in its own nature so universally important and interesting, and at the same time so truly engaging and delightful, as sufficiently accounts for the great acceptance which this book has met with — and partly also for the uncommon blessing which has attended Mr. Baxter’s manner of treating the subject, both from the pulpit and the press. For where are the operations of Divine grace more reasonably to be expected, or where have they in fact been more frequently discerned, than in concurrence with the best adapted means? And should it appear that persons of distinguishing judgment and piety have expressly ascribed their first religious impressions to the hearing or reading of the important sentiments contained in this book — or after a long series of years, have found it both the

Compiler's Preface

counterpart and the improvement of their own divine life — will this not be thought a considerable recommendation of the book itself?

Among the instances of persons who dated their true conversion from hearing the sermons on the *Saints' Rest* when Mr. Baxter first preached them, was the Rev. Thomas Doolittle, M.A. He was a native of Kidderminster, and at that time a scholar about seventeen years old. Mr. Baxter himself afterward sent him to Pembroke Hall, in Cambridge, where he took his degree. Before his going to the university, he was being tested as an attorney's clerk; and under that character, being ordered by his master to write something on a Lord's day, he obeyed with great reluctance. And the next day he returned home with an earnest desire that he might not apply himself to anything as the employment of life, but serving Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. His praise is still in the churches, for his pious and useful labors as a minister, a tutor, and a writer.

In the life of the Rev. John Janeway, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, who died in 1657, we are told that his conversion was, in a great measure, occasioned by his reading the *Saints' Rest*. And in a letter which he afterwards wrote to a near relative, speaking with a more immediate reference to that part of the book which treats heavenly contemplation, he says,

“There is a duty which, if it were exercised, would dispel all cause of melancholy: I mean heavenly meditation and contemplation of the things to which the true Christian religion tends. If we but walked closely with God one hour a day in this duty, O what influence it would have on the whole day besides — and duly performed, upon the whole life! This duty, with its usefulness, manner, and directions, I knew in some measure before. But I had it more pressed upon me by Mr. Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, a book that can scarcely be overvalued, and for which I have cause forever to bless God.”

This excellent young minister's life is worth reading, were it only to see how delightfully he was engaged in heavenly contemplation, according to the directions in the *Saints' Rest*.

It was the example of heavenly contemplation, at the close of this book, which the Rev. Joseph Alleine so frequently quoted in conversation, with this solemn introduction: “Most divinely says that man of God, holy Mr. Baxter...”

Dr. Bates, in his funeral sermon dedicated to Sir Henry Ashurst, says to that religious gentleman and most distinguished friend and executor of Mr. Baxter, “He was most worthy of your highest esteem and love; for the first impressions of heaven upon your soul were in reading his invaluable book of the *Saints' Everlasting Rest*.”

In the life of the Rev. Matthew Henry, we have the following character given to us of Robert Warburton, Esq., of Grange, the son of the eminently religious Judge Warburton, and the father of Mr. Matthew Henry's second wife. “He was a gentleman who greatly affected retirement and privacy, especially in the latter part of his life. The Bible and Mr. Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* used to lie daily before him on the table in his parlor — he spent the greatest part of his time in reading and prayer.”

In the life of that honorable and most religious knight, Sir Nathaniel Barnardiston, we are told that

“He was constant in private prayer and reading the Scriptures; afterwards, he read other choice authors. But not long before his death, he took a singular delight in reading Mr. Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest* and in preparations for it. This was esteemed a gracious event of Divine Providence, sending it as a guide to bring him more speedily and directly to that rest.”

Besides persons of eminence, to whom this book has been precious and profitable, we have an instance in the Rev. James Janeway's *Token for Children*, of a little boy whose piety was so revealed and promoted by reading it as the most delightful book to him, next to the Bible, that the thoughts of everlasting rest seemed, even while he continued in health, to swallow up all other thoughts.

Compiler's Preface

He lived in constant preparation for it, and appeared more like one who was ripe for glory, than an inhabitant of this lower world. And when he was in the sickness of which he died before he was twelve years old, he said, "I pray, let me have Mr. Baxter's book, that I may read a little more of eternity before I go into it."

Nor is it less observable that Mr. Baxter himself, in a paper found in his study after his death, taking notice what a number of persons were converted by reading his *Call to the Unconverted*, accounts of which he had received by letter every week, expressly adds, "This little book, the *Call to the Unconverted*, God has blessed with unexpected success, beyond all that I have written, except *the Saints' Rest*." With an evident reference to this book, and even during the life of the author, the pious Mr. Flavel affectionately says, "Mr. Baxter is almost in heaven — living in the daily views and cheerful expectation of the saints' everlasting rest with God; and he is left for a little while among us, as a great example of the life of faith." And Mr. Baxter himself says in his preface to his *Treatise of Self-Denial*, "I must say, that of all the books which I have written, I peruse none so often, for the use of my own soul in its daily work, as my *Life of Faith*, this of *Self-Denial*, and the last part of *the Saints' Rest*." On the whole, it is not without good reason that Dr. Calamy remarks concerning it, "This is a book for which multitudes will have cause to bless God forever."

This excellent and useful book now appears in the form of an *abridgment*. And it is therefore presumed, that it will be more likely, under the Divine blessing, to diffuse its salutary influence among those who would otherwise have lacked opportunity or inclination to read over the larger volume. In reducing it to this smaller size, I have been very desirous to do justice to the author, and at the same time, to promote the pleasure and profit of the serious reader.

And I hope these ends are in some measure answered chiefly by dropping things of a digressive, controversial, or metaphysical nature; together with prefaces, dedications, and various allusions to some peculiar circumstances of the last age — and particularly, by throwing several chapters into one, so that the number of them may better correspond with the size of the volume — and sometimes by altering the form but not the sense of a period, for the sake of brevity; and when an obsolete phrase occurred, changing it for one more common and intelligible. I should never have thought of attempting this work, if it had not been suggested and urged by others; and by some very respectable names, of whose learning, judgment, and piety I forbear to avail myself. However defective this performance may appear, the labor of it (if it may be called a labor) has been, I bless God, one of the most delightful labors of my life.

Certainly, the thoughts of everlasting rest may be as delightful to souls in the present day, as they have ever been to those of past generations. I am sure such thoughts are as absolutely necessary now — nor are temptations to neglect them either fewer or weaker than formerly. The worth of *Everlasting Rest* is not felt because a thousand trifles are preferred before it. But if the divine reasonings of this book were duly attended to (and O that the Spirit and grace of the Redeemer may make them so!), then an age of vanity would become serious; minds enervated by sensuality would soon resume the strength of reason and display the excellence of Christianity; the delusive names of pleasure would be blotted out by the glorious reality of heavenly joy upon earth; every station and relation in life would be filled up with the propriety and dignity of serious religion. Every member of society would then effectually contribute to the beauty and happiness of the whole. And every soul would be ready for life or death, for one world or another, in a well-grounded and cheerful persuasion of having secured a title to that rest which remains for the people of God.

B.F.

Kidderminster, Dec. 25th, 1758.

THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST.

Hebrews, 4:9.

*“There remains, therefore, a rest
for the people of God.”*

CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK, WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE NATURE OF THE SAINTS' REST.

The important design of the apostle in the text, to which the author earnestly entreats the attention of the reader. The Saints' Rest defined, with a general plan of the work. What this rest presupposes. The author's humble sense of his inability fully to show what this rest contains. It contains, 1. A ceasing from the means of grace; 2. A perfect freedom from all evils; 3. The highest degree of the saints' personal perfection in both body and soul; 4. The nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good; 5. A sweet and constant action of all the powers of soul and body in this enjoyment of God.

It was not only our interest in God, and our actual enjoyment of him, which was lost in Adam's fall, but all spiritual knowledge of him, and a true disposition towards such a felicity.⁵

When the Son of God comes with recovering grace, and revelations of a spiritual and eternal happiness and glory, he finds no faith in man to believe it. Just as the poor man wouldn't believe anyone had such a sum as a hundred pounds (it was so far above what he himself possessed), so men can hardly believe there is such a happiness as mankind once had, much less as Christ has now procured. When God would give the Israelites his Sabbaths of rest in a *land* of rest, it was harder to make them believe it, than to overcome their enemies and procure it for them. And when they had it — which was only a small intimation and earnest of an incomparably more glorious rest through Christ — they still believed no more than they possessed, but said as the epicure said at the feast, “Surely there is no other heaven but this!” Or if they expect more by the Messiah, it is only for the increase of their earthly felicity. The apostle aims most of this Epistle⁶ against this obduracy, and clearly and largely proves that the end of all ceremonies and shadows is to direct them to Jesus Christ, the substance; and that the rest of Sabbaths, and of Canaan, should teach them to look for a *further rest*, which indeed is their happiness. My text is his conclusion, after diverse arguments — a conclusion which contains the ground of all the believer's comfort, the end of all his duty and sufferings, the life and sum of all gospel promises and Christian privileges. What is more welcome to men under personal afflictions, tiring duties, disappointments, or sufferings, than *rest*?

It is not only for our comfort, but our stability. Our liveliness in all duties, our enduring of tribulation, our honoring of God, the vigor of our love, thankfulness, and all our graces — indeed, the very being of our religion and Christianity — depend on believing serious thoughts about our rest. And now, reader, whoever you are, young or old, rich or poor, I entreat you, and I charge you in the name of your Lord — who will shortly call you to a reckoning, and judge you to your everlasting, unchangeable state — that you not give these things only a reading, and so dismiss them with a bare approval; but that you set upon this work, and take God in Christ for your only rest, and fix your heart upon Him above all. May the living God, who is the portion and rest of his saints, make our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving him, and delighting in him, may be the work of our lives — and that neither I who write, nor you who read this book, may ever be turned from this path of life, “lest a promise being left to us of entering into his rest,” we should “come short of it”^{Heb 4.1} through our own unbelief or negligence.

⁵ *Felicity*: a state of well-being characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy.

⁶ Baxter, like most reformers and Puritans, assumed the apostle Paul was the author of Hebrews.

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

The *Saints' Rest* is the most happy state of a Christian; or, *it is the perfect endless enjoyment of God by the perfected saints, according to the measure of their capacity, to which their souls arrive at death, and to which both soul and body most fully arrive after the resurrection and final judgment.*

According to this definition of the *Saints' Rest*, a larger account of its nature will be given in *this* chapter; its preparatives in chap. 2; its excellencies in chap. 3; and in chap. 4, the persons for whom it is designed. To further illustrate the subject, some description will be given in chap. 5 of the misery of those who lose this rest; and in chap. 6, of those who also lose the enjoyments of time, and suffer the torments of hell. Next will be shown, chap. 7, the necessity of diligently seeking this rest; chap. 8, how our title to it may be discerned; chap. 9, that those who discern their title to it should help those who cannot; and chap. 10, that this rest is not to be expected on earth. It will then be proper to consider, in chap. 11, the *importance* of a heavenly life on earth; chap. 12, how to *live* a heavenly life on earth; chap. 13, the nature of heavenly contemplation, with the time, place, and temper most fit for it; chap. 14, what use heavenly contemplation makes of consideration, affections, soliloquy, and prayer; and likewise, chap. 15, how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, and guarded against a treacherous heart. Heavenly contemplation will be exemplified in chap. 16; and the whole work then concluded.

There are some things necessarily presupposed in the nature of this rest: such as, that mortal men are the persons seeking it; for angels and glorified spirits have it already, and devils and the damned are past hope — that they choose *God* only for their end and happiness; he that takes anything else for his happiness is out of the way at the first step — that they are distant from this end; this is the woeful state of all mankind since the fall. When Christ comes with regenerating grace, he finds no man sitting still, but all are posting ⁷ to eternal ruin, and making haste toward hell — till by conviction, he first brings them to a standstill, and then by conversion, turns their hearts and lives sincerely to himself. This end and its excellence is supposed to be *known* and seriously *intended*. An unknown good, won't move us to desire it or endeavor for it. And not only a distance from this rest, but the true knowledge of this distance, is also supposed. Those who never knew they were without God and on the way to hell, never knew the way to heaven. Can a man find that he has lost his God and his soul, and not cry, *I am undone?* The reason why so few obtain this rest is that they won't be convinced they are, in point of title, *distant* from it, and in point of practice, *contrary* to it. Who has ever sought what he did not know he lost? "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but those who are sick." ^{Mat 9.12} The influence of a superior *moving Cause* is also supposed; otherwise we would all stand still and not move toward our rest. If *God* does not move us, we *cannot* move. It is a most necessary part of our Christian wisdom, to keep our subordination to God, and our dependence on him. "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." ^{2Cor 3.5} "Without me," says Christ, "You can do nothing." ^{Joh 15.5} It is next supposed that those who seek this rest have *an inward principle of spiritual life*. God does not move men like stones, but he endows them with life — not to enable them to move without him, but in subordination to himself, the First Mover.

And further, this rest supposes such an actual tendency of soul toward it, that it is regular and constant, *earnest and laborious*. The one who hides his talent will receive the wages of a slothful servant. ^{Mat 25.26f} Christ is the door, the only way to this rest. "But strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" ^{Mat 7.13} and we must strive if we would enter; for "many will seek to enter in, and will not be able" ^{Luk 13.24}. This implies that "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence." ⁸ Nor will it bring us to the saints' end, if we begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh. Only he "that endures to the end will be saved." ^{Mat 24.13} And a soul has never obtained rest with God, whose desire was not set upon Him above all other things in the world. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." ^{Mat 6.21} The remainder of our old nature will much weaken and interrupt these desires, but never overcome them. And considering that the opposition to our

⁷ *Post*: to make haste or speed, like that of a messenger or mail carrier rushing to a timely destination.

⁸ Today, "violence" typically means injuring someone; but in this verse, it means acting with great force, energy, or emotional intensity. The NIV provides this sense of the Greek: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." (Mat 11:12 ^{NIV}) That's how Baxter intends it here.

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

desires — from the contrary principles in our nature, the weakness of our graces, and our continued distance from the end — our tendency to that end must be laborious, and with all our might.

All these things are presupposed in order for a Christian to obtain an interest in heavenly rest.

Now that we have ascended these steps into the outward court, may we look within the veil? May we show what this rest contains, as well as what it presupposes? Alas! How little I know of that glory! The glimpse which Paul had, contained what could not or must not be uttered. If he had spoken the things of heaven in the language of heaven, and none understood that language, what good was it? May the Lord reveal to me what I may reveal to you! May the Lord open some light, and show both you and me our inheritance! — not as He showed Balaam, whose eyes were only opened to see the goodness of Jacob's tents and of Israel's tabernacles where he had no portion, and where his own destruction must come from — not as he showed Moses, who had only a discovery instead of possession, and saw the land which he never entered — but as the pearl was revealed to the merchant in the Gospel, who did not rest till he had sold all he had and bought it; ^{Mat 13.46} — and as heaven was opened to blessed Stephen, which he was shortly to enter, and the glory that was shown him, which would be his own possession. ^{Act 7.56}

The things contained in heavenly rest are such as these: ceasing from the means of grace; perfect freedom from all evils; the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection of both body and soul; the nearest enjoyment of God, who is the chief good; and a sweet and constant action of all the powers of body and soul in this enjoyment of God.

1. One thing contained in heavenly rest is *ceasing from the means of grace*. Once we have obtained the haven, we are done sailing. When the workman receives his wages, it is implied that his work is done. When we are at our journey's end, we are done with the path. Whether prophecies, they will fail; whether tongues, they will cease; whether knowledge, it too, so far as it had the nature of means, will vanish away. ^{1Cor 13.8} There will be no more prayer, because there will be no more necessity; but instead, the full enjoyment of what we prayed for. Nor will we need to fast, and weep, and watch anymore, being out of the reach of sin and temptations. Preaching is done; the ministry of man ceases; ordinances become useless; the laborers are called in because the harvest is gathered, the tares are burned, and the work is finished; the unregenerate are past hope, and the saints are past fear, *forever*.

2. There is, in heavenly rest, a *perfect freedom from all evils*: from all the evils that accompanied us through our course, and which necessarily follow our absence from the chief good — besides our freedom from those eternal flames and restless miseries which the neglecters of Christ and grace must forever endure; and from a woeful inheritance which, both by birth and actual merit, was due *us* as well as *them*! In heaven there is nothing that defiles or is unclean. All of that remains outside. Doubtless there is no such thing as grief and sorrow known there; nor is there such a thing as a pale face, a languid body, feeble joints, helpless infancy, decrepit age, peccant humors, ⁹ painful or pining sickness, griping fears,¹⁰ consuming cares, nor whatever deserves the name of evil. We wept and lamented when the world rejoiced; but our sorrow is turned to joy, and no man will take our joy from us.

3. Another ingredient of this rest is *the highest degree of the saints' personal perfection, both of body and soul*. If the glory were ever so great, and the saints were not made capable of it by a personal perfection that is suitable to it, it would mean little to them. "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him." ^{1Cor 2.9} For the eye of flesh is not capable of seeing them, nor is this ear capable of hearing them, nor is this heart capable of understanding them. But *there*, the eye, ear, and heart are made capable; otherwise, how would they enjoy them? The more perfect the sight is, the more delightful the beautiful object. The more perfect the appetite, the sweeter the food. The more musical the ear, the more pleasant the melody. The more perfect the soul, the more joyous those joys, and the more glorious to us is that glory.

⁹ *Peccant humours*: our tendency to sin, born of our sinful nature.

¹⁰ *Griping*: causing spasms or acute abdominal pain.

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

4. The principal part of this rest is *our nearest enjoyment of God, the chief good*. And here, reader, do not wonder if I am at a loss, and if my apprehensions receive but little of what is in my expressions. If it did not appear to the beloved disciple what we will be, but only in general, “that when Christ appears, we will be like him,” ^{1Joh 3:2} it is no wonder if I know but little. When I know so little of God, I cannot much know what it means to enjoy him. If I know so little of spirits, then how little I know of the Father of spirits, or the state of my own soul, when advanced to the enjoyment of him! I stand and look upon a heap of ants, and see them all in one view. They don't know me — my being, nature, or thoughts — though I am their fellow-creature. How little then, we must know of the great Creator, though he, with one view, clearly beholds us all! A glimpse — the saints behold as in a mirror — which makes us capable of some poor, dark apprehensions of what we will behold in glory. ^{1Cor 13:12} If I told a worldling what the holiness and spiritual joys of the saints on earth are, he cannot know them; for grace cannot be clearly known without grace. How much less could he conceive it, if I told him of this glory! But to the saints I may be somewhat more encouraged to speak, for grace gives them at least a darkened knowledge and a slight taste of glory.

If men and angels studied to speak the blessedness of that state in one word, what could they say beyond this: that it is the nearest enjoyment of God? O the full joys offered to a believer in that one sentence of Christ, “Father, I would that those whom you have given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me!” ^{Joh 17:24} Every word is full of life and joy. The queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, “Happy are your men, happy are these your servants who stand continually before you, and hear your wisdom;” ^{1King 10:8} Then surely those who stand continually before God, and see his glory and the glory of the Lamb, are *more* than happy. To them Christ will give to eat of the tree of life, ^{Rev 22:14} and to eat of the hidden manna; ^{Rev 2:17} yes, he will make them pillars in the temple of God, and they will go out no more; and he will write upon them the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from his God; and he will write upon them his new name; ^{Rev 3:12} indeed more, if there may be more, he will grant them to sit with him on his throne. ^{Rev 3:21} “These are the ones who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sits on the throne will dwell among them. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, will feed them, and will lead them to living fountains of water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.” ^{Rev 7:14-17} O blind, deceived world! Can you show us such a glory? This is the city of our God, where the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people; and God himself will be with them and be their God. The glory of God will light it, and the Lamb is its light. ^{Rev 21:23} And there will be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it; and his servants will serve him, and they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. These sayings are faithful and true, and the things which must shortly be done. ^{Rev 22:4, 6}

And now we say, as Mephibosheth did, let the world take all, for our Lord will come in peace. ^{2Sam 19:30} Rejoice, therefore, in the Lord, O you righteous! and say, with his servant David,

“The Lord is the portion of my inheritance: the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a goodly heritage. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in hell, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”
(Psa 16:5-11)

What presumption it would have been, to have thought or spoken of such a thing, if God had not spoken it before us! I dared not have thought of the saints' preferment in this life as Scripture sets it forth, had it not been the express truth of God. How unbecoming to talk of being sons of God — speaking to him — having fellowship with him — dwelling in him and he in us — if this had not been God's own language! How much less would we have dared to think even once of shining forth as the sun — of being joint

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

heirs with Christ — of judging the world — of sitting on Christ's throne — of being one in him and the Father — if we did not have all this from the mouth, and under the hand of God! But has he said, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not make it good? ^{Num 23.19} — Yes, as the Lord God is true, thus it will be done to the man whom Christ delights to honor.

Be of good cheer, Christian; the time is at hand when God and you will be near, and as near as you can well desire. You will dwell in his family. Is that enough? 'It is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' ^{Psa 84.10} You will ever stand before him about his throne — in the room with him, in his presence-chamber. Would you be nearer still? You will be his child, and he your Father; you will be an heir of his kingdom — indeed *more*, the spouse of his Son. And what more can you desire? You will be a member of the body of his Son; he will be your head; you will be one with him who is one with the Father, as he himself has desired for you from his Father: "that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be one in us; and the glory which you gave me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them as you have loved me." ^{Joh 17.21-23}

5. We must add, that *this rest contains a sweet and constant action of all the powers of the soul and body in this enjoyment of God*. It is not resting like a stone, which ceases from all motion when it reaches the centre. This body will be so changed that it will no longer be flesh and blood, which cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but a spiritual body. 'We don't sow that body which will be,' but God gives it a body as it has pleased him, and to every seed his own body.' ^{1Cor 15.37-38} If grace makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, *I am not the man I was*, then how much more will glory make us differ! As much as a spiritual body, above the sun in glory, exceeds these frail, noisome, diseased bodies of flesh, so far will our senses exceed those which we now possess. Doubtless, as God advances our senses, and enlarges our capacity, so he will advance the happiness of those senses, and fill with himself, all that capacity. Certainly the body would not be raised and continued, if it were not to share in the glory. Just as it shared in the obedience and sufferings, so it will share in the blessedness. As Christ bought the whole man, so the whole will partake of the everlasting benefits of the purchase. O blessed employment of a glorified body! — to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to sound forth forever,

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; for you have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us kings and priests to our God. Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, to the Lord our God. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigns." ^{Rev 4.11; 5:10-13; 19.6}

O Christians! *this* is the blessed rest; a rest, as it were, *without* rest; for "they do not rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." ^{Rev 4.8} And if the body will thus be employed, O how the soul will be taken up! As its powers and capacities are greatest, so its actions are strongest, and its enjoyments sweetest. As the bodily senses have their proper actions by which they receive and enjoy their objects, so the soul, in its own actions, enjoys its own objects by knowing, remembering, loving, and delightful joying. This is the *soul's* enjoyment. By these eyes it sees, and by these arms it embraces.

Knowledge, of itself, is very desirable. As far as the rational soul exceeds the sensitive, so far the delights of a philosopher — in discovering the secrets of nature, and knowing the mystery of sciences — exceed the delights of the drunkard, the voluptuary, or the sensualist. So excellent is all truth. What, then, is the delight of those who know the God of truth! How noble a faculty of the soul is the understanding! It can compass the earth; it can measure the sun, moon, stars, and heaven; it can foreknow each eclipse to a minute, many years before. But *this* is the peak of all its excellence: that it can know God, who is infinite, who *made* all these — a little here, and more, much more, hereafter. O the wisdom and goodness of our blessed Lord! He has created the understanding with a natural bias

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

and inclination to truth as its object; and to the prime truth as its prime object. Christian, when after long gazing heavenward, you have gotten a glimpse of Christ, don't you sometimes seem to have been with Paul in the third heaven, whether in the body or out, and to have seen what is unutterable? ^{2Cor 12.2} Aren't you ready to say with Peter, "Master, it is good to be here"? ^{Luk 9.33} "O that I might dwell in this mount! O that I might *ever* see what I *now* see!" Did you ever look so long at the Sun of Righteousness that your eyes were dazzled with his astonishing glory? And didn't its splendor make all things below seem black and dark to you? Especially in the day of suffering for Christ, when he usually appears most manifestly to his people, did you ever see one walking in the midst of the fiery furnace with you, like the Son of God? ^{Dan 3.25} Believe me, Christians — indeed, believe *God* — you who have known most of God in Christ here, it is nothing compared to what you *will* know. In comparison to that, it scarcely deserves to be called knowledge. For just as these *bodies* cease, so that *knowledge* must cease, so that a more perfect knowledge may succeed it.

"Knowledge will vanish away. For we know in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then will I know even as I also am known." ^{1Cor 13.8-12}

Don't marvel, therefore, Christian, how it can be life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ. ^{Joh 17.3} To enjoy God and Christ is eternal life; and the soul's enjoying is in knowing. Those who savor only of earth and consult with flesh, think it is a poor happiness to know God.

"But we know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." ^{1Joh 5.19-20}

The *memory* will not be idle or useless in this blessed work. From that height, the saint can look behind him and before him. And comparing past things with present things must raise in the blessed soul an inconceivable esteem and sense of its condition. To stand on that mount from where we can see the Wilderness and Canaan, both at once — to stand in heaven and look back on earth, and weigh them together in the balance of a comparing sense and judgment — how it must transport the soul, and make it cry out,

"Is this the purchase that cost so dear as the blood of Christ? No wonder! O blessed price, and thrice blessed love, who invented and condescended! Is this the end of believing? Is this the end of the Spirit's workings? Have the gales of grace blown me into such a harbor? Is it here that Christ has allured my soul? O blessed way, and thrice blessed end! Is this the glory which the Scriptures spoke of, and ministers preached so much of? I see the Gospel is indeed good tidings, even tidings of peace and good things, tidings of great joy to all nations! Has my mourning, my fasting, my sad humblings, my heavy walking, come to this? Have my praying, watching, fearing to offend, come to this? Have all my afflictions, Satan's temptations, the world's scorns and jeers, come to this? O vile nature that resisted so much and so long, such a blessing! Unworthy soul! Is this the place you came to so unwillingly? Was duty so wearisome? Was the world too good to lose? Could you not leave all, deny all, and suffer anything for this? Were you loath to die, to come to this? O false heart, you had almost betrayed me to eternal flames, and lost me this glory! Are you not now ashamed, my soul, that you ever questioned that love which brought you here? — that you were jealous of the faithfulness of your Lord? — that you suspected his love, when you should only have suspected yourself? — that you ever quenched a motion of his Spirit? — and that you should misinterpret those providences, and repine at those ways which have such an end? Now you are sufficiently convinced that your blessed Redeemer was saving you when he *crossed* your desires, as well as when he *granted* them; when he *broke* your heart, as well as when he *bound it up*. No thanks to you, unworthy self, for this received crown; but to Jehovah and the Lamb be glory forever."

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

But, O! the full, near, sweet enjoyment of that *love*. “God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.” ^{1Joh 4.16} *Now* the poor soul complains, “O that I could love Christ more!” *Then* you cannot help but love him. *Now* you know little of his amiableness, and therefore you love little. *Then* your eyes will affect your heart, and the continual viewing of that perfect beauty will keep you in continual transports of love. Christians, does it not now stir up your love, to remember all the experiences of his love? Doesn't kindness melt you, and the sunshine of Divine goodness warm your frozen hearts? What will it do *then*, when you live in love, and have all in Him, who is all in all? ^{1Cor 15.28} Surely love is both work and wages. What a high favor, that God will give us leave to love him! — that he will be embraced by those who have embraced lust and sin above him! But more than this, he returns love for love — indeed, a thousand times *more*. Christian, you will *then* be brim-full of love; and yet, love as much as you can, you will be ten thousand times more beloved. Were the arms of the Son of God open upon the cross, and an open passage made to his heart by the spear? And will his arms and heart not be open to you in glory? Didn't he begin to love before you loved, and won't he now continue? Didn't he love you, an enemy, you a sinner, you who loathed even yourself — and own you when you disclaimed yourself? And won't he now immeasurably love you — you a son, you a perfect saint, you who returned some love for love? The one who in love wept over the old Jerusalem when near its ruin — with what love he will rejoice over the new Jerusalem in her glory!

Christian, believe this, and think on it: you will be eternally embraced in the arms of that love which was from everlasting, and will extend to everlasting; that love which brought the Son of God's love from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to glory; that love which was weary, hungry, tempted, scorned, scourged, beaten, spit upon, crucified, pierced; that love which fasted, prayed, taught, healed, wept, sweated, bled, and died — *that* love will eternally embrace you. When perfect *created* love, and most perfect *uncreated* love, meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brothers, who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and *rejoicing*, not loving and *sorrowing*. Yes, it will make Satan's court *ring* with the news that Joseph's brothers have come, that the saints have arrived safely at the bosom of Christ, out of the reach of hell forever.

Nor is there any such love as David's and Jonathan's, breathing its last into sad lamentations for a forced separation. Know this, believer, to your everlasting comfort: once those arms have embraced you, neither sin nor hell can take you from there, forever. You don't have to deal with an inconstant creature, but with Him in whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning. His love to you will not be like yours was on earth to him — seldom and cold, up and down. He that would not cease nor abate his love for all your enmity, unkind neglects, and churlish resistances — can he cease to love you when he has made you truly lovely? He that keeps you so constant in your love to him, that you can dare tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword to separate your love from Christ — how much more will he himself be constant! Indeed, you may be “persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” ^{Rom 8.38-39} And now, are we not left in the apostle's admiration? “What will we say to these things?” ^{Rom 8.31} Infinite love must be a mystery to one of finite capacity. No wonder angels desire to look into this mystery! ^{1Pet 1.12} If it is the study of saints here “to know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge,” ^{Eph 3.18-19} then the saints' everlasting rest must consist in the enjoyment of God *by love*.

Nor does *joy* have the least share in this fruition. It is this which all that we mentioned leads to and concludes in: even the inconceivable complacency which the blessed feel in seeing, knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. This is “the white stone which no man knows, saving he that receives it.” ^{Rev 2.17} Surely this is the joy with which a stranger does not intermeddle. All Christ's ways of mercy tend to, and end in, the saints' *joys*. He wept, sorrowed, and suffered, that they might rejoice; he sends the Spirit to be their comforter; he multiplies promises; he reveals their future happiness, that their joy may be full. He opens to them the fountain of living waters, that they may thirst no more, and that it may spring up in them to everlasting life. ^{Joh 4.14} He chastens them, that he may give them rest. He makes it their duty

I. The Nature of the Saints' Rest

to rejoice in him always, and again commands them to rejoice. He never brings them into so low a condition that he does not leave them more cause for joy than sorrow.

And does the Lord have such a care for our comfort here? O what will that joy be where the soul being perfectly prepared for joy, and joy being prepared by Christ *for* the soul, it will be our work, our *business*, to eternally rejoice! It seems the saints' joy will be greater than the damned's torment — for their torment is the torment of creatures prepared for the devil and his angels; but our joy is the joy of our Lord. The same glory which the Father gave the Son, the Son has given them, to sit with him on his throne even as he has sat down with his Father on His throne. You poor soul who *pray* for joy, *wait* for joy, *complain* for lack of joy, *long* for joy — you will then *have* full joy, as much as you can hold, and more than ever you thought about or your heart desired. In the meantime, walk carefully, watch constantly, and let God measure out to you your times and degrees of joy. It may be that he keeps them until you have more need. It would be better to lose your comfort than your safety. If you should die full of fears and sorrows, it will be but a moment and they will all be gone, concluded in inconceivable joy. As the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, so are the fears of the upright. God's "anger endures but a moment; in his favor is life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Psa 30.5 O blessed morning! Poor, humble, drooping soul, how it would fill you with joy now if a voice from heaven were to tell you of the love of God, the pardon of your sins, and assure you of your part in these joys! What then will your joy be, when your actual possession convinces you of your title, and you are in heaven before you are well aware!

And it is not your joy only — it is a *mutual* joy, as well as a *mutual love*. Will there be joy in heaven at your conversion, and none at your glorification? Won't the angels welcome you there and congratulate your safe arrival? Yes, it is the joy of Jesus Christ; for he will then have the end of his undertaking, labor, suffering, and dying — when we have our joys; when he is "glorified in his saints and admired in all those who believe;" 2Th 1.10 when he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." Isa 53.11 This is Christ's harvest, when he will reap the fruit of his labors. And he won't regret his sufferings, but will rejoice over his purchased inheritance; and his people will rejoice *in him*. Indeed, the Father himself puts on joy, too, in *our* joy. Just as we grieve his Spirit, and weary him with our iniquities, so he is rejoiced in our good. O how quickly he now spies a returning prodigal, even afar off! How he runs and meets him! And with what compassion he falls on his neck and kisses him, and puts the best robe on him, and puts a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and kills the fatted calf, to eat and be merry! Luk 15.22-23 This is indeed a happy meeting; but it is nothing compared to the embracing and joy of that last and great meeting. Indeed, it is *more*. Because God *mutually* loves and joys, he makes this *His* rest, just as it is *our* rest. What an eternal Sabbatism, when the work of redemption, sanctification, preservation, and glorification is all finished and perfected forever! "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save; he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over you with singing." Zep 3.17 We may then well rejoice in our God with joy, and rest in our love, and joy in him with singing.

Alas! my fearful heart scarcely dares proceed. I think I hear the Almighty's voice saying to me, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Job 38.2 But pardon your servant, O Lord. I have not pried into unrevealed things. I bewail that my apprehensions are so dull, my thoughts so mean, my affections so stupid, and my expressions so low and unbecoming such a glory. I have only heard by the hearing of the ear: O let your servant see you, and possess these joys; then I will have more suitable conceptions, and will give you fuller glory. I will abhor my present self, and disclaim and renounce all these imperfections. "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." Job 42.3 Yet, "I believed, and therefore have I spoken." 2Cor 4.13 Lord, what can you expect from dust but levity, or from corruption but defilement? Though the weakness and irreverence are the fruit of my own corruption, yet the fire is from your altar, and the work of your commanding. I did not look into your ark, nor put out my hand to it without you. Wash away these stains, also, in the blood of the Lamb. Imperfect, or none, must be my service to you here. O take your Son's excuse, "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Mat 26.41

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT PREPARATIVES FOR THE SAINTS' REST.

There are four things which principally prepare the way to enter into it; particularly, 1. The glorious appearing of Christ; 2. The general resurrection; 3. The last judgment; and 4. The saints' coronation.

The passage to paradise is not so blocked up now as when the law and curse reigned. Therefore, beloved Christians, finding a new and living way consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, by which we may enter into the holiest with boldness, I will draw near with fuller assurance; and finding the flaming sword removed, I will look again into the paradise of our God. And because I know that this is not forbidden fruit, and that it is also good for food and pleasant to the spiritual eyes, and it is a tree to be desired to make one truly wise and happy — I will, through the assistance of the Spirit, take and eat of it myself, and give to you according to my power, that you may eat. The porch of this temple is exceedingly glorious, and its gate is called Beautiful. Here are four things which are the four corners of this porch.

1. The *most glorious coming and appearing of the Son of God* may well be reckoned as his people's glory. For their sake he came into the world, suffered, died, rose, and ascended; and it is for their sake that he will return. To this end, Christ will come again to receive his people to himself, that where he is, there they may be also. ^{Joh 14:3} The bridegroom's departure was not upon divorce. He didn't leave us with a purpose to return no more. He has left pledges enough to assure us to the contrary. We have his word, his many promises, his ordinances which show forth his death till he comes; ^{1Cor 11:26} and his Spirit to direct, sanctify, and comfort us till he returns. We have frequent tokens of love from him to show us that he doesn't forget his promise, nor us. We daily behold the forerunners of his coming, foretold by himself. We see the fig-tree put forth leaves, and therefore we know that summer is near. ^{Mat 24:32} Though the riotous world says, My Lord delays his coming; yet let the saints lift up their heads, for their redemption draws near. Alas! fellow-Christians, what would we do if our Lord did *not* return? What a state we would be left in here! What! Would he leave us in the midst of wolves, among lions, in a generation of vipers, and forget us here? Would he buy us so dearly, and then leave us sinning, suffering, groaning, dying daily, and come to us no more? *It cannot be.*

This is like our unkind dealing with Christ: when we feel ourselves warm in the world, we don't care for coming to him — but this is *not* like Christ's dealing with us. The one who came to suffer, will surely come to triumph. The one who came to purchase, will surely come to possess. Where else would all our hopes be? What would become of our faith, our prayers, our tears, and our waiting? What was all the patience of the saints worth to them? Would we not be left the most miserable of all men? ^{1Cor 15:19} Christians, hasn't Christ made us forsake all the world, and to be forsaken by all the world; to hate all, and to be hated by all — and all this for *him*, so that we might have him instead of all? And do you think after all this, he would forget us and forsake us himself? Such a thought be far our hearts! But why didn't he stay with his people while he was here? *Why?* Was the work on earth not done? Will he not take possession of glory in our behalf? Will he not intercede with the Father, plead his sufferings, be filled with the Spirit to send forth, receive authority, and subdue his enemies? ^{Joh 16:7} Our abode here is short. If he had stayed on earth, what good would it have been to enjoy him for a few days and then die? He has more in heaven to dwell among — even the spirits of many generations. He would have us live by faith, and not by sight.

O fellow-Christians, what a day that will be when we — who have been kept prisoners by sin, by sinners, and by the grave — will be brought out by the Lord himself! It will not be a coming like his first one, in poverty and contempt, to be spit upon, beaten, and crucified again. He will not come, O careless world! to be slighted and neglected by you anymore. Yet that coming did not lack its glory. If the heavenly host must praise God to celebrate his nativity, then with what shouts the angels and saints at that day will proclaim glory to God, peace and good-will toward men! If a star must lead men from remote parts, to come to worship the child in the manger, how the glory of his next appearing will constrain all the world

II. Preparatives for the Saints' Rest

to acknowledge his sovereignty! If, riding on an ass, he enters Jerusalem with hosannas, then with what peace and glory he will come toward the New Jerusalem! If when he was in the form of a servant, they cry out, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" ^{Mat 8.27} what will they say when they see him coming in his glory, and the heavens and the earth obey him? "Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn." ^{Mat 24.30} To think and speak of that day with horror well becomes the impenitent sinner; but it ill becomes the believing saint. Will the wicked behold him and cry, "Yonder is the one whose blood we neglected, whose grace we resisted, whose counsel we refused, whose government we cast off!" And won't the saints cry out with inconceivable gladness, "Yonder is the one whose blood redeemed us, whose Spirit cleansed us, whose law governed us; in whom we trusted, and he has not deceived our trust. For we long awaited him, and now we see that we have not waited in vain! O cursed corruption that would have had us turn to the world and to present things, saying, "Why should we wait for the Lord any longer?" ^{2Kng 6.33} Now we see, "Blessed are all those who wait for him." ^{Isa 30.18} And now, Christians, should we not put up that petition heartily, "Thy kingdom come?" ^{Mat 6.10} "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him that hears," and reads, "say, 'Come.'" Our Lord himself says, "Surely I come quickly. Amen: even so, come! Lord Jesus." ^{Rev 22.17, 20}

2. Another thing that leads to paradise, is that great work of Jesus Christ *in raising the body from the dust and uniting it again to the soul*. It is a wonderful effect of infinite power and love! "Yes, wonderful indeed," says Unbelief, "if it is true. What, will all these scattered bones and dust become a man?" Let me with reverence plead for God, for that power by which I hope to arise. What sustains the massive body of the earth? What limits the vast ocean of the waters? From where is that constant ebbing and flowing of the tides? How many times larger than all the earth is the sun, that glorious body of light? Isn't it as easy to raise the dead as to make heaven and earth, and all out of nothing? Don't look at the dead bones, and dust, and difficulty, but at the *promise*. Contentedly commit these bodies to a prison that will not long contain them. Let us lie down in peace and take our rest; it will not be an everlasting night, nor an endless sleep. If unclothing is the thing you fear, it is that you may have better clothing. If being turned out of doors is the thing you fear, remember that when "the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, you have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." ^{2Cor 5.1} Lay down cheerfully this lump of corruption; you will undoubtedly receive it again in incorruption. Lay down freely this terrestrial, *natural* body; you will receive it again a celestial, *spiritual* body. Though you lay it down with great dishonor, you will receive it in glory. Though you are separated from it through weakness, it will be raised again in mighty power; "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed." ^{1Cor 15.52} "The dead in Christ will rise first. Then those who are alive and remain, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." ^{1Th 4.16} Triumph now, O Christian, in these *promises*; you will shortly triumph in their *performance*. This is the day which the Lord will make; we will rejoice and be glad in it. ^{Psa 118.24} The grave that could not keep our Lord, cannot keep us. He arose for us; and by the same power, he will cause *us* to arise. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, those also who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him." ^{1Th 4.14} Let us never look at the *grave*, without seeing the *resurrection* beyond it. Yes, let us be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord." ^{1Cor 15.58}

3. Part of this prologue to the *Saints' Rest* is *the public and solemn process at their judgment*, where they will first be acquitted and justified themselves, and then, with Christ, judge the world. Young and old, of all estates and nations, whoever there was from the creation to that day, must here come and receive their doom. O terrible! O joyful day! Terrible to those that have forgotten the coming of their Lord! Joyful to the saints, whose waiting and hope was to see this day! Then the world will behold the goodness and severity of God — on those who perish, *severity*; but to his chosen ones, *goodness*. Every one must give an account of his stewardship. Every talent of time, health, abilities, mercies, afflictions, means, and warnings must be accounted for. The sins of youth — those which they had forgotten, and their secret sins — will all be laid open before angels and men. They will see the Lord Jesus, whom they neglected, whose word they disobeyed, whose ministers they abused, whose servants they hated, now

II. Preparatives for the Saints' Rest

sitting to judge them. Their own consciences will cry out against them, and call to their remembrance all their misdoings. Which way will the wretched sinner look? Who can conceive the terrible thoughts of his heart? Now the world cannot help him; his old companions cannot; the saints neither can nor will. Only the Lord Jesus can. But there is the misery: *he will not*. There was a time, sinner, when Christ *would*, and you would *not*; now you would have it, and he will not. It is all in vain to “cry to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne;’” ^{Rev 6.16} for you have the Lord of mountains and rocks for your enemy, whose voice they will obey, and not yours. I charge you, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, that you set yourself seriously to ponder these things.

But why do you tremble, O humble, gracious soul? He that would not lose one Noah in a common deluge, nor overlook one Lot in Sodom — indeed, who could do nothing till he left — will He forget you at that day? “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust for the day of judgment, to be punished.” ^{2Pet 2.9} He knows how to make the same day the greatest terror to his foes, and yet the greatest joy to his people. “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” “Who will lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” ^{Rom 8.1, 33} Will the law? “The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death.” ^{Rom 8.2} Or will the conscience? “The Spirit itself bears witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. It is God who justifies; who is he that condemns?” ^{Rom 8.16, 34} If our Judge does not condemn us, who will? He that said to the adulterous woman, ‘Has no man condemned you? Neither do I;’ ^{Joh 8.10-11} will say to us more faithfully than Peter said to him, ‘Though all men deny you, or condemn you, I will not.’ Having confessed me before men, “I will also confess you before my Father who is in heaven.” ^{Mat 10.32}

What inexpressible joy that our dear Lord, who loves our souls and whom our souls love, will be our Judge! Would a man fear to be judged by his dearest friend? Or a wife by her own husband? Christian, did Christ come down and suffer, and weep, and bleed, and die for you, and will he now condemn you? Was he judged, condemned, and executed in your stead, and will he now condemn you? Has he already done most of the work in redeeming, regenerating, sanctifying and preserving you, and will he now *undo* it all again? Well then, let the terror of that day be ever so great, surely our Lord can mean no ill toward us in any of it. Let it make the devils tremble, and the wicked tremble, but it will make us leap for joy. It must affect us deeply with the sense of our mercy and happiness, to see most of the world tremble with terror, while we triumph with joy; to hear them doomed to everlasting flames, when we are proclaimed heirs of the kingdom; to see our neighbors, who lived in the same town, who came to the same congregation, who dwelt in the same houses and were esteemed more honorable in the world than ourselves, now eternally separated by the Searcher of hearts. The apostle pathetically expresses the great magnificence and dreadfulness of the day this way:

“It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; and to you who are troubled, *rest with us* when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe, in that day.” ^{2Th 1.6-10}

Yet more: we will be so far from the dread of that judgment, that we will become the judges. Christ will take his people, as it were, into commission with himself, and they will sit and approve his righteous judgment. “Don’t know that the saints will judge the world?” Indeed, “do you not know that we will judge angels?” ^{1Cor. 6:2-3} Were it not for the word of Christ that speaks it, this advancement would seem incredible, and the language arrogant. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all who are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all their harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” ^{Jude 1.14-15} Thus the

II. Preparatives for the Saints' Rest

saints will be honored, and “the upright will have dominion in the morning.” Psa 49.14 O that the careless world “were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” Deu 32.29 that they would be of the same mind now as they will be when they see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are in it burnt up! 2Pet 3.10 — when all will be on fire about them, and all earthly glory consumed.

“For the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved for fire against the day of judgment, and the perdition of ungodly men. Seeing, then, that all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons should you be in all holy conversation ¹¹ and godliness, looking for and hastening to the coming of the day of God, in which the heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” 2Pet 3.7, 11, 12

4. The last preparative for the *Saints' Rest* is *their solemn coronation and receiving of the kingdom*. For just as Christ, their head, is anointed both King and Priest, so under him his people are made both kings and priests to God, to reign and to offer praises forever. The crown of righteousness which was laid up for them will, by the Lord, the righteous Judge, be given to them at that day. 2Tim 4.8 They have been faithful unto death, and therefore he will give them a crown of life. Rev 2.10 And according to the increase of their talents here, so will their rule and dignity be enlarged. Luk 19.17 They are not dignified with empty titles, but real dominion. Christ will grant them to sit with him on his throne, and will give them power over the nations, even as he received it from his Father; and he “will give them the morning star.” Rev 2.27 The Lord himself will give them possession with these applauding expressions: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” Mat 25.23

And he will enthrone them with this solemn and blessed proclamation: “Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Mat 25.34 Every word is full of life and joy. “Come” — this is holding out the golden sceptre, to warrant our approach to this glory. Come now as near as you will. Don't fear the Bethshemites' judgment, 1Sam 6.1-18 for the enmity is utterly abolished. This is not such a “Come” as we were used to hearing, “Come, take up your cross and follow me.” Mar 10.21 Though that was sweet, yet this is much sweeter. “You blessed” — blessed indeed, when that mouth so pronounces us! For though the world has considered us accursed, and we have been ready to consider ourselves so, yet certainly those that He blesses are blessed; and only those whom he curses are cursed; and his blessing cannot be reversed. “Of my Father” — blessed in the Father's love, as well as the Son's; for they are one. The Father has testified his love in their election, their donation to Christ, in sending Christ, and in accepting his ransom, as the Son has also testified his love. “Inherit” — no longer bondsmen nor servants only, nor underage children, who don't differ from servants in possession, but only in title; but now we are heirs of the kingdom, and joint-heirs with Christ. Rom 8.17 “The kingdom” — no less than the kingdom! Indeed, to be King of kings and Lord of lords is our Lord's own proper title; but to be kings, and reign with him, is *ours*. The enjoyment of this kingdom is like the light of the sun — each has the whole, and the rest have no less. “Prepared for you” — God is the Alpha as well as the Omega of our blessedness. Eternal love has laid the foundation. He prepared the kingdom for us, and then He prepared us for the kingdom. This is the preparation of his counsel and decree, for the execution of which, Christ was yet to make a further preparation. “For you” — not for believers in general only, who without individual persons are nobody; but for you *personally*. “From the foundation of the world” — not only from the promise after Adam's fall, but from eternity.

Thus we have seen the Christian safely landed in paradise, and conveyed honorably to his rest. Now let us, in the next chapter, view those mansions a little further, consider their privileges, and see whether there is any glory like this glory.

¹¹ *Conversation*: in the 17th century, this word meant the way we conduct ourselves; the life we visibly live.

CHAPTER III.

THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE SAINTS' REST.

1. *It is the purchased possession; 2. A free gift; 3. Peculiar to saints; 4. An association with saints and angels; 5. It derives its joys immediately from God himself; 6. It will be seasonable; 7. Suitable; 8. Perfect, without sin and suffering; 9. And everlasting.*

Let us draw a little nearer, and see what further excellencies this rest affords. May the Lord hide us in the clefts of the rock, and cover us with the hands of indulgent grace, while we approach to take this view.

1. It is a most singular honor of the *Saints' Rest*, to be called *the purchased possession*; that is, the fruit of the blood of the Son of God — indeed, the *chief* fruit, the end and perfection of all the fruits and efficacy of that blood. There is no greater love than this: to lay down the life of the lover — and to have this, our Redeemer, ever before our eyes, and the liveliest sense and freshest remembrance of that dying, bleeding love, still upon our souls! How it fills our souls with perpetual joy, to think that in the streams of this blood, we have swum through the violence of the world, the snares of Satan, the seductions of flesh, the curse of the law, the wrath of an offended God, the accusations of a guilty conscience, and the vexing doubts and fears of an unbelieving heart — and have arrived safely at the presence of God! Now he cries to us, “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold, and see if there is any sorrow like *my* sorrow!” ^{Lam 1.12} And we scarcely regard the mournful voice, and scarcely turn aside to view the wounds. But *then* our perfected souls will feel and flame *in love for* love. With what astonishing apprehensions redeemed saints will everlastingly behold their blessed Redeemer! — the purchaser, and the price, together with the possession! Nor will the view of his wounds of love renew our wounds of sorrow. His first words after his resurrection were to a great sinner, “Woman, why do you weep?” ^{Joh 20.15} He knows how to raise love and joy, without any cloud of sorrow, or storm of tears. If anything that we enjoy was purchased with the life of our dearest friend, how highly we should value it! If a dying friend delivers to us but a token of his love, how carefully we preserve it, and still remember him when we behold it, as if his own name were written on it! And will the death and blood of our Lord not then everlastingly sweeten our possessed glory? Just as we write down the price our goods cost us, so on our righteousness and glory, we write this price: *The precious blood of Christ*. His sufferings were to satisfy the justice that required blood, and to bear what was due to sinners, and so restore to them the life they lost, and the happiness from which they fell. The work of Christ’s redemption so well pleased the Father, that He gave him power to advance his chosen, and give them the glory which was given to himself — and all this “according to his good pleasure and the counsel of his own will.” ^{Eph 1.11}

2. Another pearl in the saints’ diadem, is that it is *a free gift*. These two — *purchased* and *free* — are the chains of gold which make up the wreaths for the tops of the pillars in the temple of God. It was dear to Christ, but free to us. When *Christ* was to buy, silver and gold were worth nothing; prayers and tears could not suffice, nor could anything less than his blood — but *our* buying is receiving; we have it freely, without money and without price. A thankful acceptance of a free acquittance is not paying a debt. Here all is free. If the Father freely gives the Son, and the Son freely pays the debt; and if God freely accepts that way of payment when he might have required it from the principal; and if both Father and Son freely offer us the purchased life on our cordial acceptance; and if they freely send the Spirit to enable us to accept — what is here, then, that is *not* free? O the everlasting admiration that must surprise the saints to think of this freeness! “What did the Lord see in me, that he should judge me fit for such a state? That I, who was but a poor, diseased, despised wretch, should be clad in the brightness of this glory! That I, a creeping worm, should be advanced to this high dignity! That I, who was but recently groaning, weeping, dying, should now be as full of joy as my heart can hold! — indeed, that I should be taken from the grave where I was decaying, and from the dust and darkness where I seemed forgotten, and here be set before his throne! That I should be taken with Mordecai from captivity, and set next to the king; and taken with Daniel from the den, and made ruler of princes and provinces! Who can fathom such unmeasurable love? If our condition for admittance was worthiness, we might sit down

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

and weep with St. John, because no man was found worthy. But “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” ^{Rev 5.5} is worthy, and has prevailed; and we shall hold the inheritance by *that* title. We will offer there the offering that David refused, even praise for that which cost us nothing. ^{2Sam 24.24} Here our commission runs, “Freely you have received, freely give” ^{Mat 10.8} — but Christ *dearly* bought, and yet he freely gives.

If it were only for nothing, and without our merit, the wonder would be great; but it is moreover *against* our merit, and *against* long-endeavoring for our own ruin. What an astonishing thought it will be, to think of the immeasurable difference between our deservings and receivings! — between the state we should have been in, and the state we are in! — to look down upon hell, and see the vast difference from that to which we are adopted! What pangs of love it will cause within us to think,

“Yonder was the place that sin would have brought me to; but *this* is what Christ has brought me to! Yonder death was the wages of my sin, but this eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ my Lord. ^{Rom 6.23} Who made me to differ? Wouldn't I have been in those flames now, if I had my own way, and been left to my own will? Wouldn't I have lingered in Sodom till the flames had seized me, if God had not in mercy brought me out?”

Doubtless this will be our everlasting admiration: that so rich a crown ¹² should fit the head of so vile a sinner; that such high advancement, and such lengthy unfruitfulness and unkindness, can be the state of the same person; and that such vile rebellions can conclude in such *most precious* joys! But this is no thanks to us, nor to any of our duties and labors, much less to our neglects and laziness. We know to whom the praise is due, and must be given forever. Indeed, it was to this very end that infinite wisdom cast the whole design of man's salvation into this mold of purchases and freeness: that the love and joy of man might be perfected, and the honor of grace most highly advanced; that the thought of merit might neither cloud the one, nor obstruct the other; and that the gate of heaven might turn on these two hinges. So then, let “DESERVED” be written on the door of hell; but on the door of heaven and life, “THE FREE GIFT.”

3. This rest is *peculiar to saints*; it belongs to no others of all the sons of men. If all of Egypt had been light, the Israelites would not have had less; but to enjoy that light *alone*, while their neighbors lived in thick darkness, must make them more sensible of their privilege. *Distinguishing* mercy affects more than just *any* mercy. If Pharaoh had passed as safely as Israel, the Red Sea would have been less remembered. If the rest of the world had not been drowned, and the rest of Sodom and Gomorrah had not burned, the saving of Noah would not have been a wonder, nor Lot's deliverance so talked about. When one is enlightened, and another is left in darkness; when one is reformed and another enslaved by his lust — it makes the saints cry out, “Lord, how is it that you manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” ^{Joh 14.22} When the prophet is sent to only one widow out of all who were in Israel, and to cleanse one Naaman out of all the lepers, the mercy is more observable. That will surely be a day of passionate sense on both sides, when there will be two in one bed, and two in the field, the one taken and the other left. ^{Luk 17.34-35} The saints will look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in approving of God's just proceedings, they will rejoice and sing, “You are righteous, O Lord! who was, and is, and will be, because you have judged thus.”

4. But though this rest is peculiar to the saints, yet it is *common to all the saints*; for it is an association of blessed spirits, both saints and angels. It is a corporation of perfected saints, of which Christ is the head. It is the communion of saints completed. Just as we have been together in the labor, duty, danger and distress, so we will be together in the great recompense and deliverance. Just as we have been scorned and despised together, so we will be owned and honored together. We who have gone through the day of *sadness*, will enjoy together that day of *gladness*. Those who have been with us in persecution and in prison, will also be with us in that place of consolation. How often our groans have made, as it were, one sound, our tears one stream, and our desires one prayer! But now, all our praises will make up one melody; all our churches, one church; and all ourselves, one body; for we will be all one in

¹² Isaac Watts (1674-1748) later used “so rich a crown” in his hymn, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” (1707).

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

Christ, even as he and the Father are one. It is true, we must be careful not to look for that in the saints, which is in Christ alone. But if the forethought of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, may be our lawful joy; how much more will be the *real* sight and *actual* possession! It can only be comfortable to think of that day, when we will join with Moses in his song, with David in his psalms of praise, and with all the redeemed in the song of the Lamb forever; when we will see Enoch walking with God; Noah enjoying the end of his singularity; Joseph of his integrity; Job of his patience; Hezekiah of his uprightness, and all the saints of the end of their faith. There we will know and comfortably enjoy not only our old acquaintances, but all the saints of all ages — those whose faces we never saw in the flesh. Yes, angels as well as saints will be our blessed acquaintance. Those who are willingly our ministering spirits now, will then be willingly our companions in joy. Those who had such joy in heaven for our *conversion*, will gladly rejoice with us in our *glorification*. Then we will truly say, as David did, I am a companion of all those who fear you — when “we have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.” ^{Heb 12.22} It is a singular excellence of heavenly rest, that we are “fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” ^{Eph 2.19}

5. As another property of our rest, *we will derive its joys immediately from God*. Now we have nothing at all immediately, but only second or third-hand (or however many, who knows?) — from the earth, from man, from sun and moon, from the ministration of angels, and from the Spirit and Christ. Though in the hand of angels, the stream doesn't savor of the imperfection of *sinner*s, yet it savors of the imperfection of *creatures* — and as it comes from man, it savors of both. How quick and piercing is the word in itself! Yet many times it never enters, being managed by a feeble arm. What weight and worth are there in every passage of the blessed Gospel! — enough, one would think, to enter and pierce the dullest soul, and to wholly possess its thoughts and affections. And yet, how often it falls like water on a stone! The things of God which we handle are *divine*; but our manner of handling them is *human*. There is little that we touch, without leaving our fingerprints behind. If God speaks the word himself, it will be a piercing, melting word indeed. The Christian now knows by experience, that his most immediate joys are his sweetest joys — those which have the least touch of man, and are most directly from the Spirit. Christians who are often in secret prayer and contemplation, are men of the greatest life and joy, because they have everything more immediately from God himself. It's not that we should cast off hearing, reading, and conference, nor neglect any ordinance of God; but living above them while we use them, is the way of a Christian. There is joy in these remote receivings; but the fulness of joy is in God's immediate presence. *We will then* have light without a candle, and perpetual day without the sun, for “the city has no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is its light; there will be no night there, and they need no candle, nor light of the sun; and they will reign for ever and ever.” ^{Rev 21.23; 22.5} *We will then* have enlightened understandings without Scripture, and be governed without a written law; for the Lord will perfect his law in our hearts, and we will all be perfectly taught by God. ^{Joh 6.45} *We will* have joy, which we did not draw from the promises, nor fetch home by faith or hope. *We will* have communion without ordinances, without this fruit of the vine, when Christ drinks it anew with us in his Father's kingdom, and refreshes us with the comforting wine of immediate enjoyment. ^{Luk 22.18} To have necessities, but no supply, is the case of those in *hell*. To have necessity supplied by means of creatures, is the state of us on *earth*. To have necessity supplied immediately from God, is the state of the saints in *heaven*. To have no necessity at all, is the prerogative of God himself.

6. A further excellence of this rest is that it will be *seasonable*. The One who expects the fruit of his vineyard in its season, and makes his people “like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season,” ^{Psa 1.3} will also give them the crown in his season. The One who would have a word of joy spoken in season to the one who is weary, will surely cause the time of joy to appear in the fittest season. Those who are not weary in well-doing will, if they don't faint, reap in due season. ^{Gal 6.9} If

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

God gives rain even to his enemies, both the former and the latter in its season, and He reserves the appointed weeks of harvest, and covenants that there will be day and night in their season — then surely the glorious harvest of the saints will not miss its season. Doubtless, He who would not stay a day longer than his promise, but brought Israel out of Egypt on the self-same day when the four hundred and thirty years expired, will not lose one day or hour of the fittest season for his people's glory. When we have had a long night of darkness in this world, won't the breaking of the day and the rising of the Sun of Righteousness then be seasonable? When we have passed a long and tedious journey through no small dangers, isn't home then seasonable? When we've had a long and perilous war, and received many a wound, wouldn't peace with victory be seasonable? Men live in continual weariness; especially the saints, who are most weary of that which the world cannot feel — some weary of a blind mind; some of a hard heart; some of their daily doubts and fears; some of the lack of spiritual joys; and some of the sense of God's wrath. And when a poor Christian has desired, and prayed, and waited for deliverance many years, is it not then seasonable? We lament that we don't find a Canaan in the wilderness, or the songs of Zion in a strange land; that we don't have a harbor in the ocean, nor our rest in the heat of the day, nor heaven before we leave the earth — and wouldn't all this be very *unseasonable*?

7. Just as this rest will be seasonable, so it will be *suitable*. The new nature of the saints suits their spirits to this rest. Indeed, their holiness is nothing else but a spark taken from this element, and kindled in their hearts by the Spirit of Christ. Its flame, being mindful of its own divine origin, ever tends to the place from which it comes. Temporal crowns and kingdoms could not make a rest for the saints. Just as they weren't redeemed with so low a price, neither are they endued with so low a nature. Just as God will have spiritual worship from them, suited to his own spiritual being, he will provide a spiritual rest for them, suitable to their spiritual nature. The knowledge of God and of his Christ, delightful complacency in that mutual love, everlasting rejoicing in the enjoyment of our God, and perpetually singing of His high praises — *this* is heaven for a saint. *Then* we will live in our own element. We are now like fish in a vessel of water, having only so much as will keep them alive; but what is *that* compared to the ocean? We now have a little air to take in to afford us breathing; but what is that compared to the sweet, fresh gales on mount Zion? We have a beam of the sun to enlighten our darkness, and a warm ray to keep us from freezing; but *then* we will live in its light, and be revived by its heat forever. As are the *natures* of the saints, such are their *desires*; and it is the desires of our renewed nature to which this rest is suited. While our desires remain corrupted and misguided, it is a far greater mercy to deny them — indeed, to destroy them — than to satisfy them. But those which are *spiritual* are of His own planting, and he will surely water them, and give them the increase. ^{1Cor 3:7} He quickened our hunger and thirst for righteousness, so that he might make us happy in full satisfaction. Christian, this is a rest after your own heart. It contains all that your heart can wish for — what you long for, pray for, labor for — and *there* you will find it all. You would rather have God in Christ, than all the world; *there* you will have him. What wouldn't you give for assurance of his love? *There* you will have assurance without suspicion. Desire what you can, ask what you will as a Christian, and it will be given to you, not only to half the kingdom, but to the enjoyment of both kingdom and King. *This* is a life of desire and prayer; but *that* is a life of satisfaction and enjoyment. This rest is very suitable to the saints' necessities, as well as to their natures and desires. It contains whatever they truly wanted — not supplying them with gross, created comforts which, like Saul's armor on David, are more a burden than a benefit. It was Christ and perfect holiness which they most needed, and they will be supplied with these.

8. Still more, this rest will be *absolutely perfect*. We will then have joy without sorrow, and rest without weariness. There is no mixture of corruption with our graces, nor suffering with our comfort. There are none of those waves in that harbor, which now so toss us up and down. Today we are well, tomorrow sick; today in esteem, tomorrow in disgrace; today we have friends, tomorrow none; indeed, we have wine and vinegar in the same cup. If revelations raise us to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must soon buffet us, and a thorn in the flesh pull us down. But there is none of this inconstancy in heaven. If perfect love casts out fear, ^{1Joh 4:18} then perfect joy must cast out sorrow, and perfect happiness exclude all the relics of misery. There we will rest from all the evil of sin and of suffering.

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

Heaven excludes nothing more directly than *sin*, whether of nature or conduct. "There shall in no way enter anything that defiles, nor whatever works abomination, or makes a lie." ^{Rev 21.27} What need was there for Christ to die at all, if heaven could have contained imperfect souls? "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested: that he might destroy the works of the devil." ^{1Joh 3.8} His blood and Spirit have not done all this to leave us defiled in the end. "What communion has light with darkness? and what concord has Christ with Belial?" ^{2Cor 6.14-15} Christian, once you are in heaven, you will sin no more. Isn't this glad news to you who have prayed and watched against it for so long? I know if it were given as a choice, you would choose to be freed from sin, rather than have all the world. You will have your desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts which accompanied you to every duty, will be left behind forever. Your understanding will never more be troubled with darkness. All dark Scriptures will be made plain; all seeming contradictions reconciled. The poorest Christian is shortly *there* a more perfect divine than any *here*. O that happy day when error vanishes forever! when our understanding will be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! His face will be the Scripture where we read the truth. Many a godly man here, in his mistaken zeal, has been the means of deceiving and perverting his brothers; and when he sees his own error, he cannot tell how to undeceive them. But *there* we will join in one truth, just as we are one in Him who *is* the truth. We will also rest from all the sin of our will, affections, and conduct. We will no longer retain this rebelling principle which still draws us from God; we will no longer be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence. No pride, passion, slothfulness, or insensibility will enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no inconstant walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conduct — we will rest from all these forever. *Then* our will shall correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a mirror, and from which — as our law and rule — we will never swerve. "For he that has entered into his rest, has also ceased from his own works, as God did from his." ^{Heb 4.10}

Our *sufferings* were but the consequences of our sinning, and in heaven they will both cease together.

We will rest from all our *doubts* of God's love. It will no longer be said that "doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground." They will be weeded out, and will trouble the gracious soul no more. We will hear that kind of language no more, "What should I do to know my state? How will I know that God is my Father; that my heart is upright; that my conversion is true; that my faith is sincere? I am afraid that my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers. There, all this is turned into praise.

We will rest from all sense of *God's displeasure*. Hell will not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted. Divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all His waves. But that blessed day will convince us that, although God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness, He will have mercy on us.

We will rest from all the *temptations of Satan*. What a grief it is to a Christian, even if he doesn't yield to the temptation, to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment it is to have such horrid suggestions made to his soul, such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! — sometimes cruel thoughts about God, undervaluing thoughts about Christ, unbelieving thoughts about Scripture, or injurious thoughts about Providence! — sometimes to be tempted to turn to present things, to play with the baits of sin, and to venture on the delights of the flesh, and sometimes on atheism itself! This is especially so, when we know the treachery of our own hearts, which are ready as tinder to catch fire as soon as one of those sparks falls on them! Satan has power to tempt us in the wilderness *here*, but he doesn't enter the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the *earthly* Jerusalem, but he may not approach the New Jerusalem; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but he cannot ascend Mount Sion. And even if he could, all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, would be a despised bait to the soul that is possessed by the kingdom of our Lord. No, it is in vain for Satan to offer a temptation more.

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

All our temptations from *the world and the flesh* will also cease. O the hourly dangers that we walk in here! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarcely open our eyes without the danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honors and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others, with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if deformity, a bait to loathing and disdain. How soon slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart! How constant and strong a watch our appetite requires! Do we have attractiveness and beauty? What fuel these are for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion it is for repining! Do we have strength of reason, and gifts of learning? O how prone we are to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brothers! Are we unlearned? How apt we then are to despise what we don't have! Are we in places of authority? How strong is the temptation to abuse our trust, to make our will our law, and to mold all the enjoyments of others by the rules and model of our own interest and policy! Are we inferiors? Then how prone we are to envy others' pre-eminence, and to bring their actions to the bar of our judgment! Are we rich, and not too exalted? Are we poor and not discontented? Are we lazy in our duties, or do we make a Christ of them? It's not that *God* has made these things our snares; but through our own corruption they become snares to us. We are the greatest snares to ourselves.

This is our comfort: our rest will free us from all these. Just as Satan has no entrance there, so he has nothing to serve his malice; instead, all things there will join with us in the high praises of our great Deliverer.

Just as we will rest from the temptations, so we will rest from the *abuses and persecutions* of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth. ^{Rev 6.9-10} *This* is the time for crowning with thorns; *that* is the time for crowning with glory. *Now* "all who would live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution;" ^{2Tim 3.12} *then* those who suffered with him will be glorified with him. *Now* we must be hated by all men for Christ's sake; *then* Christ will be admired in his saints who were thus hated. We are *here* made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men; as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, ^{1Cor 4.13} men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and toss out our names as evil. But *then* we will be much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us, whether they would or not. We can *now* scarcely pray in our families, or sing praises to God, without our voice being a vexation to them. How it must torment them *then*, to see us praising and rejoicing while they are howling and lamenting! You brothers who can *now* attempt no work of God without losing the love of the world, consider that you will *then* have none in heaven who will not further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. *Till then*, possess your souls in patience. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world's treasures. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with Christ." ^{2Th 1.6}

We will then rest from all our sad *divisions* and unchristian quarrels with one another. How lovingly thousands live together in heaven, who lived at variance on earth! There is no contention, because there is none of this pride, ignorance, or other corruption. There is no plotting to strengthen our party, nor deep designing against our brothers. If there is sorrow or shame in heaven, we will then be both sorry and ashamed to remember all this conduct on earth — as Joseph's brothers were sorry to behold him, when they remembered their former unkind use of him. Isn't it enough that all the world is against us, without also being against one another? O happy days of persecution which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the *Saints' Rest* in glory when — just as there is one God, one Christ, and one Spirit — so we will have one heart, one church, and one employment forever.

We will then rest from our participation in *our brothers' sufferings*. The church on earth is a mere hospital! Some are groaning under a dark understanding, some under an insensible heart, some anguishing under unfruitful weakness, and some bleeding from miscarriages and wilfulness; some are

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

crying out of their poverty, some groaning under pains and infirmities, and some are bewailing a whole catalogue of calamities. But it is a far greater grief to see our dearest and most intimate friends turned aside from the truth of Christ. They are continuing their neglect of Christ and their souls, and nothing will awaken them out of their security. It is grievous to look at an ungodly father or mother, brother or sister, wife or husband, child or friend, and think how certainly they will be in hell forever, if they die in their present unregenerated state — or to think of the Gospel departing, the glory taken from our Israel, poor souls left willingly dark and destitute, and blowing out the light that should guide them to salvation! Our day of rest will free us from all this, and the days of mourning will be ended. Then your people, O Lord, will all be righteous; they will inherit the land forever — the branch of your planting, the work of your hands — that you may be glorified.

Then we will rest from all our own *personal sufferings*. This may seem a small thing to those who live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul, it makes thoughts of heaven delightful. O the dying life we now live! It is as full of sufferings, as of days and hours! Our Redeemer leaves this measure of misery upon us to make us know for what we are beholden; to remind us of what we would otherwise forget; to be serviceable to his wise and gracious designs; and be advantageous to our full and final recovery. Grief enters at every sense, seizes every part and power of flesh and spirit. What noble part is there that suffers its pain or ruin alone? But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquility of that region where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! O healthful place where none are sick! O fortunate land where all are kings! O holy assembly where all are priests! How free a state where none are servants except to their supreme Monarch! The poor man will no longer be tired with his labors; he will have no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness; no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces will no longer be pale or sad; no more breaches in friendship, nor friends parting asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings: God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. O my soul, bear with the infirmities of your earthly tabernacle; it will be this way but a little while — the sound of your Redeemer's feet is at the door even now.

We will also rest from all *the toils of duties*. The conscientious magistrate, parent, and minister cry out, "O the burden that lies upon me!" Every relation, state, and age has a variety of duties, so that every conscientious Christian cries out, "O the burden! O my weakness, that makes it burdensome!" But our remaining rest will ease us of the burdens.

Once more, we will rest from all these troublesome *afflictions* which necessarily accompany our absence from God. The trouble that is mixed in our desires and hopes, in our longings and waitings, will cease then. We will no longer look into our cabinet and miss our treasure; into our hearts and miss our Christ. We will no longer seek him from ordinance to ordinance, but all will be concluded in a most blessed and full enjoyment.

9. The last jewel of our crown is that it will be an *everlasting rest*. Without this, all would be nothing, comparatively. The very thought of leaving it would embitter all our joys. It would be a hell in heaven, to think even once of losing heaven; just as it would be a kind of heaven to the damned, if they only once had a hope of escaping. Mortality is the disgrace of all sublunary delights. How it spoils our pleasure to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity, where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! — where "we will be pillars in the temple of God, and go out no more." ^{Rev 3.12} While we were servants, we held by lease, and that was only for the term of a transitory life; "but the son abides in the house forever." ^{Joh 8.35} "O my soul, let go of your dreams of present pleasure, and loose your hold of earth and flesh. Study frequently, study thoroughly, this one word — *eternity*. What! live and never die! rejoice and *ever* rejoice!" O happy souls in hell, if only you could escape after millions of ages! O miserable saints in heaven, if you were dispossessed after the age of a million worlds! This word, *everlasting*, contains the perfection of their torment, and of our glory. O that the sinner would study this word; I think it would startle him out of his dead sleep! O that the gracious soul would study it; I think it would revive him in his deepest agony! "And Lord, if I must thus

III. Excellencies of the Saints' Rest

live forever, then I will also *love* forever. If my joys must be immortal, won't my thanks also be immortal? Surely, if I will never lose my glory, then I will never cease your praises. If you both perfect and perpetuate me and my glory, such that I will be yours and not my own, then my glory will be your glory. And just as your glory was your ultimate end in my glory, so too it will be my end, when you have crowned me with that glory which has no end. 'Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever.'" ^{1Tim 1.17}

Thus I have endeavored to show you a glimpse of approaching glory. But how short are my expressions of its excellence! Reader, if you are a humble, sincere believer, and wait with longing and laboring for this rest, then you will shortly see and feel the truth of all this. You will then have so high an impression of this blessed state that it will make you pity the ignorance and distance of mortals, and will tell you all that is said here falls short of the whole truth a thousand-fold. In the meantime, let this much kindle your desires, and quicken your endeavors. Get up and be doing; run, and strive, and fight, and hold on; for you have a certain glorious prize before you. God will not mock you; if you don't mock yourself, or betray your soul by delaying, then all is your own. What kind of men do you think Christians would be in their lives and duties, if they still had this glory fresh in their thoughts? What frame would their spirits be in, if their thoughts of heaven were lively and believing? Would their hearts be so heavy, or their countenances so sad? Would they need to take their comforts from below? Would they be so loath to suffer, and so afraid to die? Or would they instead think that every day is a year till they enjoy it? May the Lord heal our carnal hearts, lest we "not enter into this rest because of unbelief." ^{Heb 4.11}

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS FOR WHOM THIS REST IS DESIGNED.

The people of God who will enjoy this rest are, 1. Chosen from eternity; 2. Given to Christ; 3. Born again; 4. Deeply convinced of the evil of sin, their misery by sin, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ. 5. Their will is proportionately changed. 6. They engage in covenant with Christ. 7. They persevere in their engagements. The reader is invited to examine himself by these characteristics of God's people. Further testimony from Scripture, that this rest will be enjoyed by the people of God: also, that none but they will enjoy it; and that it remains for them, and it is not to be enjoyed till they come to another world. The chapter concludes with showing that their souls will enjoy this rest while separated from their bodies.

While I was in the mount describing the excellencies of the *Saints' Rest*, I felt it was good being there, and therefore tarried longer; and if there wasn't an extreme disproportion between my conceptions and the subject, I would have been there much longer. Can a prospect of that happy land be tedious? Having read about such high and unspeakable glory, a stranger would wonder for what rare creatures this mighty preparation should be made, and expect that some illustrious sun would break forth. But behold! There is only a shellful of dust, animated with an invisible rational soul, and that is rectified with an unseen restoring power of grace — and this is the creature that must possess such glory! You would think it must be some deserving piece, or one who brings a valuable price. But, behold! It is one who *has* nothing, and can *deserve* nothing — indeed, he deserves the contrary; and yet he would, if he might, proceed in that deserving. But being apprehended by love, he is brought to Him that is all. And most affectionately receiving Him, and resting on Him, he receives all this *in* and *through* Him! More particularly, the persons for whom this rest is designed, are chosen by God from eternity; given to Christ as their Redeemer; and born again. Being are deeply convinced of the evil and misery of a sinful state, the vanity of the creature, and the all-sufficiency of Christ, their will is renewed. They engage themselves to Christ in covenant; and they persevere in their engagements to the end.

1. The persons for whom this rest is designed, whom the text calls “the people of God,” are “*chosen by God before the foundation of the world*, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love.” ^{Eph 1.4} It is apparent in Scripture and experience, that they are but a part of mankind. They are the *little flock*, to whom “it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom.” ^{Luk 12.32} They are fewer than the world imagines; yet they are not so few as some drooping spirits think, those who are suspicious that God is unwilling to be their God, when they know that they are willing to be his people.

2. These persons are *given by God to his Son*, to be redeemed by him from their lost state, and advanced to this glory. God has given all things to his Son, but not as He has given his *chosen* to him. “God has given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him.” ^{Joh 17.2} The difference is clearly expressed by the apostle: “He has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” ^{Eph 1.22} And though Christ is in some sense a ransom for *all*, yet it is not in that special manner that he is for his people.¹³

3. One great qualification of these persons is that they are *born again*. To be the people of God without regeneration, is as impossible as to be the children of men without generation. Seeing that we are born God's enemies, we must be new-born as his sons, or else we remain enemies still. The greatest reformation of life that can be attained to without this new life wrought in the soul, may procure our further delusion, but never our salvation.

4. This new life in the people of God reveals itself by *conviction*, or a deep sense of divine things. They are convinced of the *evil of sin*. The sinner is made to know and feel that the sin which was his delight, is a more loathsome thing than a toad or serpent, and a greater evil than plague or famine. Being a breach of the righteous law of the most high God, it is dishonorable to Him, and destructive to the sinner. Now the sinner no longer hears the reproofs of sin as a course of words; instead, the mention of

¹³ Here is an instance of Baxter's mixed theology concerning the doctrines of grace. — WHG

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

his sin now speaks to his very heart — and yet he is willing that you show him the worst. Before, he was prone to marvel at what made men maintain such a stir against sin; or what harm it was for a man to take a little forbidden pleasure. He saw no such heinousness in it that Christ must die for it, nor that a Christless world be eternally tormented in hell. But *now* the case is altered: God has opened his eyes to see the inexpressible vileness of sin.

Christians are convinced of *their own misery* because of sin. Those who previously read the threats of God's law as men might read stories about foreign wars, now find that it is their *own* story. And they perceive their own doom, as if they found their names written in the curse, or heard the law say, as Nathan said to David, "*You are the man.*" ^{2Sam 12.7} Before, the wrath of God seemed like a storm to a man in a dry house, or like the pains of the sick to a healthy bystander. But now he finds that the disease is his own, and he feels he is a condemned man — that he is dead and damned as a point of law, and nothing is lacking but his execution to make him absolutely and irrecoverably miserable. This is a work of the Spirit, wrought in some measure in all the regenerate. Why would he come to Christ for pardon, if he didn't first find himself guilty and condemned? Or come to Him for life, if he never found himself spiritually dead? "The healthy do not need a physician, but those who are sick." ^{Mat 9.12} The discovery of the remedy as soon as the misery, must prevent a great part of the trouble. And perhaps the joyful apprehensions of mercy make the sense of misery sooner forgotten.

They are also convinced of *the creature's vanity and insufficiency*. Every man is naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall; and the creature has been our god ever since. This is the grand sin of our nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest place in his soul; or, if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his savior. Indeed, God and His Christ may be *called* "Lord and Savior," but the real expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit, and honor, are the natural man's trinity, and his carnal self is these three in unity. It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods; and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from generation to generation. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves; when he should be our Sovereign, we rule ourselves. The laws which he gives us, we find fault with, and would correct; and if we had made them, we would have made them otherwise. When God should take care of us (and *must*, or we perish), we would take care of ourselves. When we should depend on him in daily receiving, we would rather have our portion in our own hands. When we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel with it, and think we could make a better disposal than God has made. When we should study and love, trust and honor God, we study and love, trust and honor our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence be upon us, and all men's thanks returned to us; and we would gladly be the only men on earth who are extolled and admired by all. Thus we are naturally our own idols.

But down falls this Dagon once God renews the soul. ^{1Sam 5.3} It is the chief design of that great work, to bring the heart back to God himself. He convinces the sinner that the creature can neither be his God to make him happy, nor his Christ to recover him from his misery and restore him to the God who is his happiness. God does this not only by his word, but also by his providence. This is the reason why affliction so frequently concurs in the work of conversion. Arguments which speak to the quick, will force a hearing when the most powerful words are slighted. If a sinner made his credit his god, and God throws him into the lowest disgrace; or brings the one who idolized his riches, into a condition where his riches cannot help him, or causes them to take wing and fly away — what a help is here to this work of conviction! If a man makes pleasure his god — whatever a roving eye, curious ear, greedy appetite, or lustful heart could desire — and God takes these from him, or turns them into gall and wormwood, what a help is here to conviction! When God casts a man into languishing sickness, and inflicts wounds on his heart, and stirs his own conscience against him, and then says to him, as it were, "See if your reputation, riches, or pleasures can help you now. Can they heal your wounded conscience? Can they support your tottering tabernacle? Can they keep your departing soul in your body, or save you from my everlasting wrath, or redeem your soul from eternal flames? Cry aloud to them, and see what these will be to you

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

instead of God and Christ.” O how this renewal *now* works with the sinner! Sense acknowledges the truth, and even the flesh is convinced of the creature’s vanity, and our very deceiver is un-deceived.

The people of God are likewise convinced of the *absolute necessity, the full sufficiency, and perfect excellency of Jesus Christ*: as a man in famine is convinced of the necessity of food; or a man who has heard or read his sentence of condemnation, is convinced of the absolute necessity of pardon; or a man who lies in prison for debt, is convinced of his need for a surety to discharge it. Now the sinner feels an insupportable burden upon himself, and sees there is none but Christ who can take it off. He perceives that the law proclaims him a rebel, and none but Christ can make his peace. He is like a man pursued by a lion, who must perish if he doesn’t find a present sanctuary. He is now brought to this dilemma: either he must have Christ to justify him, or else be eternally condemned; he must have Christ to save him, or burn in hell forever; he must have Christ to bring him to God, or be shut out of His presence everlastingly! It is no wonder if he cries as the martyr did, “None but Christ! none but Christ!” It isn’t gold, but *bread* that will satisfy the hungry; nor will anything comfort the condemned, except pardon.

All things are counted but dung now, that he may win Christ; and what was gain, he counts loss for Christ. ^{Phi 3.8} Just as the sinner sees his misery, and the inability of himself and all things to relieve him, so he perceives that there is no saving mercy outside of Christ. He sees that, though the *creature* cannot help him, and he cannot help *himself*, *Christ* can help him. Though the fig leaves of our own unrighteous righteousness are too short to cover our nakedness, the righteousness of *Christ* is large enough. Ours is disproportionate to the justice of the law, but *Christ’s* extends to every tittle. If He intercedes, there is no denial. Such is the dignity of His person and the value of his merits, that the Father grants all he desires. *Before*, the sinner knew Christ’s excellency as a blind man knows the light of the sun; but *now* he knows as someone who beholds its glory.

5. After this deep conviction, the *will also manifests its change*. For instance, the sin which the *understanding* pronounces evil, the *will* turns away from with abhorrence. It isn’t that the sensitive appetite is changed, or in any way made to abhor its object. But when it would prevail against reason, and carry us to sin against God — instead of Scripture being the rule, and reason the master, and sense the servant — *the will* is what *abhors* this disorder and evil. The misery also, which sin has procured, is not only discerned, but bewailed. It is impossible for the soul to now look either on its trespass against God, or its own self-procured calamity, without some contrition. One who truly discerns that he has killed Christ and killed himself, will surely be pricked to the heart in some measure. If he cannot weep, he can heartily groan; his heart feels what his understanding sees. The creature is renounced as vanity, and turned out of the heart with disdain. It isn’t that the creaturely thing is undervalued, or the use of it condemned; what is condemned is its idolatrous abuse, and its unjust usurpation.

Can Christ be the *way*, where the creature is the *end*? Can we seek Christ to reconcile us to God, while in our hearts we prefer the creature before him? In the soul of every unregenerate man, the creature is both God and Christ. Just as turning from the creature to God, and not by Christ, is not true turning, so believing in Christ while the creature still has our hearts, is not true believing. Our aversion to sin, renouncing our idols, and rightly receiving Christ, is all but one work which God ever perfects where he begins it. At the same time, the will clings to God the Father, and to Christ. Having been convinced that nothing else can be his happiness, the sinner now finds it in God. Convinced also that Christ alone is able and willing to make peace for him, he most affectionately accepts Christ as his Savior and Lord. Paul’s preaching was “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” ^{Act 20.21} And life eternal consists *first*, in “knowing the only true God;” and *then* “Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.” ^{Joh 17.3} To take the Lord for our God is the natural part of the covenant; the *supernatural* part is to take Christ for our *Redeemer*. The former is necessary first, and implied in the latter. To accept Christ without affection and love, is not justifying faith; nor does love follow as a fruit, but it concurs immediately — for faith is receiving Christ with the whole soul. “He that loves father or mother more than Christ, is not worthy of him,” ^{Mat 10.37} nor is he justified by him. Faith accepts Christ as Savior *and* Lord: for he will be

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

received in both relations, or not at all. Faith not only acknowledges his sufferings, and accepts pardon and glory, but acknowledges His sovereignty, and submits to His government and way of salvation.

6. As an essential part of the character of God's people, they now *enter into a cordial covenant with Christ*. The sinner was never strictly nor comfortably been in covenant with Christ till now. He is sure by the free offers that *Christ* consents; and now he cordially consents *himself*; and so the agreement is fully made.¹⁴ With this covenant, Christ presents himself in all comfortable relations to the sinner; and the sinner presents himself to be saved and ruled by Christ. Now the soul resolutely concludes,

“I have for too long been blindly led by flesh and lust, by the world and the devil, almost to my utter destruction; I will now be wholly at the disposal of my Lord, who has bought me with his blood, and will bring me to his glory.”

7. I add that the people of God *persevere in this covenant to the end*. Though the believer may be tempted, he never disclaims his Lord, renounces his allegiance, nor repents of his covenant. Nor can he properly be said to break that covenant, while that faith continues which is the condition of it. Indeed, those who have *verbally* and not *cordially*¹⁵ covenanted, may tread underfoot as an unholy thing, the blood of the covenant with which they were sanctified; they have merely separated from those outside the church. But the elect cannot be so deceived. Though this perseverance is certain for true believers, it is made a *condition* of their salvation; indeed, it is a condition of their continued life and fruitfulness, and of the continuance of their justification — though not a condition of their initial justification itself. But, may that hand of love be eternally blessed which has drawn the free promise, and subscribed and sealed that which makes us certain of both the *grace*, which is the condition, and the *kingdom*, which is offered upon that condition!

Such are the essentials of this people of God — not a full portraiture of them in all their excellencies, nor all the marks by which they may be discerned. I beseech you, reader, as you have the hope of a Christian, or the reason of a man, judge yourself as one who must shortly be judged by a righteous God, and faithfully answer these questions. I will not inquire whether you remember the time or the order of these workings of the Spirit; there may be much uncertainty and mistake in that. If you are sure they are wrought in you, it is not so great a matter that you should know when or how you came by them. But carefully examine yourself, and inquire:

Have you been thoroughly convinced of a prevailing depravation through your whole soul, and a prevailing wickedness through your whole life, and how vile sin is — and that by the covenant which you have transgressed, the least sin deserves eternal death? Do you consent to the law, that it is true and righteous, and do you perceive that you are sentenced to death by it? Have you seen the utter insufficiency of every created thing, either to be your happiness, or the means of removing your misery? Have you been convinced that your happiness is only in God as the end, and in Christ as the way to Him, and that you must be brought to God through Christ, or else perish eternally? Have you seen an absolute necessity of enjoying Christ, and the full sufficiency in him to do for you whatever your case requires? Have you discovered the excellence of this pearl to be worth “selling all to buy it?” Have your convictions been like those of a man who *thirsts*, and not merely a change in opinion, produced by reading or education? Have both your sin and misery been the abhorrence and burden of your soul? If you could not weep, could you yet heartily groan under the insupportable weight of both? Have you renounced all your own righteousness? Have you turned your idols out of your heart, so that the creature no longer has the sovereignty, but is now a servant to God and Christ? Do you accept Christ as your only Savior, and expect your justification, recovery, and glory from him alone? Are his laws the most powerful commanders of your life and soul? Do they ordinarily prevail against the commands of the flesh, and against the greatest interest of your credit, profit, pleasure, or life?

¹⁴ Baxter has been describing the component parts of conversion. At this point, the will has professed Christ, through faith in the promises and person of Christ. This profession completes the conversion, and begins the covenant relationship. — WHG

¹⁵ *Cordial*: here it means heartfelt and sincerely.

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

Does Christ have the highest place in your heart and affections, so that, even though you cannot love him as you would, yet nothing else is loved so much? Have you, to this end, made a hearty covenant with him, and presented yourself to him? Is it your uttermost care and watchful endeavor that you may be found faithful in this covenant — and though you fall into sin, you would not renounce your bargain, nor change your Lord, nor give yourself up to any other government, for all the world?

If this is truly your case, then you are one of “the people of God” in my text; and as sure as the promise of God is true, this blessed rest remains for you. Only see yourself “abide in Christ,” and “endure to the end;” for “if any man draws back, his soul will have no pleasure in him.”^{Heb 10.38} But if no such work is found within you, whatever your deceived heart may think, or however strong your false hopes may be, you will find to your cost (unless thorough conversion you prevent it) that the *Rest of the Saints* does not belong to you. “O that you were wise, that you would understand this, that you would consider your latter end!”^{Deu 32.29} that while your soul is yet in your body, and “a price in your hand,”^{Pro 17.16} and opportunity and hope are before you, your ears may be open, and your heart yield to the persuasions of God, so that you may rest among his people, and enjoy “the inheritance of the saints in light!”^{Col 1.12}

That this rest will be enjoyed *by the people of God*, is a truth which the Scripture (if its testimony is further needed) clearly asserts in a variety of ways. For instance, that they are foreordained to it, and it for them. “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.”^{Heb 11.16} They are styled “vessels of mercy, prepared beforehand unto glory.”^{Rom 9.23} “In Christ they have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of his own will.”^{Eph 1.11} And “whom he predestined, he also glorified.”^{Rom 8.30} Who can deprive his people of that rest which is designed for them by God’s eternal purpose? Scripture tells us, they are redeemed to this rest. “By the blood of Jesus, we have boldness to enter into the holiest;”^{Heb 10.19} whether that entrance means by faith and prayer *here*, or by full possession *hereafter*. Therefore, the saints in heaven sing a new song to Him who has “redeemed them to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them kings and priests to God.”^{Rev 5.9-10} Either Christ, then, must lose his blood and sufferings, and never “see the travail of his soul,”^{Isa 53.11} or else “there remains a rest for the people of God.”^{Heb 4.9} In Scripture, this rest is *promised* to them. As the firmament [is adorned] with stars, so are the sacred pages bespangled with these divine engagements.

Christ says, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”^{Luk 12.32} “I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.”^{Luk 22.29-30} All the means of grace, the operations of the Spirit upon the soul, and the gracious actings of the saints — every command to repent and believe, to fast and pray, to knock and seek, to strive and labor, to run and fight — *prove* that there remains a rest for the people of God. The Spirit would never kindle in us such strong desires for heaven, such love to Jesus Christ, if we were not to receive what we desire and love. He that “guides our feet into the *way* of peace,”^{Luk 1.79} will undoubtedly bring us to the *end* of peace. How nearly are the means and end conjoined! “The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”^{Mat 11.12} Those who “follow Christ in the regeneration, will sit upon thrones of glory.”^{Mat 19.28} Scripture assures us that the saints have the “beginnings, foretastes, earnest, and seals” of this rest here. “Though they have not seen Christ, yet loving him, and believing in him, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.”^{1Pet 1.8-9} They “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”^{Rom 5.2} And would God “seal them with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of their inheritance,”^{Eph 1.13-14} and yet deny them the full possession of it? The Scripture also mentions by name, those who have entered into this rest, such as Enoch, Abraham, Lazarus, and the thief who was crucified with Christ. And if there is a rest for *these*, then surely there is a rest for *all* believers. But it is needless to bring together Scripture proofs, seeing that it is the very end of Scripture to be a guide, to lead us to this blessed state, and to be the charter and grant by which we hold all our title to it.

Scripture not only proves that this rest remains for the people of God, but that *it remains for none but them*; the rest of the world will have no part in it. “Without holiness no man will see the Lord.”^{Heb 12.14}

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

“Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Joh 3.3 “He that does not believe the Son, will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Joh 3.36 “No whoremonger, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Eph 5.5 “The wicked will be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Psa 9.17 “They will all be damned who do not believe the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2Th 2.12 “The Lord Jesus will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; they will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” 2Th 1.8-9

If the ungodly had turned back before their life expired, and been heartily willing to accept Christ for their Savior and their King, and to be saved by him in his way, and upon his most reasonable terms, they might have been saved. God freely offered them life, and they would not accept it. The pleasures of the flesh seemed more desirable to them than the glory of the saints. Satan offered them the one, and God offered them the other. They had free liberty to choose which they would have, and they chose “the pleasures of sin for a season,” Heb 11.25 above everlasting rest with Christ. Isn’t it a righteous thing that they should be denied what they would not accept? When God pressed them so earnestly, and persuaded them so importunately, to come in — and yet they would not — where should they be but among the dogs outside? Though man is so wicked that he won’t yield till the mighty power of grace prevails with him, yet we may still truly say that he may be saved “if he will,” on God’s terms. Exo 19.5 His inability being *moral*, and lying in wilful wickedness, is no more an excuse for him than it would be for an adulterer who cannot love his own wife, or a malicious person who cannot help but hate his own brother. Isn’t he so much the worse, and deserving of that much sorer a punishment? Sinners would forever in hell lay all the blame on their own wills. Hell is a rational torment by conscience, according to the nature of the rational subject. If sinners could say, “It was God’s fault, and not ours,” it would quiet their consciences and ease their torments; for them, hell would be no hell. But remembering their own wilfulness feeds the fire, and causes the worm of their conscience to “never to die.” Mar 9.44

It is the will of God that this rest remain yet ahead for his people, and *not be enjoyed till they come to another world*. Who should dispose of the creatures if not the one who made them? You may as well ask why we don’t have spring and harvest without winter, or why the earth is below and the heavens above, as to ask why we don’t have rest on earth? All things must come to their perfection by degrees. The strongest man must first be a child. The greatest scholar must begin with the alphabet. The tallest oak was once an acorn. This life is our infancy; would we be perfect in the womb, or born at full stature? If our rest was here, most of God’s providences would be useless. Should God lose the glory of his church’s miraculous deliverances, and of the fall of his enemies, that men may have their happiness here? If we were all happy, innocent, and perfect, what use would there be for the glorious work of our sanctification, justification, and future salvation? If we lacked nothing, we wouldn’t depend on God so closely, nor call upon him so earnestly. How little He would hear from us if we had what we wanted! God wouldn’t have had such songs of praise from Moses at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; from Deborah and Hannah; from David and Hezekiah — if they could have chosen their own condition.

Reader, haven’t your own highest praises to God been occasioned by your dangers or miseries? The greatest glory and praise God has throughout the world, is for redemption, reconciliation, and salvation by Christ. And wasn’t man’s misery the occasion for that praise? And where God loses the opportunity to exercise his mercies, man must lose the happiness of enjoying them. Where God loses his praise, man will certainly lose his comforts. O the sweet comforts the saints have had in return for their prayers! How would we know what a tender-hearted Father we have, if we hadn’t, like the prodigal, been denied the husks of earthly pleasure and profit? We would never have felt Christ’s tender heart if we hadn’t felt ourselves “weary and heavy laden, hungry and thirsty, poor and contrite.”¹⁶ It is a delight to a soldier or traveller to look back on his escapes, when they are over. And for a saint in heaven, to look back on his sins and sorrows on earth — his fears and tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities —

¹⁶ Mat 11.28; Psa 107.5; Isa 55.2.

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

must make his joy more joyful. Therefore, the blessed, in praising the Lamb, mention his “redeeming them out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue;” ^{Rev 5.9} and thus out of their misery, and wants, and sins, “and making them kings and priests to God.” ^{Rev 1.6} But if they had had nothing but contentment and rest *on earth*, what room would there have been for these rejoicings *hereafter*?

Besides, *we are not capable of rest upon earth*. Can a soul that is so weak in grace, so prone to sin, so nearly joined to such a neighbor as this flesh, have full contentment and rest in such a case? What is soul-rest, if not our freedom from sin, and imperfections, and enemies? And *can* the soul have rest, who is continually molested with all these? Why do Christians so often cry out, in the language of Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who will deliver me?” ^{Rom 7.24} What makes them “press toward the mark,” ^{Phi 3.14} and “run that they may obtain,” ^{1Cor 9.24} and “strive to enter in,” ^{Luk 13.24} if they are capable of rest in their present condition? And our *bodies* are incapable, as well as our souls. They are not now those sun-like bodies which they will be, when this “corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality.” ^{1Cor 15.41, 42, 53} They are our prisons and our burdens — so full of infirmities and defects that we spend most of our time in repairing them and supplying their continual wants. Is it possible that an immortal soul should have rest in such a disordered habitation? Surely these sickly, weary, loathsome bodies must be refined before they can be capable of enjoying rest. The objects which we enjoy here, are insufficient to afford us rest. Alas! What is there in all the world to give us rest? Those who most have rest in the world, have the greatest burden. Those who set most by it, and rejoice most in it, cry out at last, of its vanity and vexation. Men promise themselves a heaven on earth, but when they come to enjoy it, it flies from them. The one who has any regard for the works of the Lord, may easily see that their very end is to take down our idols, to make us weary of the world, and have us seek our rest in Him. Where does the Lord cross us most, if not where we promise ourselves the most contentment? If you have a child that you dote upon, it becomes your sorrow. If you have a friend that you trust in, and judge unchangeable, he becomes your scourge. Is *this* a place or state of rest?

Just as the objects we enjoy here are insufficient for our rest, so God, who *is* sufficient, is little enjoyed here. It is not here that He prepared the presence-chamber of his glory. He has drawn the curtain between us and him. We are far from him as creatures, and farther still as frail mortals, and farthest as sinners. We hear now and then a word of comfort from Him, and receive his love-tokens to keep up our hearts and hopes; but this is not our full enjoyment. And can any soul that has made God his portion (as everyone has that will be saved by him), find rest in so vast a distance from him, and so seldom and small an enjoyment of him?

Nor are we now *capable* of rest, as there is a worthiness that must go before it. Christ will give the crown to none but the worthy. Are we fit for the crown before we have overcome? or for the prize before we have run the race? or to receive our penny before we have worked in the vineyard? or to be rulers of ten cities before we have increased our ten talents? or to enter into the joy of our Lord before we have done well as good and faithful servants? God won't alter the course of justice to give you rest before you have labored, nor the crown of glory till you have overcome. There is reason enough why our rest should remain till the life to come. Take heed, then, Christian reader, how you dare to contrive and care for a rest on earth; or to murmur at God for your trouble, and toil, and wants in the flesh. Does your poverty weary you — your sickness, your bitter enemies and unkind friends? It *should* be so here. Do the abominations of the times, the sins of professors, the hardening of the wicked, all weary you? It must be so while you are absent from your rest. Do your sins and your naughty, distempered heart weary you? Be thus wearied more and more. But under all this weariness, are you willing to go to God, who is your rest; and to have your warfare accomplished, and your race and labor ended? If not, then complain more about your own heart, and get it *more* wearied, till rest seems more desirable.

I have but one more thing to add for the close of this chapter — that the souls of believers enjoy inconceivable blessedness and glory, *even while they remain separated from their bodies*. What can be plainer than these words of Paul: “We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home” (or rather, *sojourning*) “in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are

IV. Persons for Whom this Rest is Designed

confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” ^{2Cor 5.6-8} Or these: “I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” ^{Phi 1.23} If Paul had not expected to enjoy Christ till the resurrection, why should he be in a strait, or desire to depart? No, shouldn’t he have been loath to depart on the very same grounds? For while he was in the flesh, he enjoyed something of Christ. The words of Christ to the thief are plain enough — “Today will you be with me in paradise.” ^{Luk 23.43} In the parable of Dives ¹⁷ and Lazarus, ^{Luk 16.19 ff} it seems unlikely that Christ would so evidently intimate and suppose the soul’s happiness or misery shortly after death, if there were no such thing. Our Lord’s argument for the resurrection supposes that God, not being “the God of the dead, but of the living,” ^{Mat 22.32} Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were therefore *then* living in the soul. If the “blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord” ^{Rev 14.13} were only in resting in the grave, then a beast or a stone would be as blessed; indeed, it would evidently be a curse, and not a blessing. For wasn’t life a great mercy? Wasn’t it a greater mercy to serve God and do good; to enjoy all the comforts of life, the fellowship of saints, the comfort of ordinances, and much of Christ in all these, than to lie rotting in the grave? Therefore some *further* blessedness is promised there. How else is it said, “We have come to the spirits of just men made perfect?” ^{Heb 12.22} Surely at the resurrection, the *body* will be made perfect as well as the *spirit*. The Scriptures tell us that Enoch and Elijah are taken up already. And would we think they possess that glory alone? Didn’t Peter, James, and John see Moses also with Christ on the mount? Yet the Scripture says Moses died. And is it likely that Christ deluded their senses in showing them Moses, if he didn’t partake of that glory till the resurrection? And isn’t that instance of Stephen as plain as we can desire? “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ^{Act 7.59} Surely, if the Lord receives it, it is neither asleep, nor dead, nor annihilated; but it is where he is, and beholds his glory. That saying of the wise man has the same import: “The spirit will return to God who gave it.” ^{Ecc 12.7}

Why are we said to “have eternal life;” ^{1Joh 5.13} and that to “know God is life eternal;” ^{Joh 17.3} and that one who believes “on the Son has everlasting life?” ^{Joh 3.36} Or how is “the kingdom of God within us?” ^{Luk 17.21} If there is as great an interruption of our life as there is till the resurrection, then this is no eternal life, nor is it an “everlasting kingdom.” ^{2Pet 1.11} “The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah” are spoken of as “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire!” ^{Jude 1.7} If the wicked already suffer eternal fire, there is no doubt that the godly enjoy eternal blessedness. When John saw his glorious revelations, he is said to be “in the Spirit,” ^{Rev 1.10} and to be “carried away in the Spirit.” ^{Rev 17.3} And when Paul was “caught up to the third heaven,” he didn’t know “whether in the body or out of the body.” ^{2Cor 12.2} This implies that spirits are capable of these glorious things without the help of their bodies. The same is implied when John says, “I saw under the altar, the souls of those who were slain for the word of God.” ^{Rev 6.9} When Christ says, “Don’t fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul,” ^{Mat 10.28} does it not plainly imply that when wicked men have killed our bodies — that is, when they have separated the souls from them — the souls are still alive? The soul of Christ was alive when his body was dead; and therefore, so will ours. This appears by his words to the thief, “Today will you be with me in paradise;” and also by his voice on the cross, “Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit.” ^{Luk 23.46} If the spirits of those who “were disobedient in the days of Noah were in prison,” ^{1Pet 3.19-20} that is, in a living and suffering state, then certainly, the separated spirits of the just are in an opposite condition of happiness. Therefore, faithful souls will no sooner leave their prisons of flesh, than angels will be their convoy; Christ, and all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions; heaven will be their residence; and God will be their happiness. When such faithful souls die, they may boldly and believingly say, as Stephen did, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” ^{Act 7.58} and commend it as Christ did, into a Father’s hands. ^{Luk 23.46}

¹⁷ “Dives” is the name traditionally given to the rich man, in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. The name comes from Dante’s *Inferno*, in the first part of his *Divine Comedy* (14th c.).

CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT MISERY OF THOSE WHO LOSE THE SAINTS' REST.

I. *The loss of heaven includes, 1. The personal perfection of the saints; 2. God himself; 3. All delightful affections towards God; 4. The blessed society of angels and glorified spirits. II.* *The aggravations of the loss of heaven; 1. The understanding of the ungodly will then be made clear; 2. Also enlarged. 3. Their consciences will make a true and close application. 4. Their affections will be livelier. 5. Their memories will be large and strong.*

If you, reader, are a stranger to Christ, and to the holy nature and life of his people, who have been described, and will live and die in this condition, let me tell you: you will never partake of the joys of heaven, nor have the least taste of the saints' eternal rest. I may say, as Ehud said to Eglon, "I have a message for you from God;" ^{Jdg 3:20} — that as the word of God is true, you will never see the face of God in peace. I am commanded to pass this sentence upon you. Take it as you will, and escape it if you can. I know that your humble and hearty subjection to Christ would procure your escape; he would then acknowledge you as one of his people, and give you a portion in the inheritance of his chosen. If this might be the happy success of my message, I would be so far from complaining like Jonah, that the threatenings of God are not executed upon you, that I would *bless* the day that God ever made me so happy a messenger. But if you end your days in your unregenerate state, then as sure as the heavens are over your head and the earth under your feet, you will be shut out from the rest of the saints, and receive your portion in everlasting fire.

I expect that you will turn upon me and say, When did God show *you* the book of life, or tell *you* who those are that will be saved and who will be shut out? I answer, I don't name you or any other. I only conclude it about the unregenerate in general; but if you are such a one, then about you. Nor do I go about determining who will repent and who will not; much less, that you will *never* repent. I would rather show you what hopes you have before you, if you will not sit still and lose them. I would far rather persuade you to hearken in time, before the door is shut against you, than tell you there is no hope of your repenting and returning. But if the foregoing description of the people of God doesn't agree with the state of your soul, is it then a hard question whether you will ever be saved? Need I ascend into heaven to know that "without holiness no man will see the Lord;" ^{Heb 12:14} or that only "the pure in heart will see God;" ^{Mat 5:8} or that "unless a man is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"? ^{Joh 3:3} Need I go up to heaven to inquire of Christ what he came down to earth to tell us, and sent his Spirit in his apostles to tell us, and which he and they have left on record for all the world?

And though I don't know the secrets of your heart, and therefore cannot tell you by name, whether it is your state or not, if you are but willing and diligent, you may know for yourself whether you are an heir of heaven or not. It is the main thing I desire, that if you are still miserable, you may discern and escape it. But how can you escape if you neglect Christ and salvation? It is as impossible as it is for the devils themselves to be saved. Indeed, God has more plainly and frequently spoken in Scripture of such sinners as you are, than he has of the devils. I think a glimpse of your case would strike you with shock and horror. When Belshazzar "saw the fingers of a man's hand that wrote upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees struck one against the other." ^{Dan 5:5-6} What trembling, then, would seize *you*, who have the hand of God himself against you — not in a sentence or two, but in the very scope of the Scriptures — threatening the loss of an everlasting kingdom! Because I would gladly have you lay it to heart, I will show you *first*, the nature of your loss of heaven; and *secondly*, its aggravations.

I. *First*, in their loss of heaven, the ungodly lose the saints' personal perfection, God Himself, all delightful affections toward God, and the blessed society of angels and saints.

1. *The glorious personal perfection* which the saints enjoy in heaven, is the great loss of the ungodly. They lose that shining lustre of the body, surpassing the brightness of the sun at noonday. Though the bodies of the wicked will be raised more spiritual than they were on earth, that will only make them

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

capable of more exquisite torments. They would be glad then, if every member were a dead member, that it might not feel the punishment inflicted on it; and if the whole body were a rotten carcass, or it might lie down again in the dust. Much more, they lack that moral perfection which the blessed partake of — those holy dispositions of mind; that cheerful readiness to do the will of God; that perfect rectitude of all their actions. But instead of these, they have that perverseness of will, that loathing of good, that love of evil, that violence of passion, which they had on earth. It is true, their understandings will be greatly cleared by the ceasing of former temptations, and experiencing the falsehood of their former delusions. But they still have the same dispositions, and would gladly commit the same sins if they could; they lack only the opportunity. There will be a greater difference between these wretches and the glorified Christian, than there is between a toad and the sun in the firmament. “The rich man’s fine purple linen and sumptuous fare,” didn’t so exalt him above “Lazarus at his gate, full of sores.” Luk 16.19-20

2. They will have *no comfortable relation to God, nor communion with Him*. “As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,” Rom 1.28 but said to him, “Depart from us, for we do not desire the knowledge of your ways,” Job 21.14 so God will abhor retaining them in his household. He will never admit them to the inheritance of his saints, nor endure them standing in his presence; but he “will profess to them, I never knew you; depart from me, you who work iniquity.” Mat 7.23 They are ready *now* to lay as confident a claim to Christ and heaven, as if they were sincere, believing saints. The swearer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the worldling can say, ‘Isn’t God *our* Father as well as yours?’ But when Christ separates his followers from his foes, and his faithful friends from his deceived flatterers, where *then* will be their presumptuous claim? *Then* they will find that God is not their Father, because they would not be his people. As they would not consent to have God dwell in them by his Spirit, so the tabernacle of wickedness will have no fellowship with Him, nor the wicked inhabit the city of God. Only those who walked with God *here*, will live and be happy with him in *heaven*. Little does the world know what the loss is of that soul who loses God! What a dungeon the earth would be if it had lost the sun! What a loathsome carrion the body would be, if it had lost the soul! Yet all these are nothing compared to the loss of God. As the *enjoyment* of God is the heaven of the saints, so the *loss* of God is the hell of the ungodly; and as the enjoying of God is the enjoying of all, so the loss of God is the loss of all.

3. They also lose *all delightful affections toward God*: that transporting knowledge; those delightful views of his glorious face; the inconceivable pleasure of loving him; the apprehensions of his infinite love to us; the constant joys of his saints, and the rivers of consolation with which he satisfies them — is it nothing to lose all this? The employment of a king in ruling a kingdom, does not so far exceed that of the vilest slave, as this heavenly employment exceeds that of an earthly king. God suits men’s employment to their natures. Your hearts, sinners, were never set upon God in your lives, never warmed with his love, never longed after the enjoyment of him; you had no delight in speaking or hearing of him; you would rather have continued on earth, if you had known how, than to be interested in the glorious praises of God. Is it fitting, then, that you should be members of the celestial choir?

4. They will be deprived of *the blessed society of angels and glorified saints*. Instead of being companions of those happy spirits, and numbered with those triumphant kings, they must be driven down to hell, where they will have companions of a far different nature and quality. Scorning and abusing the saints, hating them, and rejoicing at their calamities, was not the way to obtain their blessedness. Now you are shut out of that company from which you first shut out yourselves; and you are separated from those with whom you would not be joined. You could not endure them in your houses, or towns, or scarcely in the kingdom. You took them, as Ahab took Elijah, for the “troublers of the land;” 1Kng 18.17 and as the apostles were taken for “men who turned the world upside down.” Act 17.6 If anything went amiss, you thought it was all owing to them. When they were dead or banished, you were glad they were gone, and thought the country well rid of them. They molested you by faithfully reproving your sins. Their holy conduct troubled your consciences to see them so far excel you. It was a vexation to you to hear them pray, or to sing praises in their families. And is it any wonder if you are separated from them hereafter? The day is near when they will trouble you no more. Between them and you, a great gulf will be fixed. Even in this life, while the saints were “mocked, destitute, afflicted,

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

tormented,” and though they had their personal imperfections, yet in the judgment of the Holy Ghost, they were men “of whom the world was not worthy.” ^{Heb 11.37-38} Much more will the world be unworthy of their fellowship in glory.

II. I know many are ready to think they could well enough spare having these things in this world; and why may they not be without them in the world to come? Therefore, to show them that this loss of heaven will *then* be most tormenting, let them *now* consider that their understandings will be cleared to know their loss, and have more enlarged apprehensions concerning it; their consciences will make a close application of it to themselves; and their affections will no longer be stupefied, nor their memories betray them.

1. *The understanding of the ungodly will then be cleared to know the worth of what they have lost.* Now they don't lament their loss of God, because they never knew his excellence, nor the loss of that holy employment and society — for they were never sensible of what they were worth. A man who has lost a jewel, thinking it was only a common stone, is never troubled at the loss. But once he knows what he has lost, he laments it. Though the understandings of the damned won't be sanctified, they will yet be cleared from a multitude of errors. They now think that their honors, estates, pleasures, health, and life are better worth their labor than the things of another world. But once these things have left them in misery — when they *experience* the things which before they had only read and heard about — they will be of another mind. They wouldn't believe that water would drown, till they were in the sea; nor that fire would burn, till they were thrown into it. But when they *feel*, they will easily believe. All that error of mind which made them set lightly by God, and abhor his worship, and vilify his people, will then be confuted and removed by experience. Their knowledge will be increased, so that their sorrows may be increased. Poor souls! They would be comparatively happy if their understandings were wholly taken from them, if they had no more knowledge than idiots or brutes. Or if they knew no more in hell than they did on earth, their loss would trouble them less. How happy they would think they are, if they didn't know there *is* such a place as heaven! *Now*, when their lack of knowledge helps to prevent their misery, they *will not* know, or won't read or study so that they *may* know. *Then*, when their knowledge only feeds their consuming fire, they *will* know, whether they want to or not. They are now in a dead sleep, and dream that they are the happiest men in the world. But when death awakes them, how their judgments will be changed in a moment! And those who *would* not see, will then see, and be ashamed.

2. Just as their understanding will be cleared, so it will be *more enlarged*, and made more capacious to conceive the worth of that glory which they have lost. The strength of their apprehensions, as well as the truth of them, will then be increased. What deep apprehensions of the wrath of God, the madness of sinning, and the misery of sinners, those souls will have who now endure this misery, compared to those on earth who only hear of it! What sensibility of the worth of life the condemned man has who is going to be executed, compared to what he had in the time of his prosperity! Much more will the actual loss of eternal blessedness make the damned exceedingly apprehensive of the greatness of their loss. Just as a large vessel holds more water than a shell, so their more enlarged understandings will contain more matter to feed their torment, than their shallow capacity can now contain.

3. Their *consciences*, also, will make a truer and closer application of this doctrine to themselves, which will tend to increase their torment exceedingly. It will then be no hard matter for them to say, “This is my loss! and this is my everlasting remediless misery!” The lack of this self-application is the main reason they are so little troubled now. They are hardly brought to believe that there *is* such a state of misery; but more hardly to believe that it is likely to be their own. This makes so many sermons lost on them, and all threatenings and warnings in vain. Let a minister of Christ show them their misery ever so plainly and faithfully, and they won't be persuaded that they are so miserable. Let him tell them of the glory they must lose, and the sufferings they must feel, and they will think he doesn't mean them, but some notorious sinners. It is one of the hardest things in the world to bring a wicked man to know that he is wicked, or to make him see himself in a state of wrath and condemnation. They may easily find, by their strangeness to the new birth and their enmity to holiness, that they were never partakers of them.

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

And yet they truly expect to see God and be saved, as if they were the most sanctified persons in the world. How seldom men cry out, after the plainest disclosure of their state, *'I am the man!'* or acknowledge that if they die in their present condition, they are undone forever! But when they suddenly find themselves in the land of darkness, and feel themselves in scorching flames, and see they are shut out of the presence of God forever, *then* applying God's anger to themselves will be the easiest thing in the world. *Then* they will roar out these forced confessions: "O my misery! O my folly! O my inconceivable, irrecoverable loss!"

4. Then their *affections* will likewise be *livelier* and no longer stupefied. A hard heart now makes heaven and hell seem but trifles. We have shown them everlasting glory and misery, and they are like men asleep. Our words are like stones thrown against a wall, which fly back in our faces. We talk of terrible things, but it is to dead men; we explore the wounds, but they never feel it; we speak to rocks rather than to men; the earth would as soon tremble as they. But when these dead souls have revived, what passionate sensibility, what working affections, what pangs of horror, what depths of sorrow there will then be! How violently they will denounce and reproach themselves! How they will rage against their former madness! The lamentations of the most affectionate wife for the loss of her husband, or of the tenderest mother for the loss of her children, will be nothing compared to theirs, lamenting the loss of heaven. O the self-accusing and self-tormenting fury of those forlorn creatures! How they will even tear their own hearts, and be God's executioners upon themselves! As they were the only meritorious cause of their own sufferings, so they will be their own chief executioners. Just as Satan was not so great a cause of their sinning as they were themselves, he will not be so great an instrument of their torment. How happy they would think themselves then, if they were turned into rocks, or into anything that had neither passion nor sense! How happy if they could then feel as lightly as they were prone to hear lightly! Or if they could sleep through the time of execution as they did through the time of the sermons that warned them of it! But their stupidity is gone: *it will not be.*

5. Their *memories*, moreover, will be as large and strong as their understanding and affections. If they could but lose the use of their memory, their loss of heaven (being forgotten) would little trouble them. Though they would consider annihilation a great mercy, they won't be able to lay aside any part of their being. Their understanding, conscience, affections, and memory, which should have helped their happiness, must all live to torment them. Just as they should have fed upon the love of God by these, and perpetually drawn forth the joys of His presence, so they must feed upon his wrath by these, and continually draw forth the pains of His absence. *Now* they have no leisure to consider, nor any room in their memories for the things of another life; but *then* they will have nothing else to do; their memories will have no other employment. God would have had the doctrine of their eternal state "written on the posts of their doors, on their hands and hearts." He would have them mind it, "and mention it when they lay down and rose up, when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way." ^{Deu 6.6-9} But seeing that they rejected this counsel of the Lord, it will therefore be written always before them in the place of their thralldom, ¹⁸ so that whichever way they look, they may still behold it. It will torment them to think of the greatness of the glory they have lost. If they could have spared it, or if it were a loss they could have repaired with anything else, it would have been a smaller matter. If it had been their health, or wealth, or friends, or life, it would have been nothing. But O! to lose that exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will also torment them to think of the possibility they once had of obtaining it. *Then* they will remember,

"There was a time when I was as fair for the kingdom as others. I was set upon the stage of the world. If I had believed in Christ, I might now have had possession of the inheritance. I who am now tormented with these damned fiends, might have been among yonder blessed saints. The Lord set before me life and death; and having chosen death, I deserve to suffer it. ^{Deu 30.19} The prize was held out before me. If I had run well, I might have obtained it. If I had striven, I might have had the victory. If I had fought valiantly, I would have been crowned."

¹⁸ *Thralldom*: a place of bondage; the state of being under the control of another person.

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

It will torment them even more to remember that obtaining the crown was not only *possible* for them, but very *probable*. It will wound them to think,

“I once had the gales of the Spirit ready to assist me. I was proposing to be another man, to have clung to Christ and forsaken the world. I was almost resolved to be wholly for God. I was once even turning from my base seducing lusts. I had cast off my old companions, and I was associating with the godly. Yet I turned back, lost my hold, and broke my promises. I was almost persuaded to be a real Christian, had I conquered those persuasions. What workings were in my heart when a faithful minister pressed home the truth! O how fair I once was for heaven! I almost had it, and yet I have lost it. If I had followed on to seek the Lord, I would now be blessed among the saints.”

It will exceedingly torment them to remember their *lost opportunities*.

“How many weeks, and months, and years did I lose, which if I had improved, I might now have been happy! Wretch that I was! Could I find no time to study the work for which I had all my time — no time among all my labors, to labor for eternity? Did I have time to eat, and drink, and sleep, and none to save my soul? Did I have time for mirth and vain discourse, and none for prayer? Could I take time to secure the world, and none to test my title to heaven? *O precious time!* I once had enough, and now I have no more. I once had so much I didn’t know what to do with it; now it is gone, and cannot be recalled. O that I had but one of those years to live over again! How speedily I would repent! How earnestly I would pray! How diligently I would hear! How closely I would examine my state! How strictly I would live! But now it is too late — alas! — too late.”

It will add to their calamity to remember *how often they were persuaded to return*.

“Gladly would the minister have had me escape these torments. With what love and compassion he beseeched me! And yet I made a jest of it. How often he convinced me! And yet I stifled all these convictions. How he opened my very heart to me! And yet I was loath to know the worst of myself. O how glad he would have been if he could have seen me cordially turn to Christ! My godly friends admonished me. They told me what would become of my wilfulness and negligence in the end — but I neither believed nor regarded them. How long God himself condescended to entreat me! How the Spirit strived with my heart, as if he was loath to take a denial! How Christ stood knocking, one Sabbath after another, crying out to me, ‘Open, sinner! Open your heart to your Savior, and I will come in and sup with you, and you with me! Why do you delay? How long will your vain thoughts lodge within you? Will you not be pardoned, and sanctified, and made happy? *When will it be?*’”

O how the recollection of such divine pleadings will passionately transport the damned with self-indignation!

“Must I tire out the patience of Christ? Must I make the God of heaven follow me in vain, till I have wearied him with crying out to me, *Repent! Return!* O how justly that patience has now turned into fury, which falls upon me with irresistible violence! When the Lord cried out to me, ‘Will you not be made clean? When will it be?’ my heart, or at least my practice answered, ‘*Never.*’ And now, when I cry out, ‘How long will it be till I am freed from this torment? how justly I receive the same answer, ‘*Never; never!*’”

It will also be most cutting to remember *on what easy terms they might have escaped their misery*. Their work was not to remove mountains, nor conquer kingdoms, nor fulfil the law to the smallest tittle, nor satisfy justice for all their transgressions. “The yoke was easy and the burden was light” which Christ would have laid upon them. It was but to repent and cordially accept him for their Savior; to renounce all other happiness, and take the Lord for their supreme good; to renounce the world and the flesh, and submit to his meek and gracious government; and to forsake the ways of their own devising, and walk in his holy, delightful way.

“Ah,” thinks the poor tormented wretch, “how justly I suffer all this. I wouldn’t take even small pains to avoid it! Where was my understanding when I neglected that gracious offer — when I called the

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

Lord ‘a hard master,’^{Mat 25.24} and thought his pleasant service was bondage, and the service of the devil and the flesh was my only freedom? Wasn’t I a thousand times worse than mad, when I censured the holy way of God as needless preciseness;¹⁹ when I thought the laws of Christ were too strict, and what I did for the life to come was too much? What would all my sufferings for Christ and well-doing have been, compared with these sufferings I must undergo forever? Wouldn’t the heaven which I have lost, have recompensed all my losses? And wouldn’t all my sufferings have been forgotten there? What if Christ had asked me to do some great matter — whether to live in continual fears and sorrows, or to suffer death a hundred times over — wouldn’t I have done it? How much more, when he said only, ‘Believe and be saved. Seek my face, and your soul will live. Take up your cross and follow me, and I will give you everlasting life.’ O gracious offer! O easy terms! O cursed wretch, who would not be persuaded to accept them!”

This too will be a most tormenting consideration, to remember *what they sold their eternal welfare for*. When they compare the value of sinful pleasures, with the value of “the recompense of reward,”^{Isa 62.11} how vast the disproportion will astonish them! To think of the low delights of the flesh, or the applauding breath of mortals, or possessing heaps of gold — and then to think of everlasting glory. “This is all I had in exchange for my soul, my God, and my hopes of blessedness!” It cannot possibly be expressed how these thoughts will tear his very heart. Then will he exclaim against his folly:

“O miserable wretch! Did I sell my soul for so base a price? Did I part with my God for a little dirt and dross, and sell my Savior, like Judas, for a little silver? I had but a dream of delight for my hopes of heaven. Now that I am awakened, it has all vanished. My morsels are now turned to gall, and my cups to wormwood. When they were past tasting, the pleasure perished. And is this all that I had for the inestimable treasure? What a mad exchange I made! What if I had gained all the world, and lost my soul! But alas! How small a profit it was from the world, for which I gave up heaven!”

O that sinners would think of this when they are swimming in the delights of the flesh, and studying how to be rich and honorable in the world! — when they are desperately venturing upon a known transgression, and sinning against the checks of their conscience!

It will add still more to their torment, when they consider that *they most wilfully procured their own destruction*. If they had been *forced* to sin, it would much abate the rage of their consciences; or if they were punished for another man’s transgressions, or if anyone else had been the chief author of their ruin. But this will be a cutting thought: to think it was the choice of their own will, and that no one in the world could have forced them to sin against their wills.

“Didn’t I have enough enemies in the world,” thinks this miserable creature, “that I must be an enemy to myself? God would never give the devil or the world, so much power over me as to force me to commit the least transgression. They could only *entice* me. I was the one who yielded and did the evil. Must I lay hands on my own soul, and imbrue my hands in my own blood? I never had so great an enemy as myself. God never offered any good to my soul that I did not resist him. He has heaped mercy upon me, and renewed one deliverance after another, to draw my heart to him. Indeed, he has gently chastised me, and made me groan under the fruit of my disobedience. And though I promised many things in my affliction, I was never heartily willing to serve Him.”

Thus will it gnaw the hearts of these sinners to remember that they were the cause of their own ruin, and that they wilfully and obstinately persisted in their rebellion, and were volunteers in the service of the devil.

The wound in their consciences will be yet deeper, when they remember not only that it was their own doing, but that *they took so much cost and pains for their own damnation*. What great undertakings they engaged in, to effect their own ruin: to resist the Spirit of God; to overcome the power of mercies, judgments, and even the word of God; to subdue the power of reason; and to silence their conscience!

¹⁹ *Precise*: characterized by perfect conformity to fact, truth, or rules of conduct; strictly correct.

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

They undertook and performed *all* this. Though they walked in continual danger of the wrath of God, and knew he could lay them in the dust, and throw them into hell in a moment, they still ran against all this. O, the labor it costs sinners to be damned! They might have had sobriety, with health and ease, at a cheaper rate — and yet they would rather have gluttony and drunkenness, with poverty, shame, and sickness. They might have contentment, with ease and delight — and yet they would rather have covetousness and ambition, though it costs them cares and fears, labor of body and distraction of mind. Though their anger is self-torment, and revenge and envy consume their spirits; though uncleanness destroys their bodies, estates, and good names — yet they would commit and suffer all this, rather than suffer their souls to be saved. With what rage they will lament their folly, and say,

“Was damnation worth all this cost and pains? Might I not have been damned free of cost, and not purchased it so dearly? I thought I could have been *saved* without so much ado; could I not have been *destroyed* without so much ado? Must I so laboriously work out my own damnation, when God commanded me to ‘work out my own salvation?’ ^{Phi 2.12} If I had done as much for heaven as I did for hell, I would surely have had it. I complained about the tedious way of godliness, and the painful course of self-denial — and yet I chose to be at a great deal more pains for Satan and for death. If I had loved Christ as strongly as I did my pleasures, and profits, and honors; and thought about him as often, and sought him as painfully, O how happy I would have been now! How justly I suffer the flames of hell for buying them so dear, rather than have heaven, when it was purchased for me!”

O that God would persuade you, reader, to take up these thoughts now, for preventing the inconceivable calamity of taking them up in hell as your own tormentor! Don’t say they are only imaginary. Read what Dives thought, being in torments. ^{Luke 16.19 ff} As the joys of heaven are chiefly enjoyed by the rational soul in its rational actings, so must the pains of hell be suffered. As they will still be men, so they will still feel and act as men.

V. The Misery of Those Who Lose this Rest

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISERY OF THOSE WHO, BESIDES LOSING THE SAINTS' REST, LOSE THE ENJOYMENTS OF TIME, AND SUFFER THE TORMENTS OF HELL.

I. The enjoyments of time which the damned lose: 1. Their presumptuous belief of their interest in God and Christ: 2. All their hopes; 3. All their peace of conscience; 4. All their carnal mirth; 5. All their sensual delights. II. The torments of the damned are exceedingly great: 1. The principal Author of them is God himself. 2. The place or state of torment. 3. These torments are the effects of divine vengeance. 4. God will take pleasure in executing them. 5. Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners. 6. These torments will be universal; 7. Without any mitigation; 8. And eternal. The obstinate sinner convinced of his folly in venturing on these torments; and entreated to fly for safety to Christ.

“Godliness has a promise of the life that now is, and of that life which is to come;” ^{1Tim 4.8} And if we “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” then all lesser “things will be added to us;” ^{Mat 6.33} So too, the ungodly are threatened with the *loss* both of spiritual and temporal blessings; and because they didn't seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, they will lose both that and what they *did* seek; and “what little they have will be taken from them.” ^{Mat 13.12} If they could only have kept their present enjoyments, they would not have cared much for the loss of heaven. If they had “lost and forsaken all for Christ,” ^{Mat 19.27} they would have found it all again in him; for he would have been *all in all* to them. But now that they have forsaken Christ for other things, they will lose Christ, and also that for which they forsook him — even the enjoyments of time, besides suffering the torments of hell.

I. First. They will lose the enjoyments of time, particularly their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favor of God and the merits of Christ; all their hopes; all their false peace of conscience; all their carnal mirth; and all their sensual delights.

1. They will lose *their presumptuous belief of their interest in the favor of God and the merits of Christ.* This false belief now supports their spirits, and defends them from the terrors that would otherwise seize them. But what will ease their trouble when they can no longer believe this falsehood, nor rejoice? If a man is near the greatest mischief, and yet strongly conceives that he is safe, he may be just as cheerful as if all were well. If it took no more to make a man happy than to believe that he is or will be happy, then happiness would be far more common than it is. Just as true faith is the leading grace in the regenerate, so false faith is the leading vice in the unregenerate. Why do such multitudes sit still when they might be pardoned, if not that they truly think they are pardoned already? If you could ask thousands in hell, what madness brought them there, most of them would answer, “We thought we were sure of being saved, till we found ourselves damned. We would have been more earnest seekers of regeneration and the power of godliness, but we truly thought we were Christians already. We flattered ourselves into these torments, and now there is no remedy.” Reader, I must in faithfulness tell you that the confident belief of their good estate, which the careless, unholy, unhumiliated multitude so commonly boast of, will prove in the end but a soul-damning delusion. There is none of this believing in hell. It was Satan's stratagem that, being blindfolded, they might now follow him more boldly; but *then* he will uncover their eyes, and they will see where they are.

2. They will also lose *all their hopes.* In this life, though threatened with the wrath of God, their hope of escaping it bore up their hearts. We can now scarcely speak with the vilest drunkard, or swearer, or scoffer, who doesn't hope to be saved despite all this. O happy world, if salvation were as common as this hope! Indeed, men's hopes are so strong that they will dispute the cause with Christ himself at the judgment, and plead they “ate and drank in his presence, and prophesied in his name, and in his name cast out devils.” ^{Mat 7.22} They will stiffly deny that they ever neglected Christ in hunger, nakedness, or in prison, till he confutes them with the sentence of their condemnation. ^{Mat 25.35-36} O the sad state of those men when they must bid farewell to all their hopes! “When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish; and the hope of unjust men perishes.” ^{Pro 11.7} “The eyes of the wicked will fail, and they will not escape, and their hope will be like giving up the ghost.” ^{Job 11.20} Giving up the ghost is a fit but terrible picture of a wicked man giving up his hopes. As the soul does not depart from the body without the

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

greatest pain, so the hope of the wicked departs. The soul departs from the body suddenly, in a moment, though it delightfully continued there so many years; just so, the hope of the wicked departs. The soul will never again return to live with the body in this world; and the hope of the wicked takes an everlasting farewell of his soul. ^{Heb 9.27} A miracle of resurrection will again unite soul and body, but there will be no such miraculous resurrection of the damned's hope. I think it is the most pitiable sight this world affords, to see such an ungodly person dying, and to think of his soul and his hopes departing together. With what a sad change he appears in another world! If a man could then but ask that hopeless soul, "Are you as confident of salvation as you used to be?" what a sad answer would be returned! O, that careless sinners would be awakened to think of this in time! Reader, don't rest till you can give a reason for all your hopes, grounded upon Scripture promises — that they purify your heart; that they quicken your endeavors in godliness; that the more you hope, the less you sin, and the more exact is your obedience. If your hopes are such as these, go on in the strength of the Lord, hold fast to your hope, and "it will never make you ashamed." ^{Rom 9.33} But if you haven't one sound evidence of a work of grace on your soul, throw away your hopes. Despair of ever being saved, "unless you are born again;" ^{Joh 3.3} or of "seeing God, without holiness;" ^{Heb 12.14} or of having a part in Christ, unless you "love him above father, mother, or your own life." ^{Joh 13.8; Luk 14.26}

This kind of despair is one of the first steps to heaven. If a man is quite out of his way, what must be the first means to bring him into it again? He must despair of ever coming to his journey's end in the way that he is in. If his home is eastward and he is going westward, as long as he hopes he is right, he will continue going the wrong way; and as long as he goes on hoping so, he goes further amiss. When he despairs of ever coming home unless he turns back, then he will return, and then he may hope. Sinner, it is just so with your soul. You were born out of the way to heaven, and thus you have proceeded many a year. You go on and hope to be saved, because you are not so bad as many others. Unless you throw away those hopes, and see that all this while you have been quite out of the way to heaven, you will never return and be saved. There is nothing in the world more likely to keep your soul out of heaven, than your false hopes of being saved while you are out of the way to salvation. See, then, how it aggravates the misery of the damned, that along with the loss of heaven, they will lose all that hope of it which now supports them.

3. They will lose *all that false peace of conscience which makes their present life so easy*. Who would think, observing how quietly the multitude of the ungodly live, that they must very shortly lie down in everlasting flames? They are as free from the fears of hell as an obedient believer; and for the most part, their mind is less disquieted than those who will be saved. How happy men would be if this peace proved to be lasting! "When they say, 'Peace and safety,' sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail comes upon a woman with child; and they will not escape." ^{1Th 5.3} O cruel peace, which ends in such a war! The soul of every man by nature is Satan's garrison. All is at peace in such a soul till Christ comes and gives it terrible alarms of judgment and hell, batters it with the ordnance of his threats and terrors, forces it to yield to his mere mercy, and takes Him for its Governor. Then He casts out Satan, "overcomes him, takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils," ^{Luk 11.22} and then He establishes a firm and lasting peace. If, therefore, you are still in that first peace, never think it will endure. Can your soul have lasting peace in enmity with Christ? Can someone have peace, against whom God proclaims war? I wish you no greater good than that God breaks in upon your careless heart, and shakes you out of your false peace, and makes you lie down at the feet of Christ, saying, "Lord, what would you have me do?" ^{Luk 10.25} And so you will receive from him a better and surer peace, one which will never be fully broken but will be the beginning of your everlasting peace. It will not perish in your perishing, as the groundless peace of the world will do.

4. They will lose *all their carnal mirth*. They will say of their "laughter, 'It is madness;'" and of their mirth, "What does it accomplish?" ^{Ecc 2.2} It was but "the crackling of thorns under a pot." ^{Ecc 7.6} It made a blaze for a while, but it was quickly gone, and returned no more. The talk of death and judgment was irksome to them, because it damped their mirth. They could not endure to think of their sin and danger because these thoughts sunk their spirits. They didn't know what it was to weep for sin, or to humble

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

themselves under the mighty hand of God. ^{1Pet 5.6} They could laugh away sorrow, and sing away cares, and drive away those melancholy thoughts. They fancied that to meditate and pray would be enough to make them miserable, or run them mad. Poor souls! What a misery that life will be where you have nothing but sorrow — intense, heart piercing, multiplied sorrow — when you have neither the joys of saints nor your own former joys! Do you think there is one merry heart in hell, or one joyful countenance, or jesting tongue? You now cry, ‘a little mirth is worth a great deal of sorrow.’ But surely a little godly sorrow which ended in eternal joy, would have been worth much more than all your foolish mirth; for the end of such mirth is sorrow. ^{Pro 14.13}

5. They will also lose *all their sensual delights*. What they esteemed their chief good, their heaven, their god, they must lose, as well as God himself. What a fall the proud ambitious man will have from the height of his honors! ^{Pro 16.18} Just as his dust and bones will not be distinguished from the dust and bones of the poorest beggar, neither will his soul be honored or favored more than theirs. What a number of the great, noble, and learned will be shut out from the presence of Christ! They won’t find their magnificent buildings, soft beds, and easy couches. They won’t view their elegant gardens, their pleasant meadows, and plenteous harvests. Their tables won’t be so furnished or attended. The rich man there is no longer “clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day.” ^{Luk 16.19} There is no expecting the admiration of beholders. They will spend their time in sadness, and not in sports and pastimes. What an alteration they will then find! The heat of their lust will then be abated. How it will cut them to the heart to look each other in the face! What an interview there will be then, cursing the day they ever saw one another! O that sinners would *now* remember and say, “Will these delights accompany us into the other world? Won’t the remembrance of them then be our torment? Will we then take this partnership in vice for true friendship? Why should we sell such lasting incomprehensible joys for a taste of seeming pleasure? Come, as we have sinned together, let us pray together that God would pardon us; and let us help one another toward heaven, instead of helping to deceive and destroy each other.” O if men only knew what they are desiring, when they would so gladly have all things suited to the desires of their flesh! It is only to desire that their temptations be increased, and their snares strengthened.

II. Secondly. Just as the loss of the *Saints’ Rest* will be aggravated by losing the enjoyments of time, it will be much more so by suffering the torments of hell. The exceeding greatness of such torments may appear by considering the principal Author of them, who is God himself; the place or state of torment; that these torments are the fruit of divine vengeance; that the Almighty takes pleasure in them; that Satan and sinners themselves will be God’s executioners; and that these torments will be universal, without mitigation and without end.

1. The *principal author* of hell-torments is God himself. Just as it was no less than God whom sinners had offended, so it is no less than God who will punish them for their offences. He has prepared those torments for his enemies. His continued anger will still be devouring them. His breath of indignation will kindle the flames. His wrath will be an intolerable burden to their souls. If it were but a creature they had to deal with, they might better bear it. But woe to him who falls under the blows of the Almighty! “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” ^{Heb 10.31} It would be nothing in comparison to this, if all the world were against them, or if the strength of all creatures were united in one to inflict their penalty. *Now* they would rather risk displeasing God, than to displease a landlord, a customer, a master, a friend, a neighbor, or their own flesh; but *then* they will wish a thousand times in vain, that they had been hated by all the world, rather than to have lost the favor of God. What a consuming fire is his wrath! If it is kindled just a little here, we “wither like grass!” ^{Psa 37.2} How soon our strength decays and turns to weakness, and our beauty turns to deformity! The flames don’t so easily run through the dry stubble, as the wrath of God will consume these wretches. Those who couldn’t bear a prison, or a gallows, or a fire for Christ (or scarcely a few scoffs) — how will they bear the devouring flames of Divine wrath?

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

2. The *place or state of torment* is purposely ordained to glorify the justice of God. When God would glorify his power, he made the worlds. The attractive order of all his creatures declares his wisdom. His providence is shown in sustaining all things. When a spark of his wrath kindles on the earth, the whole world, except for eight persons, are drowned; Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, are burnt with fire from heaven; the sea shuts her mouth on some, and the earth opens and swallows others; pestilence destroys by the thousands. What a standing witness of the wrath of God is the present deplorable state of the Jews! Yet the glorifying of the mercy and justice of God is intended most eminently for the life to come. Just as God will then glorify his mercy in a way that is now beyond the comprehension of the saints who must enjoy it, so also He will manifest his justice to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell won't be thought too hot for the rebellious. And when they have burned there through millions of ages, He won't regret the evil which has befallen them. Woe to the soul that is thus the object of the wrath of the Almighty, like a bush that must burn in the flames of His jealousy and never be consumed!

3. The torments of the damned must be extreme, because they are the *effect of divine vengeance*. Wrath is terrible, but vengeance is implacable. When the great God says, "My rebellious creature will now pay for all the abuse of my patience. Remember how I awaited your leisure in vain, how I stooped to persuade and entreat you. Did you think I would always be so slighted?" Then he will be avenged for every abused mercy, and for all their neglects of Christ and grace. O that men would foresee this, and please God better in preventing their woe!

4. Consider also, though God would rather have men accept Christ and mercy, yet when they persist in rebellion, *He will take pleasure in their execution*. He tells us, "Fury is not in me;" and yet he adds, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together." ^{Isa 27.4} Wretched creatures! "He that made them will not have mercy upon them, and he that formed them will show them no favor." ^{Isa 27.11} "As the Lord rejoiced over them to do them good, so the Lord will rejoice over them to destroy them and bring them to nothing." ^{Deu 28.63} Woe to the souls whom God rejoices to punish: "He will laugh at their calamity; he will mock when their fear comes — when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon them." ^{Pro 1.26-27} It is a terrible thing when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and He *rejoices* in their calamity! Though Scripture speaks of God's laughing and mocking, it is not literally, but in the manner of men. Yet, it is an *act of God* in tormenting the sinner, which cannot otherwise be more fitly expressed.

5. Consider that *Satan and sinners themselves will be God's executioners*. The one who was so successful here in drawing them away from Christ, will then be the instrument of their punishment for yielding to his temptations. That is the reward he will give them for all their service — for their rejecting the commands of God, forsaking Christ, and neglecting their souls at his persuasion. If they had served Christ as faithfully as they did Satan, Christ would have given them a better reward. It is also most just that they should be their own tormentors. They may see that their whole destruction is of themselves; and then, who can they complain about but themselves?

6. Consider also that their torment will be *universal*. Because all parts have joined in sin, so they must all partake in the torment. ²⁰ The soul, as it was chief in sinning, will be chief in suffering; and as it has a more excellent nature than the body, so its torments will far exceed bodily torments. And as its joys far surpass all sensual pleasures, so the pains of the soul exceed corporeal pains. It is not just a soul, but a *sinful* soul that must suffer. Fire won't burn unless the fuel is combustible; but if the wood is dry, how fiercely it will burn! For damned souls, the guilt of their sins will be like tinder to gunpowder, making the flames of hell take hold of them with fury. The body must also bear its part. The body, which was so carefully looked to, so tenderly cherished, so ornately dressed — what it must now endure! How its haughty looks are now brought down! How little those flames will regard its attractiveness and beauty!

²⁰ Alluding to previous chapters, describing how body and soul, with their corrupted faculties of desire, sense, understanding, will, conscience, affections, and memory, are all involved in sin; thus, all must be involved in the punishment of sin. — WHG

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

Those eyes which were prone to be delighted with curious sights, must then see nothing but what will terrify them: an angry God above them, with those saints whom they scorned, now enjoying the glory which they themselves have lost; and about them will be only devils and damned souls. How they will look back and say, 'Have all our feasts, games, and revels come to this?' Those ears which were accustomed to music and songs, will hear the shrieks and cries of their damned companions; children crying out against their parents, who gave them encouragement and examples in evil; husbands and wives, masters and servants, ministers and people, magistrates and subjects, charging their misery upon one another — for discouraging in duty, conniving at sin, and being silent when they should have plainly foretold the danger. Thus soul and body will be companions in woe.

7. These torments will be far greater, because they are *without mitigation*. In this life, when told of hell, or if their conscience has troubled their peace, they had comforters at hand: their carnal friends, their business, their company, their mirth. They could drink, play, or sleep away their sorrows. But now, all these remedies are vanished. Their hard, presumptuous, unbelieving heart was a wall to defend them against trouble of mind. Satan himself was their comforter, as he was to our first mother: "Has God said, you shall not eat? You will *not* surely die." Gen 3.1, 4 "Did God tell you that you will die in hell? There is no such thing," he tells us. "God is more merciful than that. Or, if there is a hell, you don't need to fear it. Aren't you a Christian? Wasn't the blood of Christ shed for you?" Thus, just as the Spirit of Christ is the Comforter of the saints, so Satan is the comforter of the wicked. Never was a thief more careful lest he awaken the people when robbing their house, than Satan is careful not to awaken a sinner. But when the sinner is dead, then Satan is done flattering and comforting. Which way *then* will the forlorn sinner look for comfort? Those who drew him into the snare, and promised him safety, now forsake him, and they are forsaken themselves. His comforts are gone; and the righteous God whose forewarnings he made light of, will now make good His word against him to the last tittle.

8. But the greatest aggravation of these torments will be their *eternity*. When a thousand million ages are past, they are as fresh to begin as the first day. If there was any hope of an end, it would ease the damned to foresee it; but *forever* is an intolerable thought! They were never weary of sinning, nor will God be weary of punishing. They never heartily repented of sin, nor will God repent of their suffering. They broke the laws of the eternal God, and therefore they will suffer eternal punishment. They knew it was an everlasting kingdom which they refused; is it any wonder that they are everlastingly shut out of it? Their immortal souls were guilty of the trespass, and therefore they must immortally suffer the pains. What happy men they would think themselves, if they might still have lain in their graves, or might but lie down there again! How they will call and cry, "O death, where have you gone? Come now and cut off this doleful life. O that these pains would break my heart, and end my being! O that I might at last die! O that I never had a being!" Thoughts of eternity will wring these groans from their hearts. They used to think sermons and prayers were long; how long will they think these endless torments are then! What difference is there between the length of their pleasures and their pains! The one continued but a moment; the other endures through all eternity. Sinner, remember how time is almost gone. You are standing at the door of eternity; and death is waiting to open the door and put you in. Go, sleep out a few more nights; stir about a few more days on earth; then your nights and days will end. Your thoughts, cares, and pleasures will all be devoured by eternity — you must enter the state which will never be changed. Just as the joys of heaven are beyond our conception, so are the pains of hell. Everlasting torment is inconceivable torment.

But I think I see the obstinate sinner desperately resolving, "If I must be damned, there is no remedy. Rather than live as the Scripture requires, I will risk it. I will escape as well as the rest of my neighbors, and we will bear it as well as we can." Alas! poor creature. Let me beg this of you before you so resolve: lend your attention to a few questions, and weigh them with the reason of a man. Who are you to bear the wrath of God? What is your strength? Isn't it like the strength of wax or stubble resisting the fire, or like chaff to the wind, or like dust in a fierce whirlwind? If your strength were like iron, and your bones like brass — if your foundation were like the earth, and your power like the heavens — you would still perish at the breath of His indignation. How much more, when you are but a piece of breathing clay,

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

kept a few days from being eaten with worms, by the mere support and favor of the One whom you are thus resisting! Why do you tremble at the mere *signs* of His almighty power and wrath? — at peals of thunder or flashes of lightning; or at that unseen power which tears mighty oaks in pieces, and tears down the strongest buildings; or at the plague when it rages around you? If you had seen the plagues of Egypt, or seen the earth swallow up Dathan and Abiram, ^{Num 16.27-31} or Elijah bringing fire from heaven to destroy the captains and their companies, ^{2Kng 1.10} would none of these sights have daunted your spirit? How then can you bear the plagues of hell? Why are you dismayed by such small sufferings as befall you here: a toothache, a fit of the gout or stone, the loss of a limb, or falling into beggary and disgrace? And yet, all these laid together will one day be considered a happy state compared to what is suffered in hell.

Why does the approach of death frighten you so much? O how cold it strikes at your heart! Wouldn't the grave be considered a paradise compared to that place of torment which you slight? Isn't it an intolerable thing to burn part of your body by holding it in the fire? What will it be like then, to suffer ten thousand times more, forever in hell! If the thought or mention of hell disquiets your spirit, then how can you endure the torments themselves? Why does the rich man complain to Abraham about his torments in hell? Why do your dying companions lose their courage, and change their haughty language? Why can't they make as light of hell as you do? Did you never see or speak with a man in despair? How *uncomfortable* his talk was! How *burdensome* his life! Nothing he possessed did him any good; he had no sweetness in his food or drink; the sight of friends troubled him; he was weary of life, and fearful of death. If the misery of the damned could be endured, then why can't a man more easily endure these *foretastes* of hell? What if you were to see the devil appear to you in some terrible shape! Wouldn't your heart fail you, and your hair stand on end? And how will you endure living forever where you will have no other company but devils and the damned — and not only *see* them, but be tormented *with* them and *by* them? Let me ask once more, if the wrath of God is so light, why did the Son of God make so great a matter of it? It caused "his sweat to be, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground." ^{Luk 22.44} The Lord of life cried, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." ^{Mat 26.38} And on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ^{Mat 2.46} Surely if anyone could have borne these sufferings easily, it would have been Jesus Christ. He had another measure of strength to bear it with than you have. Woe to you, sinner, for your mad security! Do you think what was so heavy for Christ to bear, will be tolerable to you? No, the Son of God is thrown into a bitter agony and bloody sweat, only under the curse of the *law*. And yet *you* — feeble, foolish creature — you think it nothing to also bear the curse of the *Gospel*, which requires a "much sorer punishment." ^{Heb 10.29} May the good Lord bring you to your right mind by repentance, lest you buy your wit at too dear a price!

And now, reader, I demand your resolution. What use will you make of all this? Will it be lost on you? Or will you consider it in good earnest? You have thrown away many a warning from God; will you do the same with this? Take heed: God will not always stand warning and threatening. The hand of vengeance is lifted up; the blow is coming; and woe to him on whom it falls! Will you throw away the book, saying that it speaks of nothing but hell and damnation? This is how you also used to complain of the preacher. But wouldn't you have us tell you about these things? Should we be guilty of the blood of your soul by keeping silent about what God has charged us to make known? Would you perish in ease and silence, and have us perish with you, rather than displease you by speaking the truth? If you would be guilty of such inhuman cruelty, God forbid that we should be guilty of such sottish folly! This kind of preaching or writing is a ready way to be hated; and the desire for applause is so natural, that few delight in such a displeasing way.

But consider: *are these things true, or not?* If they aren't true, I would heartily join you against anyone who frightens people without cause. But if these threatenings are the word of God, then what a wretch you are, if you will not hear and consider it! If you are one of the people of God, this doctrine will be a comfort to you, and not a terror. If you are still unregenerate, I think you should be as fearful to hear of heaven as hell, unless the bare mention of heaven or salvation is sufficient. Preaching heaven and mercy to you, is entreating you to seek them, and not reject them; and preaching hell is but to persuade you to

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

avoid it. If you were quite past hope of escaping it, then it would be in vain to tell you about hell. But as long as you are alive, *there is hope of your recovery*. And therefore, all means must be used to awaken you from your lethargy. Alas! what heart can now possibly conceive, or what tongue can express, the pains of those souls who are under the wrath of God!

Then, sinners, you will cry out to Jesus Christ, “O mercy! O pity, pity on a poor soul!” Well, I now cry out to you in the name of the Lord Jesus, “O have mercy, have pity on your own soul!” Will God pity you, if you won’t be entreated to pity yourself? If your horse sees but a pit before him, you can scarcely force him in — and will you so obstinately throw yourself into hell, when the danger is foretold to you? “Who can stand before the indignation of the Lord? Who can abide the fierceness of his anger?” ^{Nah 1.6} I think you need no more words, but should quickly toss away your soul-damning sins, and wholly deliver yourself to Christ. Resolve to do it immediately, and let it be done, that I may see your face in rest among the saints. May the Lord persuade your heart to strike this covenant without any longer delay! But if you are hardened unto death, and there is no remedy, don’t say on another day, that you weren’t faithfully warned, but had a friend who would gladly have prevented your damnation.

VI. The Misery of Those Who Suffer the Torments of Hell

CHAPTER VII.

THE NECESSITY OF DILIGENTLY SEEKING THE SAINTS' REST.

The Saints' Rest is surprisingly neglected. The author mourns that neglect, and excites the reader to diligence, by considering, 1. The ends we aim at, the work we have to do, the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and the diligence of our enemies; 2. Our talents, mercies, relations to God, and our afflictions; 3. What assistance we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty never to do enough; 4. That every grace tends to diligence, and to trifle is lost labor; that much time is misspent, and that our recompense and labor will be proportionate; 5. That striving is the divine appointment; all men do or will approve it; the best Christians, at death, lament their want of it; heaven is often lost for want of it, but never obtained without it; 6. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are in earnest; God is so in hearing and answering prayer; ministers in their instructions and exhortations; all the creatures in serving us; sinners in serving the devil in worldly things, as we once were, and now are; and in heaven and hell, all are in earnest.

If there is so certain and glorious a rest for the saints, why isn't there more earnestness in seeking it? One would think, if a man but once heard of such unspeakable glory to be obtained, and believed what he heard, he would be transported after it with the vehemence of his desire. He would almost forget to eat and drink, and care for nothing else, and speak of and inquire about nothing else, except how to get this treasure. And yet people who hear of it daily, and profess to believe it as a fundamental article of their faith, mind it or labor for it as little as if they never heard of any such thing, or didn't believe one word they did hear of it. This reproof is applicable to the worldly-minded, to the profane multitude, to formal professors, and even to the godly themselves.

The *worldly-minded* are so taken up in seeking things below, that they have neither heart nor time to seek this rest. O foolish sinners, "who has bewitched you?" Gal 3.1 The world bewitches men into brute beasts, and draws them even to madness. See what riding and running there is, what scrambling and catching for what amounts to nothing, while eternal rest lies neglected! What contriving and caring to get a step higher in the world than their brothers, while they neglect the kingly dignity of the saints! What insatiable pursuit of fleshly pleasures, while they regard the praises of God, and the joy of angels, as a tiresome burden! What unwearied diligence in raising their posterity, enlarging their possessions (perhaps for a poor living from hand to mouth), while judgment is drawing near! But how it will go with them *then*, never brings them to one hour's consideration *now*! They rise early and stay up late, and labor from year to year to maintain themselves and their children in credit till they die! But they never think about what will follow *after*! Yet these men cry, "May we not be saved without so much ado?" How early they rouse their servants to their labor! But how seldom they call them to prayer, or to reading the Scriptures!

What has this world done for its lovers and friends, that it is so eagerly followed and painfully sought after, while Christ and heaven are neglected? Or what will the world do for them in the time to come? The common entrance into life is through anguish and sorrow. The passage through it is with continual care and labor. The passage out of it is the sharpest of all. O unreasonable, deluded men! Will mirth and pleasure stay by you? Will gold and worldly glory prove fast friends to you in the time of your greatest need? Will they hear your cries in the day of your calamity? At the hour of your death, will they either answer or relieve you? Will they go along with you into the other world, and bribe the Judge and bring you off clear, or purchase for you a place among the blessed? Why then did the rich man want "a drop of water to cool his tongue?" Luk 16.24 Are the sweet morsels of present delight and honor of more worth than eternal rest? And will they recompense for the loss of that enduring treasure? Can there be the least hope of any of these? Ah, vile, deceitful world! How often have we heard your most faithful servants at last complaining, "O, the world has deceived me, and undone me! It flattered me in my prosperity, but now it turns away in my necessity. If I had as faithfully served Christ as I served the world, he wouldn't have left me thus comfortless and hopeless." Thus they complain; and yet succeeding sinners take no warning from it.

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

As for the *profane multitude*, they won't be persuaded to take such pains for salvation as to perform the common outward duties of religion. If they have the Gospel preached in the town where they dwell, they may give one part of the day to hearing it, and stay at home the rest. Or if the master comes to the congregation, part of his family stays at home. If they don't have the plain and powerful preaching of the Gospel, how few there are in a whole town, who will travel a mile or two to hear — though they will go many miles to the market for provisions for their bodies! They know the Scripture is the law of God, by which they must be acquitted or condemned in the judgment; and that "the man is blessed who delights in the law of the Lord," Psa 112.1 and "in his law he meditates day and night." Psa 1.2 Yet they won't take pains to read a chapter once a day. If they carry a Bible to church, and neglect it all week, this is the most use they make of it. Though they are commanded to pray without ceasing, and to pray always, yet they neither pray constantly in their families, nor in secret. Daniel would rather be thrown to the lions than forbear praying three times a day in his house, where his enemies might hear him. Yet these men would rather risk being an eternal prey to Satan, the roaring lion, than to thus seek their own safety. Or their cold and heartless prayers invite God to deny them. For among men it is taken for granted that someone who asks but little, and seldom, doesn't care much for what he asks. Those who think it isn't worth their more constant and earnest requests, judge themselves unworthy of heaven.

If every door was marked where families don't earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, morning and evening, and His wrath were poured out on such prayerless families, our towns would be like places overthrown by the plague, the people being dead within, and the mark of judgment without. I fear, where one house would escape, ten would be marked for death; and the very doors, as it were, would cry out, "Lord, have mercy upon us," because the people would not pray themselves. But especially if we could see what men do in their secret chambers, how few you would find in a whole town, who spend one quarter of an hour, morning and night, in earnest supplication to God for their souls! O how little these men value eternal rest! Thus they slothfully neglect all endeavors for their own welfare, except some public duty in the congregation, to which custom or credit engages them. Persuade them to read good books, learn the grounds of religion in their catechism, and sanctify the Lord's day in prayer, meditation, and hearing the word — forbearing all worldly thoughts and speeches — and what a tedious life they take this to be! — as if they thought heaven wasn't worth so much effort.

Another class are *formal professors*. They may be brought to any outward duty, but they will never be persuaded to the inward work of religion. They will preach, hear, read, and talk about heaven, or pray in their families, and take part with persons or causes that are good; they desire to be esteemed among the godly. But you can never bring them to the more spiritual duties — such as being constant and fervent in secret prayer and meditation; conscientious in self-examination; heavenly-minded; watchful over their hearts, words, and ways; mortifying the flesh, and not making provision to fulfil its lusts; to love and heartily forgive an enemy, and to prefer their brothers before themselves; to lay at the feet of Christ all that they have and do; to prize His service and favor above all; and to prepare to die and willingly leave all to go to Christ. *Hypocrites* will never be persuaded to any of these. If any hypocrite entertains the Gospel with joy, it is only on the surface of his soul; he never gives the seed any depth of earth to grow in. The Gospel changes his opinions, but never melts and newly molds his heart, nor sets up Christ there in full power and authority. Just as his religion lies mostly in opinion, so does his chief business and conversation. He is usually an ignorant, bold, conceited dealer in controversies, rather than a humble embracer of known truth, with love and obedience. By slighting the judgments and persons of others, and seldom talking with seriousness and humility about the great things of Christ, he shows that his religion dwells in his brain, and not in his heart. The wind of temptation carries him away like a feather, because his heart is not established with Christ and grace. In private conversation, he never humbly bewails his soul's imperfections, or tenderly acknowledges his unkindness to Christ; but gathers his greatest comfort from being of some such a persuasion or party.

The same may be said of the *worldly hypocrite*, who chokes the Gospel with the thorns of worldly cares and desires. He is convinced that he must be religious, or he cannot be saved. And therefore he reads, and hears, and prays, and forsakes his *former* company and courses; but he resolves to keep hold of

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

present things. His *judgment* may say, 'God is the chief good;' but his *heart* and *affections* never said so. The world has more of his affections than God; and therefore the world is his god. Though he doesn't run after opinions and novelties like the world does, yet he will be of that opinion which best serves his worldly advantage. Like someone whose spirits are enfeebled by a pestilent disease, so this man's spirits are possessed by the plague of a worldly disposition. How feeble he is in secret prayer! How superficial in his examination and meditation! How poor he is in heart-watchings! How empty in loving and walking with God, rejoicing in him, or desiring him! These and many other sorts of hypocrites, though they may go along with you in the easy outside of religion, they will never take pains at inward and spiritual duties.

And even the *godly themselves* are lazy seekers of their everlasting rest. Alas! What a disproportion there is between our light and heat, our profession and prosecution! Who makes such haste as if it were for heaven? How still we stand! How idly we work! How we talk, and jest, and trifle away our time! How deceitfully we perform the work of God! How we hear, as if we had not heard, and pray as if we did not pray! And we examine, and meditate, and reprove sin, as if we did not! And we enjoy Christ, as if we did not! — as if we had learned to use the things of *heaven* as the apostle teaches us to "use the things of the *world!*" ^{1Cor 7:31} What a frozen stupidity has benumbed us! We're dying, and we know it; and yet we don't stir; we're at the door of eternal happiness or misery, and yet we don't perceive it; death knocks, and we don't hear it. God and Christ call and cry out to us, "Today, if you will hear my voice, don't harden your hearts;" ^{Heb 3:15} "work while it is day, for the night comes, when none can work." ^{Joh 9:4} Now ply your business, labor for your lives, lay out all your strength and time — *now or never!* And yet, we stir no more than if we were half asleep. What haste death and judgment make! How fast they come on! They are almost upon us, and yet what little haste we make! Lord, what a senseless, earthly, hellish thing is a hard head! Where is the man who is a Christian in earnest? I think men everywhere make but a trifle of their eternal state. They look after it only little by little; they don't make it the business of their lives. If I weren't sick with the same disease myself, what tears I would mix this ink with! — with what groans I would express these complaints! — and with what heart-grief I would mourn this universal deadness!

Do *magistrates* among us seriously perform their work? Are they zealous for God? Do they build up his house? Are they tender for His honor? Do they second the word, and oppose sin and sinners as the disturbers of our peace, and as the only cause of all our miseries? Do they improve all their power, wealth, and honor, and all their influence, for the greatest advantage to the kingdom of Christ, as men who must shortly give an account of their stewardship?

How few are the *ministers* who are serious in their work! Indeed, how grievously the very best fail in this! We cry about men's disobedience to the Gospel "in the demonstration of the Spirit," ^{1Cor 2:4} but do we deal with sin as with a destroying fire in our towns, and pull men out of it by force? Do we persuade our people, as those who should "know the terror of the Lord?" ^{2Cor 5:11} Do we press Christ, and regeneration, and faith, and holiness upon men, believing that without these, they can never have life? Do our hearts yearn over the ignorant, careless, obstinate multitude? When we look them in the face, do our hearts melt over them, lest we never see their faces in rest? Do we, like Paul, "tell them, weeping," ^{Phi 3:18} of their fleshly and earthly disposition; "and teach them publicly, and from house to house, at all seasons, and with many tears?" ^{Act 20:18-20} And do we entreat them, as for their soul's salvation? Or do we instead study to gain the approval of critical hearers — as if a minister's business were of no more weight than to tell a smooth tale for an hour — and *not* to look after the people till the next sermon? Does carnal prudence control our fervor, and make our discourses lifeless on subjects that are the most piercing? How gently we handle those sins which so cruelly handle our people's souls! In a word, our lack of seriousness about the things of heaven, charms the souls of men into formality, and brings them to this customary careless hearing, which undoes them. May the Lord pardon the great sin of the ministry in this thing, and in particular, my own!

Are *the people* any more serious than their magistrates or ministers? How can it be expected? Reader, look but to yourself and resolve the question. Ask your conscience, and let it to tell you truly. Have you

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

set your eternal rest before your eyes, as the great business you have to do in this world? Have you watched and labored with all your might, “that no man takes your crown?” ^{Rev 3.11} Have you made haste, lest you come too late, and die before your work is done? Have you pressed on through crowds of opposition, “toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” till you are “reaching forward to those things which are ahead?” ^{Phi 3.13-14} Can conscience witness your secret cries, and groans, and tears? Can your family witness that you taught them the fear of the Lord, and warned them not to “go to that place of torment?” Can your minister witness that he has heard you cry out, “What shall I do to be saved?” or that you have followed him with complaints against your corruptions, and with earnest inquiries after the Lord? Can your neighbors around you witness that you reprove the ungodly, and take pains to save the souls of your brothers? Let all these witnesses judge this day between God and you, whether you are in earnest about eternal rest. You can tell by His work whether your servant has loitered, though you did not see him; and so may you, by looking at your own work. Is your love to Christ — your faith, your zeal, and other graces — strong or weak? What are your joys? What is your assurance? Is all in order with you? Are you ready to die if this should be the day? Do the souls among whom you have conversed bless you? Judge by this, and it will quickly appear whether you have been laborers, or loiterers.

O blessed rest, how unworthily you are neglected! O glorious kingdom, how you are undervalued! Little do the careless sons of men know what a state they so neglect. If they knew it, they would surely be of another mind. I hope you, reader, are sensible of what a desperate thing it is to trifle about eternal rest, and how deeply you have been guilty of this yourself. And I also hope that you won't allow this conviction to die. If your physician told you, “If you observe but one thing, I have no doubt that your disease will be cured,” wouldn't you observe it? So I tell you, if you observe but this one thing for your soul, I have no doubt of your salvation; shake off your sloth, and put all your strength to it, and be a Christian indeed. I don't know what can then hinder your happiness. As far as you have gone from God, seek him with all your heart, and no doubt you will find him. As unkind as you have been to Jesus Christ, seek him heartily, obey him unreservedly, and your salvation is as sure as if you had it already. But — as full as Christ's satisfaction is; as free as the promise is; as large as the mercy of God is — if you only *talk* about these when you should eagerly *entertain* them, you will never be better for them. And if you loiter when you should labor, you will lose the crown. So then, get to work, speedily and seriously, and bless God that you still have time to do it.

To show it isn't without cause that I urge you, I will add here a variety of animating considerations. Rouse your spirit and, as Moses said to Israel, “set your heart on all the words which I testify to you this day; it is not a futile thing for you, because *it is your life.*” ^{Deu 32.46-47} May the Lord open your heart, and fasten his counsel effectually upon you!

1. *Consider how reasonable it is that our diligence should correspond to the ends we aim at, to the work we have to do, to the shortness and uncertainty of our time, and to the contrary diligence of our enemies.*

The *ends* of a Christian's desire and endeavors are so great that no human understanding can comprehend them. What else is so excellent, so important, or so necessary as glorifying God, and the salvation of our own and other men's souls by escaping the torments of hell, and possessing the glory of heaven? Can a man be too affected with things of such moment? Can he desire them too earnestly, or love them too strongly, or labor for them too diligently? Don't we know that if our prayers don't prevail, and our labor doesn't succeed, we are undone forever?

The *work* of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed; corruptions must be mortified; customs, temptations, and worldly interests must be conquered; flesh must be subdued; life, friends, and credit must be slighted; conscience, on good grounds, must be quieted, and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. Even though God will give us these without our merit, he won't give them without our earnest seeking and labor. Besides, there is much knowledge to be acquired, many ordinances to be used and duties to be performed. Every age, year, and day, every place that we come

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

to, every person we deal with, every change of our condition, still requires the renewing of our labor. Wives, children, servants, neighbors, friends, enemies — all of them call for duty from us. Judge, then, whether men who have so much business on their hands, shouldn't exert themselves, and whether it is wise to either delay or loiter.

Time passes on. Yet a *few days*, and we will be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We who are now preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms, in darkness and corruption. We are almost there already; we don't know whether we will have another sermon, or Sabbath, or hour. How active those should be who know they have so short a space for so great a work! And we have *enemies* who are always plotting and laboring for our destruction. How diligent Satan is in all kinds of temptations! Therefore, "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; resist him, steadfast in the faith." ^{1Pet 5.8-9} How diligent are all the "ministers of Satan! — false teachers, scoffers, persecutors," ^{2Cor 11.14-15} and our inbred corruptions are the busiest and most diligent of all! Will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Shouldn't we be more active for our own preservation, than our enemies are for our ruin?

2. *It should excite us to diligence when we consider our talents and our mercies, our relation to God, and the afflictions he lays upon us.*

The *talents* which we have received are many and great. Which people breathing on earth have had plainer *instructions*, or more forcible *persuasions*, or more constant *admonitions*, in season and out of season? We've had sermons till we wearied of them, and Sabbaths till we profaned them; excellent books in such plenty that we don't know which to read! What people have had God so near them, or seen so much of Christ crucified before their eyes, or had heaven and hell so opened to them? What speed such a people should make for heaven! How they should fly who are thus winged! And how swiftly those should sail, who have wind and tide to help them! A small measure of grace doesn't become such a people, nor will ordinary diligence in the work of God excuse them.

All our lives have been filled with *mercies*. God has mercifully poured out upon us the riches of sea and land, of heaven and earth. We are fed and clothed with mercy. We have mercies within and without. To number them is to count the stars or the sands on the seashore. If there is any difference between hell and earth, or indeed, heaven and earth, then certainly we have received mercy. If the blood of the Son of God is mercy, then we are engaged to God *by mercy*. Will God then think anything is too much or too good for us? And yet we think that what we do for him is all too much. When I compare my slow and unprofitable life with the frequent and wonderful mercies received, it shames me, it silences me, and it leaves me inexcusable.

Besides our talents and mercies, our *relations* to God are most endearing. Are we his children, and do we not owe him our most tender affections and dutiful obedience? Are we "the spouse of Christ," ^{Rev 21.9} and will we not obey and love him? If he is a Father, where is his honor? And if he is a Master, where is our fear of Him? "We call him Master, and Lord, and we say well." ^{Joh 13.13} But if our industry doesn't match our relations, we condemn ourselves in saying that we are his children or his servants. Won't the hard labor and daily toil which servants undergo to please their earthly masters, judge and condemn those who won't labor so hard for their Great Master? Surely there is no master like him; nor can any servants expect such fruit from their labors as *His* servants expect. If we wander out of God's way, or loiter in it, every creature will be ready to be His rod to bring us back, or to urge us on! Our sweetest mercies will become our sorrows. Rather than want a rod, the Lord will make us a scourge to ourselves. Our diseased bodies will make us groan; our perplexed minds will make us restless; our conscience will be like a scorpion in our bosom. Isn't it easier to endure the labor than the spur? Would we rather still be afflicted, than be up and doing? And even if those who do most also meet with afflictions, surely — according to their peace of conscience and faithfulness to Christ — the bitterness of their cup is abated.

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

3. *To quicken our diligence in our work, we should also consider what assistance we have, what principles we profess, and our certainty that we can never do too much.*

For our assistance in the service of God, all the world is our servant. The sun, moon, and stars attend us with their light and influence. The earth, with all its furnishings of plants and flowers, fruits, birds, and beasts — the sea, with its inhabitants — the air, the wind, the frost and snow, the heat and fire, the clouds and rain — all wait upon us while we do our work. Indeed, “the angels are all our ministering spirits.” ^{Heb 1.14} Even more, the patience of God waits upon us; the Lord Jesus Christ waits in the offers of his blood; the Holy Spirit waits by striving with our backward hearts — besides the ministers of the Gospel, who study and wait, preach and wait, pray and wait upon careless sinners. Isn't it an intolerable crime for us to trifle while angels and men — indeed, the Lord himself — stand by and look on, as if holding the candle for us while we do nothing? I beseech you, Christians, whenever you are praying, or reproving transgressors, or upon any duty, remember what assistance you have for your work, and then judge how you ought to perform it.

The *principles* we profess are these: that God is the chief good; that all our happiness consists in His love, and therefore it should be valued and sought above all things; that he is our only Lord, and therefore chiefly to be served; that we must love Him with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our great business in the world is to glorify God and obtain salvation. Are these doctrines seen in our *practice*? Or instead, do our works deny what our words confess?

But however our assistance and principles excite us to our work, we are sure that *we can never do too much*. If we could “do all, we are unprofitable servants;” ^{Luk 17.10} much more when we are sure to *fail* in all. No man can obey or serve God too much. Though all superstition or any service of our own devising might be called ‘overly righteous,’ as long as we keep to the rule of the Word, we can never be overly righteous. The world is mad with malice when it thinks that faithful diligence in the service of Christ is singularly foolish. The time is near when they will easily confess that God could not be loved or served too much, and that no man can be too earnest to save his soul. We may easily do too much for the world, but we cannot do too much for God.

4. Let us further consider *that it is the nature of every grace to promote diligence, that trifling in the way to heaven is lost labor, that much precious time is already misspent, and that our recompense will be in proportion to our labor.*

See the *nature and tendency* of every grace. If you loved God, you would think that nothing you could possibly do to serve him and please him is too much. Love is quick and impatient, active and observant. If you loved Christ, you would keep his commandments, and not complain that they are too strict. If you had faith, it would quicken and encourage you. If you had the hope of glory, it would set all the wheels of your soul a-going, like the spring in a watch. If you had the fear of God, it would rouse you out of your slothfulness. If you had zeal, it would inflame and “eat you up.” In whatever degree you are sanctified, in that same degree you will be serious and laborious in the work of God.

Those who trifle lose their labor. Many, like Agrippa, who are *almost* Christians, ^{Act 26.28} will find in the end that they are *almost* saved. If two are running in a race, the one who runs slowest loses both prize and labor. A man who is lifting a weight, if he doesn't put sufficient strength to it, he might as well put none at all. How many duties Christians have lost, for lack of doing them thoroughly! “Many will seek to enter in, and will not be able.” ^{Luk 13.24} If they had *striven*, they might have been *able*. Therefore, put a little more diligence and strength to it, so that all you have done already will not be in vain. ^{1Cor 15.58}

Besides, isn't *much precious time already lost*? With some of us, childhood and youth are gone; with others, their middle age also; and the time before us is very uncertain. What time have we slept, talked, and played away, or spent in worldly thoughts and cares! How little of our work is done! The time we have lost cannot be recalled. Shouldn't we then redeem and improve the little time which remains? If a traveller sleeps or trifles most of the day, he must travel that much faster in the evening, or fall short of his journey's end.

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

Have no doubt that the *recompense will be according to your labor*. The seed which is buried and dies, will bring forth a plentiful harvest. Whatever you do or suffer, everlasting rest will pay for it all. There is no relenting of labors or sufferings in heaven. There no one says, "If only I had spared my pains, and prayed less, or been less strict, and done like the rest of my neighbors!" On the contrary, it will be their joy to look back on their labors and tribulations, and to consider how the mighty power of God brought them through it all. We may all say, as Paul did, "I reckon that the sufferings" and labors "of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed in us." ^{Rom 8.18} We labor but for a moment; we will rest forever. Who wouldn't put forth all his strength for one hour, when for that hour's work, he may be a prince while he lives? "God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love." ^{Heb 6.10} Won't "all our tears be wiped away," ^{Rev 21.4} and all the sorrow of our duties then be forgotten?

5. Nor does it less deserve to be considered, that *striving is the divinely appointed way of salvation; that all men either do approve or will approve it; that the best Christians, at death, lament their negligence; and that heaven itself is often lost for lack of striving, but it is never had on easier terms.*

The sovereign wisdom of God has made *striving* necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse? God or us? If it was a fault, it would lie in the One who commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men who ask us whether we are wiser than all the world besides, and yet *they* pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God? "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." ^{Mat 11.13} "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and will not be able." ^{Luk 13.24} "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, or device, or knowledge, or wisdom in the grave where you're going." ^{Ecc 9.10} "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." ^{Phi 2.12} "Be diligent to make your calling and election sure." ^{2Pet 1.10} "If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ^{1Pet 4.18}

Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can against the holy violence of the saints; this suffices me to confute them all: that God is of another mind, and he has commanded me to do much more than I do. And though I could see no other reason for it, His will is reason enough. Who should make laws for us, if not the One who made us? And who should point out the way to heaven, if not the one who must bring us there? And who should fix the terms of salvation, if not the one who bestows the gift of salvation? So that, let the world, the flesh, or the devil speak against a holy, laborious life, this is my answer: *God has commanded it*. Indeed, there never was, nor ever will be, a man who will not *approve* of such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who wouldn't go that way which every man will finally applaud? True, it is now "a way spoken against everywhere." ^{Act 28.22} But let me tell you, most who speak against it, approve of it in their judgments; and those who are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. If they go to hell, their judgment will then be altered, whether they will it or not. Remember this, you who love the opinion and the way of the multitude. Why then, won't you be of the same opinion that all will be of in the end? Why would you hold a judgment which all of you are sure to change shortly? O that you were as wise in this, as those in hell!

Even the *best of Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence*. Then they wish, "O that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me of doing too much; but my own conscience accuses me of doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world than the lashes of conscience. I would rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reproved by God for neglecting it." How their failings thus wound and disquiet those who have been the wonder of the world for their heavenly conversation!

It is *for lack of diligence that heaven itself is lost*. When those who have "heard the word, and promptly received it with joy," ^{Mat 13.20-21} and "done many things, and heard" the ministers of Christ gladly, ^{Mar 6.20} and yet *perish* — shouldn't this rouse us out of our security? How far has many a man followed Christ, and yet forsaken him when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced! God has resolved that

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

heaven will not be had on easier terms. *Rest* must always follow *labor*. "Without holiness no man will see the Lord." ^{Heb 12.14} Seriousness is the very thing our sincerity consists of. If you are not serious, you are not a Christian. It is not only a high *degree* in Christianity, but the very life and *essence* of it. Just as fencers on a stage differ from soldiers fighting for their lives, so hypocrites differ from serious Christians. If men could be saved without this serious diligence, they would never regard it; all the excellencies of God's ways would never entice them. But when God has resolved that, without serious diligence *here*, we will not rest *hereafter*, isn't it wise to exert ourselves to the uttermost?

6. But to persuade you if possible, reader, to be serious in your endeavors for heaven, let me add more considerations. For instance, consider —

God is in earnest with you; why shouldn't you be so with him? In his commands, his threatenings, his promises, he means what he says. In his judgments, he is serious. Wasn't he so when he drowned the world, when he consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and when he scattered the Jews? Is it time, then, to trifle with God? Jesus Christ was serious in purchasing our redemption. In teaching, he neglected his food and drink. In prayer, he continued all night. In doing good, his friends thought he was beside himself. In suffering, he fasted forty days; he was tempted, betrayed, spit upon, beaten, crowned with thorns, sweat drops of blood, was crucified, pierced, and died. There was no jesting in all this. And should we not be serious in seeking our own salvation? ²¹

The Holy Spirit is serious in soliciting us to be happy. His motions are frequent, pressing, and importunate. "He strives with us." ^{Gen 6.3} He is grieved when we resist him. ^{Eph 4.30} Shouldn't we be serious then, in obeying and yielding to his motions? God is serious in hearing our prayers, and bestowing his mercies. He is afflicted *with us*. He "regards every groan and sigh, and puts every tear into his bottle." ^{Psa 56.8} The next time you are in trouble, you will beg for a serious regard for your prayers. Should we expect real mercies, when we are slight and superficial in the work of God?

The ministers of Christ are serious in exhorting and instructing you. They beg of God, and of you; and they long more for the salvation of your souls than for any worldly good. If they kill themselves by their labor, or suffer martyrdom for preaching the Gospel, they think their lives are well-bestowed if they prevail in saving your souls. Will other men be so careful and self-denying for your salvation, and you be so careless and negligent of your own?

How diligent and serious are all the creatures in serving you! What haste the sun makes to compass the world! The fountains are always flowing for your use; the rivers are still running; spring and harvest still keep their times. How hard your ox labors for you from day to day! How speedily your horse travels with you! And will you alone be negligent? Will all these be so serious in serving you, and you be so careless in your service to God?

The servants of the world and the devil are serious and diligent. They work as if they could never do enough. They make haste, as if afraid of coming to hell too late. They bear down ministers, sermons, and all before them. And will they be more diligent for damnation, than you are for salvation? Don't you have a better Master, sweeter employment, greater encouragements, and a better reward? There was a time when you were serious yourself in serving Satan and the flesh, if it is not still so. How eagerly you followed your sports, your evil company, and sinful delights! And won't you now be as earnest and forceful for God? To this day, you are in earnest about the things of this life. If you are sick or in pain, what serious complaints you utter! If you are poor, how hard you labor for a livelihood! And isn't the business of your salvation of far greater moment than these?

There is no jesting in heaven or hell. The saints have a real happiness, and the damned a real misery. There are no remiss or sleepy praises in heaven, nor such lamentations in hell. All there are in earnest.

²¹ Baxter is not saying we're responsible to save ourselves, as if we were under the law and not grace. Rather, he warns us not to think that because Christ "paid it all," he also "did it all;" and therefore we have *nothing* to do. Otherwise we'll evangelize if inclined, give if asked, pray if desperate, study if convenient, teach if not toilsome. Baxter exhorts each of us to be abundantly fruitful — to be servant workers and active harvesters in God's field — not mere consumers (Joh 15.5-8). — WHG

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

When you, reader, come to death and judgment, O what deep, heart-piercing thoughts you will have of eternity! I think I foresee you already astonished to think how you could possibly make so light of these things. I think I even hear you crying out of your own stupidity and madness.

And now, reader, having laid down these undeniable arguments, in the name of God, *I demand your resolution*: will you yield obedience or not? I am confident that your conscience is convinced of your duty. Dare you now go on in your common, careless course, against the plain evidence of reason and the commands of God, and against the light of your own conscience? Dare you live as loosely, sin as boldly, and pray as seldom as before? Dare you profane the Sabbath, slight the service of God, and think of your everlasting state as carelessly as before? Or will you rather resolve to “gird up the loins of your mind,” ^{1Pet 1.13} set yourself wholly to the work of your salvation, break through the oppositions, slight the scoffs and persecutions of the world, “lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets you, and run with patience the race that is before you?” ^{Heb 12.1} I hope these are your full resolutions. Yet because I know the obstinacy of the heart of man, and because I am solicitous that your soul should live, I once more entreat your attention to the following questions; and I command you from God, that you not stifle your conscience, nor resist conviction, but answer them faithfully, and obey accordingly.

If by being diligent in godliness, you could grow rich, get honor or preferment in the world, be recovered from sickness, or live forever in prosperity on earth, what life would you lead, and what pains would you take in the service of God? And isn't the *Saints' Rest* a more excellent happiness than all of this? If it were a felony to break the Sabbath, neglect secret or family worship, or be loose in your life, what manner of person would you then be? And isn't eternal death more terrible than temporal? If God usually punished every act of sin with some present judgment, as he did the lie of Ananias and Sapphira, what kind of life would you lead? And isn't eternal wrath far more terrible? If someone of your acquaintance came back from the dead and told you that he suffered the torments of hell for those sins *you* are guilty of, what manner of person would you be afterwards? How much more would the warnings of God frighten you? If you knew that this is the last day you had to live in the world, how would you spend it? And you don't know if it *may* be your last, but you are sure your last is *near*.

If you had seen the general dissolution of the world, and all the pomp and glory of it consumed to ashes, what would such a sight persuade you to do? You will certainly see such a sight. If you had seen the judgment-seat, and the books opened, and the wicked stand trembling on the left hand of the Judge, and the godly rejoicing on the right hand, and their different sentences pronounced, what you would have been after such a sight! One day you will surely see this sight. If you had seen hell open, and all the damned there in their endless torments — and also heaven opened, as Stephen did, and all the saints there triumphing in glory — what a life you would lead after such sights! These you will see before long. If you had lain in hell but one year, or one day, or one hour, and felt there the torments you now hear about, how seriously you would then speak of hell, and pray against it! And won't you take God's word for the truth of this, unless you feel it? Or if you had possessed the glory of heaven for but one year, what pains would you take, rather than be deprived of such incomparable glory!

Thus I have said enough, if not to stir the sinner to a serious working out of his salvation, at least to silence him and leave him inexcusable at the judgment of God. When our friends are dead, and our words and actions can do them no good, yet to testify of our affection for them, we weep and mourn. So I will also do for these unhappy souls. It makes my heart tremble to think how they will stand before the Lord, confounded and speechless! When he says, “Was the world, or Satan, a better friend to you than I was? Had they done more for you than I had done? Try now if they will save you, or recompense you for the loss of heaven, or be as good to you as I would have been” — what will the wretched sinner answer to any of this? But though man will not hear, we may hope in speaking to God:

“O you who wept and groaned in spirit over a dead Lazarus, pity these dead and senseless souls, till they are able to weep and groan in pity for themselves! As you have bid your servants speak, so speak now yourself. They will hear your voice speaking to their hearts, who will not hear mine speaking to their ears. Lord, you have long knocked at these hearts in vain; now break the doors and enter in.”

VII. The Necessity of Diligently Seeking the Saints' Rest

To show the godly why they, above all men, should labor for heaven, I desire to ask them,

What manner of persons should those be whom God has chosen to be vessels of mercy? Those who have felt the smart of their negligence in their new birth, in their troubles of conscience, in their doubts and fears, and in other sharp afflictions? Those who have often confessed their sins of negligence to God in prayer? Those who have bound themselves to God by so many covenants?

What manner of persons should they be who are near to God, as the children of his family? Those who have tasted such sweetness in diligent obedience, many of whom are so uncertain of what will everlastingly become of their souls?

What manner of persons should they be in holiness? Those whose sanctification is so imperfect; whose lives and duties are so important to saving or destroying a multitude of souls; and on whom the glory of the great God so much depends?

Since these things are so, I charge you, Christian, in your Master's name, to consider and resolve the question, "What manner of persons should we be in all holy conduct and godliness?" And let your *life* answer the question, as well as your *tongue*.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW TO DISCERN OUR TITLE TO THE SAINTS' REST.

Self-examination urged, 1. From the possibility of arriving at a certainty; 2. From the hindrances which will be thrown in our way by Satan, sinners, our own hearts, and many other causes; 3. From considering how easy, common, and dangerous it is to be mistaken; that trying will not be so painful as the neglect; that God will soon try us, and that to try ourselves will be profitable. 4. Directions how to try ourselves. 5. Marks for trial; particularly, Do we make God our chief good? Do we heartily accept Christ for our Lord and Savior?

Is there such a glorious rest so near at hand, and yet none will enjoy it but the people of God? What does most of the world mean, then, by living so contentedly without assurance of their interest in this rest, and neglecting to test their title to it? When the Lord has so fully opened the blessedness of that kingdom which none but obedient believers will possess, and so fully expressed those torments which the rest of the world must eternally suffer, I think those who believe that this is certainly true, should never be at peace in themselves, till they are fully assured of being heirs of the kingdom. Lord, what a strange madness this is, that men who know they must shortly enter upon unchangeable joy or pain, should still live in uncertainty as to what their doom will be, as if they had never heard of any such state! Indeed, they live as peacefully and merrily in this uncertainty, as if all was made sure, and there was no danger! Are these men alive, or dead? Are they awake, or asleep? What do they think about? Where are their hearts? If they had a weighty lawsuit, they would be careful to know whether it will go for or against them! If they were to be tried for their lives at an earthly bar, they would be careful to know whether they will be saved or condemned, especially if such care might surely save them! If they are dangerously sick, they will inquire of the physician, "What do you think, sir; will I escape or not?" But in the business of their *salvation*, they are content to be uncertain.

If you ask most men for "a reason for the hope that is in them," ^{1Pet 3.15} they say, "Because God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners," and similar general reasons, which any man in the world may give as well as they. But ask them to prove their interest in Christ and in the saving mercy of God, and they can say nothing to the purpose. If God or man were to say to one of them, "Friend, what is the state of your soul? Is it regenerate, sanctified, and pardoned, or not?" He would say, as Cain said of Abel, "I don't know; am I my soul's keeper? I hope it is well; I trust God with my soul; I will fare as well as other men; I thank God that I never doubted my salvation." You have *cause* to doubt, because you never doubted; and still more, because you have been so careless in your confidence. What do your expressions reveal but a wilful neglect of your own salvation? It is like a shipmaster who ignores his vessel, and says, "I will risk it among the rocks, and waves, and winds; I will trust God with it. It will fare as well as other vessels." What horrible abuse of God this is, to pretend to trust God, in order to cloak their own wilful negligence! If you really trusted God, you would also be ruled by him, and trust him in his own appointed way. He requires you to be "diligent to make your calling and election sure," ^{2Pet 1.10} and thus trust him. He has marked out a way in scripture by which you are charged to search and test yourself, and may arrive at certainty. Wouldn't he be a foolish traveller who holds to his way, when he doesn't know whether he is right or wrong; and says, "I hope I am right; I will go on and trust in God"? Aren't you guilty of this folly in your travel to eternity by not considering that a little serious inquiry whether your way is right, might save you a great deal of labor? Instead, you labor in vain, and must undo it again, or else miss salvation and undo *yourself*.

How can you think or speak of the great God without terror, as long as you are uncertain whether he is your father, or your enemy, or whether all His perfections may be employed against you? Or you speak of Jesus Christ, when you don't know whether his blood has purged your soul; whether he will condemn or acquit you in judgment; or whether he be the foundation of your happiness, or a stone of stumbling to break you and grind you into powder? How can you open the Bible and read a chapter, without it terrifying you? I think every leaf should be to you like Belshazzar's writing on the wall, except that it draws you to test and reform yourself. If you read the promises, you don't know whether they will be

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

fulfilled for you. If you read the threatenings, for all you know, you're reading your own sentence. No wonder you are an enemy to plain preaching, and you say of the minister, as Ahab said of the prophet, "I hate him, for he doesn't prophesy good concerning me, but evil." ^{1Kng 22.8} How can you join in prayer without terror? When you receive the Lord's supper, you don't know whether it's your bane or bliss. What comfort can you find in your friends, and honors, and houses, and lands, till you know you have the love of God with them, and will have rest with *Him* when you leave *them*? Before a prisoner knows his sentence, offer him either music, clothes, or preferment. What are these to him, till he knows he will escape with his life? For if he knows he must die the next day, it will be small comfort to die rich or honorable. I think it should be so with you till you know your eternal state. When you lie down to take your rest, I think the uncertainty of your salvation should keep you awake, or shock you in your dreams, and trouble your sleep. Doesn't it grieve you to see the people of God so comfortable on their way to glory, when you have no good hope of ever enjoying it yourself? How can you think of your dying hour? You know it is near, and there is no avoiding it, nor has any remedy been found that can prevent it. If you should die this day (and who knows "what a day may bring?" ^{Pro 27.1}) you aren't certain whether you will go to heaven or hell. And can you be merry till you have escaped from this dangerous state? What shift ²² are you making to preserve your heart from horror, when you remember the great judgment-day, and everlasting flames? When you hear of it, don't you tremble as Felix did? ^{Act 24.25} If the "keepers shook, and became as dead men, when they saw the angel come and roll back the stone from Christ's sepulchre," ^{Mat 28.4} then how can you think of living in hell with devils, till you have some well-grounded assurance that you will escape it? Either your bed is very soft, or your heart is very hard, if you can sleep soundly in this uncertain state.

If this general uncertainty of the world about their salvation were remediless, then it must be borne as other unavoidable miseries are borne. But alas! the common cause is wilful negligence. Men won't be persuaded to *use* the remedy. The great means to conquer this uncertainty is self-examination, or the serious and diligent testing of a man's heart and case by the rule of Scripture. Either men don't understand the nature and use of this duty, or else they won't take pains to test themselves. Go through a congregation of a thousand men, and how few you will find who ever bestowed one hour in all their lives in a close examination of their title to heaven! Ask your own conscience, reader, when was the time, and where was the place, that you solemnly took your heart to task, as in the sight of God — examining it by Scripture, whether it is renewed or not; whether it is holy or not; whether it is set most on God, or on the creatures; on heaven, or on earth? And did you pursue this examination till you had discovered your condition, and passed sentence on yourself accordingly?

But because this is a work of so high an importance, and so commonly neglected, I will show that it is possible, by testing, to come to a certainty. I will show what hinders men from testing and knowing their state; and then offer motives and directions to examine, together with some marks out of Scripture, by which men may test and certainly know whether they are the people of God or not.

1. Scripture shows that *the certainty of salvation may be attained, and ought to be labored for*, when it tells us so frequently that the saints before us have known their justification and future salvation; and when it declares that "whoever believes in Christ will not perish, but have everlasting life." ^{Joh 3.15} It would be in vain to declare this when we cannot know if we are believers or not; when it makes such a wide difference between the children of God and the children of the devil; when it bids us to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure;" ^{2Pet 1.10} and earnestly urges us to "examine, prove, and know ourselves, whether we are in the faith, and whether Jesus Christ is in us, unless we are reprobates;" ^{2Cor 13.5} also, when its precepts require us to rejoice always, to call God our Father, to live in his praises, to love Christ's appearing, to wish that he may come quickly, and to comfort ourselves with the mention of it. But who can do any of these things heartily, who is not in some measure sure that he is the child of God?

²² *Shift*: a flimsy garment to cover yourself.

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

2. Among the many *hindrances* which keep men from self-examination, we cannot doubt that Satan will do his part. If all the power he has, or all the means and instruments he can employ, can do it, then above all duties, he will be sure to keep you from this. He is loath that the godly should have the joy, assurance, and advantage against corruption, which the faithful performance of self-examination would procure for them. As for the ungodly, he knows that once they earnestly examined themselves, they would discover his deceits and their own danger, and so be very likely to escape him. How could he get so many millions to hell willingly, if they *knew* they were going there? And how could they *avoid* knowing it, if they but thoroughly examined themselves — having such a clear light and sure rule in the Scripture to discover it? If the snare is not hidden, the bird will escape it. Satan knows how to angle for souls better than to show them the hook and line, or frighten them away with a noise, or with his own appearance. Therefore, he labors to keep them from a searching ministry, or to keep the minister from helping them to search, or to blunt the edge of the word so it may not pierce and divide; or to turn away their thoughts; or instill them with prejudice. Satan knows when the minister has provided a searching sermon, fitted to the state and necessity of a hearer. And therefore he will keep the hearer away that day if possible; or put him to sleep; or steal away the word by the cares and talk of the world, or in some way prevent its operation.

Another great hindrance to self-examination arises from wicked men. Their example; their merry company and discourse; their continual insistence on worldly concerns; their raillery and scoffs at godly persons; their persuasions, allurements, and threats — all of these are exceedingly great temptations to false security. God scarcely opens the eyes of a poor sinner to see that his way is wrong, without a multitude of Satan's apostles being quick to deceive and settle him again in the quiet possession of his former master.

“What!” they say, “Do you doubt your salvation? You who have lived so well, and done nobody any harm? God is merciful. And if such as you won't be saved, then God help a great many! What do you think of all your forefathers? And what will become of all your friends and neighbors who live as you do? Will they *all* be damned? Come, come, if you listen to these preachers, they will drive you out of your senses. Aren't all men sinners? And didn't Christ die to save sinners? Never trouble your head with these thoughts, and you will do well.”

O, how many thousands are kept asleep in deceit and security by such charms, till death and hell have awakened them! The Lord calls to the sinner, and tells him, “The gate is strait, the way is narrow, and few find it; test and examine yourself; give diligence to make sure.” The world cries, “Never doubt, never trouble yourself with these thoughts.” In this strait, sinner, consider that it is Christ, and not your forefathers, or neighbors, or friends, who must judge you at last. And if Christ condemns you, these cannot save you. Therefore, common reason may tell you that it is not from the words of ignorant men, but from the word of God that you must gain your hope of salvation. When Ahab inquired among the multitude of flattering prophets, it was his death. They can flatter men into the snare, but cannot tell how to release them. “Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” ^{Eph 5.6-7}

But the greatest hindrances are in men's own hearts. Some are so ignorant that they don't know what self-examination is, or what a minister means when he persuades them to test themselves. Or they don't know that there is any necessity for it; they think that every man is bound to believe that his sins are pardoned, whether it is true or false, and that it is a great fault to question it. Or they don't think that assurance can be attained. Or they don't think there is any great difference between one man and another, but that we are all Christians; therefore, we need not trouble ourselves any further. Or at least they don't know where the difference lies. They have as gross an idea of regeneration as Nicodemus had. Some won't believe that God would ever make such a difference between men in the life *to come*; and so they won't search themselves to see whether they differ *here*. Some are so stupefied, no matter what we say to them, that they don't lay it to heart; they give us a hearing, and there it ends. Some are so possessed with self-love and pride, that they won't so much as suspect they're in danger. It is like a

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

proud tradesman who scorns the prudent advice to review his books; or like silly parents who won't believe or hear any evil about their children. Some are so guilty that they *dare not* test themselves; and yet they dare to risk a more dreadful trial. Some are so in love with sin, and so dislike the way of God, that they dare not test their ways, lest they be forced from the course they love, to one they loathe. Some are so resolved never to change their present state, that they neglect examination as a useless thing. Before they will seek a new way, when they have lived so long and gone so far another way, that they will hazard their eternal state, come what may. Many men are so busy in the world that they cannot set themselves to testing their title to heaven. Others are so clogged with a slothful spirit that they won't take pains for an hour's examination of their own hearts. But the most common and dangerous impediment, is that false faith and hope which is commonly called *presumption*. It props up the hearts of most in the world, and thus it keeps them from suspecting their danger.

Even if a man were to break through all these hindrances, and set about the duty of self-examination, assurance is still not quickly attained. Too many deceive themselves in inquiring after it, through one or another of the following causes. There is such confusion and darkness in the soul of man, especially of an unregenerate man, that he can scarcely tell what he's doing, or what is in him. In a house where nothing is in its proper place, it is difficult to find what is missing. So it is in the heart where all things are in disorder. Most men accustom themselves to be strangers at home; they too little observe the temper and motions of their own hearts. Many are resolved what to judge, before they test. It is like a bribed judge, who examines *as if* he would judge uprightly, when indeed he has previously resolved which way the cause will go. Men are partial in their own cause. They are ready to think that their great sins are small, and their small sins are none at all — that their gifts of nature are the work of grace; and so they say, "All these have I kept from my youth;" ^{Mat 19.20} "I am rich, and increased in goods, and need nothing." ^{Rev 3.17} Most men search only by halves. If it cannot be easily and quickly done, they are discouraged and leave it. They test themselves by false marks and rules, not knowing what the truth of Christianity consists in. Some look beyond, and some look short of, the Scripture standard. And they frequently fail in this work by attempting it in their own strength. Just as some expect the Spirit to do it without them, so others attempt it themselves, without seeking or expecting the help of the Spirit. Both of these will certainly fail of assurance.

Some other hindrances keep even true Christians from comfortable certainty. For instance, *the weakness of grace*; small things are hardly discerned. Most Christians content themselves with a small measure of grace, and don't keep on to spiritual strength and manhood. The chief remedy for such weakness would be to keep on in their duty until their graces are increased. Wait upon God in the use of his prescribed means, and he will undoubtedly bless you with increase. O that Christians would bestow most of that time in getting more grace, which they bestow in anxious doubts about whether they have any at all; and that they would expend those serious affections in praying for more grace, which they bestow in fruitless complaints! I beseech you, Christian, take this advice as being from God. And then, when you believe strongly and love fervently, you can no more doubt your faith and love, than a man who is very hot can doubt his warmth, or a man who is strong and vigorous can doubt his being alive.

Christians hinder their own comfort by looking more at signs which tell them *what they are*, than at precepts which tell them *what they should do* — as if their present case must be their everlasting case; and if they are now unpardoned, there can be no remedy. Isn't someone mad to lie weeping because he isn't pardoned, when his prince stands by all the while offering him a pardon, and persuading him to accept it? Justifying faith, Christian, isn't your persuasion of God's special love to you, but accepting Christ to make you lovely. It is far better to accept Christ as offered, than to spend so much time doubting whether you have Christ or not.

Another cause of distress to Christians is their mistaking *assurance* for the *joy* that sometimes accompanies it. It is like a child who thinks he is a son only so long as he sees the smiles of his father's face, or hears the comfortable expressions of his mouth; and hence, whenever the father ceases those smiles and expressions, he ceases to be a father to him.

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

The trouble of souls is also increased by their not knowing *the ordinary way of God's conveying comfort*. They think they have nothing to do but to wait for when God will bestow it. But they must know that the matter of their comfort is in the *promises*; and they must draw comfort from there as often as they expect it, by daily and diligently meditating upon the promises. In this way, they may expect the Spirit to communicate comfort to their souls. The joy of the promises, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, are one. Additionally, they are expecting a greater measure of assurance than God usually bestows. As long as they have *doubts*, they think they have no *assurance*. They don't consider that there are many degrees of certainty. While they are here, they will "know but in part." ^{1Cor 13.12} Add also, that they are deriving their comfort at first from insufficient grounds. This may be the case of a gracious soul who has better grounds for comfort, but doesn't see them. An infant has life before he knows it. Despite many misapprehensions about himself and other things, it doesn't follow that the infant has no life. So too, when Christians find a flaw in their first *comforts*, they aren't to judge it as a flaw in their *safety*.

Many continue doubting through the exceeding weakness of their natural powers. Many honest hearts have weak heads; they don't know how to do the work of self-trial. They acknowledge the promises, and yet deny the obvious conclusion. If God doesn't supply the defect in their reasoning in some other way, I don't see how they can have a clear and settled peace.

One great and too common cause of distress is secretly maintaining *some known sin*. This abates the degree of our graces, and so it makes them more indiscernible. It obscures what it doesn't destroy, for it bears such sway that grace is not in action; nor does it seem to stir, nor is it scarcely heard to speak over the noise of this corruption. It puts out or dims the eye of the soul and stupefies it, so that it can neither see nor feel its own condition. But especially, it provokes God to withdraw himself, his comforts, and the assistance of his Spirit, without which we may search long before we have assurance. God has made a separation between sin and peace. As long as you cherish your pride, your love of the world, the desires of the flesh, or any unchristian practice, you can expect comfort in vain. If a man "sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and comes" to a minister, or to God, "to inquire" for comfort — then instead of comforting him, God "will answer the one who comes, according to the multitude of his idols." ^{Eze 14.4}

Another very great and common cause of the lack of comfort, is that grace isn't kept in *constant* and lively exercise. The way of painful duty is the way of fullest comfort. Peace and comfort are Christ's great encouragements to faithfulness and obedience. And therefore, though our obedience doesn't merit them, they usually rise and fall with our diligence in duty. Just as prayer must have faith and fervency to procure its success, besides the blood and intercession of Christ, so must all other parts of our obedience. If you seldom grow, and are formal and cold in duty, especially in your secret prayers to God, and yet you find no abatement in your joys, I can only fear that your joys are either carnal or diabolical. Besides, grace is never apparent and sensible to the soul, unless it is in action; therefore, lack of action must cause lack of assurance. The action of the soul upon such excellent objects, naturally brings consolation with it. The very act of loving God in Christ is inexpressibly sweet. When the soul that is best furnished with grace is not in action, it is like a lute that is well stringed and tuned. While it lies still, it makes no more music than a common piece of wood. But when it is handled by a skilful musician, the melody is delightful. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, just as heat accompanies fire, and beams and influence issue from the sun. A man who is cold should labor till heat is excited in him; so too, the one who wants assurance must not stand still, but exercise his graces till his doubts vanish.

The lack of consolation in the soul is also very commonly owing to bodily *melancholy*. It is no stranger for a conscientious man who is under melancholy, to doubt, fear, and despair, than it is for a sick man to groan, or a child to cry when it is chastised. Without the physician in this case, the labors of the divine are usually in vain. You may silence, but you cannot comfort such persons. You may make them confess they have some grace, and yet you cannot bring them to a comfortable conclusion. All the good

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

thoughts of their state which you can possibly help them to, are seldom above a day or two old. They cry out about sin and the wrath of God, when the chief cause is in their bodily disease.

3. As *motives* to the duty of self-examination, I entreat you to consider the following:

It is very easy to be *deceived* about your title to heaven. Many are now in hell who never suspected any falsehood in their hearts, who excelled in worldly wisdom, who lived in the clear light of the Gospel, and even preached against the negligence of others. To be *mistaken* in this great point is also very common. It is the case of most in the world. In the old world and in Sodom, we find none who were in any fear of judgment. Almost all men among us truly expect to be saved. And yet Christ tells us, "there are few who find the strait gate and narrow way which leads to life." ^{Mat 7:14} And if such multitudes are deceived, should we not search more diligently, lest we be as deceived as they are? Nothing is more dangerous than to be thus mistaken. If the *godly* judge that their state worse than it is, the consequences of this mistake will be sorrowful; but the mischief flowing from the mistake of the *ungodly* is unspeakable. It will exceedingly confirm that they are in the service of Satan. It will render ineffectual the means that would do them good. It will keep a man from comforting his own soul. It is a case of the greatest moment, where everlasting salvation or damnation is to be determined. And if you mistake till death, you are *undone forever*.

Seeing, then, that the danger is so great, what wise man wouldn't pursue the search of his heart both day and night, till he is assured of his safety? Consider how small the labor of this duty is, compared to that sorrow which follows its neglect. You can endure toiling and sweating from year to year to prevent poverty; why not spend a little time in self-examination to prevent eternal misery? By neglecting this duty, you can scarcely do Satan a greater pleasure, nor yourself a greater injury. It is the grand design of the devil, in all his temptations, to deceive you and keep you ignorant of your danger till you feel the everlasting flames. Would you join with him to deceive yourself? If you do this for him, then you do most of his work. Has he deserved so much from you, that you should assist him in such a design as your damnation? The time is near when God will search you. If it is only by affliction in this life, it will make you wish you had tried and judged yourself, so you might have escaped the judgment of God. It was a terrifying voice to Adam, "Where are you? Have you eaten of the tree?" ^{Gen 3:9, 11} And to Cain, "Where is your brother?" ^{Gen 4:9} Men "don't consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness," says the Lord; "now their own doings have surrounded them. They are before my face." ^{Hos 7:2}

Consider also what *the sweet effects* of this self-examination would be. If you are upright and godly, it will lead you straight toward the assurance of God's love; if you are not, though it will trouble you at present, it will tend to your happiness, and at length it will lead you to the assurance of that happiness. Isn't it desirable to know what will befall us hereafter; especially what will befall our souls, and what place and state we must be in forever? Just as that knowledge is desirable in itself, how much greater will the comfort be of that certainty of salvation! What sweet thoughts you will have of God! All that greatness and justice which is the terror of others, will be your joy. How sweet may your thoughts of Christ be, and the blood he has shed, and the benefits he has procured! How welcome the word of God will be to you, and "how beautiful the very feet of those who bring it!" ^{Rom 10:15} How sweet will be the promises, when you are sure they are your own! The very threatenings will occasion your comfort, to remember that you have escaped them. What boldness and comfort may you then have in prayer when you can say "Our Father" in full assurance? ^{Mat 6:9} It will make the Lord's supper a refreshing feast to your soul. It will multiply the sweetness of every common mercy. How comfortably may you then undergo all afflictions! How it will sweeten your forethoughts of death and judgment, of heaven and hell! How lively will it make you in the work of the Lord, and how profitable to all those around you! What vigor it will infuse into all your graces and affections! How it will kindle your repentance, inflame your love, quicken your desires, and confirm your faith. It will make you a fountain of continual rejoicing; overflow your heart with thankfulness; raise you high in the delightful work of praise; help you to be heavenly-minded, and render you persevering in all of it! All these sweet effects of assurance would make your life a heaven on earth.

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

Though I am certain these motives have the weight of reason in them, I am jealous, reader, lest you lay aside the book as if you had nothing more to do, and never set yourself to the practice of the duty. The case in hand is of the greatest moment: whether you will everlastingly live in heaven, or hell. I request you here, in behalf of your soul — indeed, I charge you, in the name of the Lord — that you defer no longer, but take your heart to task in good earnest, and think to yourself, “Is it so easy, so common, and so dangerous to be mistaken? Are there so many wrong ways? Is the heart so deceitful? Why then do I not search into every corner till I know my state? Must I shortly undergo the trial at the bar of Christ, and will I not now try myself? What condition would I be in, if I then failed in salvation? May I know by a little diligent inquiry now, and yet refuse the labor?”

But perhaps you will say, “I don’t know how to do it.” I am now going to give you directions in that. But, alas! It will be in vain if you are not resolved to *practice* them. Will you, therefore, before you go any further, promise here before the Lord, to set yourself upon the speedy performance of the duty, according to the directions I will lay down from the word of God? I demand nothing unreasonable or impossible. It is only to give a few hours to know what will become of you forever. If a neighbor, or a friend, desired but an hour of your time in conversation, or business, or anything in which you may be of service, surely you wouldn’t deny it. How much less should you deny this to yourself in so great a matter! I pray you, take this request from me as if I presented it to you on my knees, in the name of Christ. In return, I will get on my knees to Christ, to beg that he persuade your heart to the duty.

4. *The directions for how to examine yourself* are such as these:

Empty your mind of all other cares and thoughts so that they may not distract or divide your mind. This work itself will be enough without joining it with others. Then fall down before God in hearty prayer, desiring the assistance of his Spirit to reveal to you the plain truth of your condition, and to enlighten you in the whole progress of this work. Choose the most convenient time and place. Let the place be the most private, and the time when you have nothing to interrupt you; and if possible, let it be the *present* time. Have in readiness, either in memory or in writing, some scriptures containing the descriptions of the saints and the Gospel terms of salvation, and convince yourself thoroughly of their infallible truth. Then proceed to put the question to yourself. Don’t let it be whether there is any good in you at all; nor whether you have such and such a degree and measure of grace — but whether such a *saving grace* is in you in sincerity or not. If your heart draws back from the work, force it on. Lay your command upon it. Let reason interpose, and use its authority. Indeed, lay the command of God upon it, and charge it to obey on pain of His displeasure. Let conscience also do its office, till your heart is excited to the work. Nor let your heart trifle away the time when it should be diligently at work. Do as the psalmist: “My spirit made diligent search.” ^{Psa 77.6} He that can prevail with his own heart, will also prevail with God.

If you are still in doubt after all your pains, then seek help. Go to someone who is godly, experienced, able, and faithful; tell him your case, and desire his best advice. Use the judgment of such a person, as you would use that of a physician for your body. Though this can afford you no full certainty, it may be a great help to stay and direct you. But don’t make it a pretence to put off your *own* self-examination. Only use it as one of the last remedies, when your own endeavors will not serve.

When you have discovered your true state, pass sentence on yourself accordingly: either that you are a true Christian, or you are not. Don’t pass this sentence rashly, or with self-flattery, or with melancholy terrors. Rather, do it deliberately, truly, and according to your conscience, as convinced by Scripture and reason. Labor to get your heart affected with its condition, according to the sentence passed on it. If you are graceless, think of your misery; if you are renewed and sanctified, think what a blessed state the Lord has brought you into. Pursue these thoughts till they have left their impression on your heart. Write this sentence at least in your memory: “At such a time, upon thorough examination, I found my state to be thus, or thus.” Such a record will be very useful to you afterward. Don’t trust to this one discovery, so as to try yourself no more. Don’t let it hinder you in the daily search of your ways, nor be discouraged if the trial must be often repeated. Especially take heed if you are unregenerate, not to conclude what your future state is, by your present state. Don’t say, “Because I am ungodly, I will die so;

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

because I am a hypocrite, I will continue so." *Don't despair*. Nothing but your unwillingness can keep you from Christ, even if up to now you have abused him and dissembled with him.

5. Now let me add some *marks* by which you may test your title to the *Saints' Rest*. I will only mention these two: taking God for your chief good, and heartily accepting Christ as your only Savior and Lord.

Every soul that has a title to this rest, *places his chief happiness in God*. This rest consists in the full and glorious enjoyment of God. The one who doesn't make God his chief good and ultimate end, is at heart a pagan and a vile idolater. Let me ask you, then: "Do you truly consider it your chief happiness to enjoy the Lord in glory, or do you not?" Can you say, "The Lord is my portion?" ^{Lam 3:24} "Whom do I have in heaven but you? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides you?" ^{Psa 73:25} If you are an heir of the *Saints' Rest*, it will be so with you. Though the flesh will plead for its own delights, and the world will creep into your affections, yet in your ordinary, settled, prevailing judgment and affections, *you prefer God before all things in the world*. You make him the very end of your desires and endeavors. The very reason why you hear, and pray, and desire to live on earth, is chiefly this: that you may seek the Lord, and make sure of your rest. Though you don't seek it as zealously as you should, it is still your chief desire and endeavor, so that nothing else is desired or preferred above it. You will think that no labor or suffering is too great to obtain it. And though the flesh may sometimes shrink back, you are resolved and ready to go through all for it. Your esteem for it will also be so high, and your affection for it so great, that you wouldn't exchange your title to it and hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. If God were to set before you an eternity of earthly pleasure on the one hand, and the *Saints' Rest* on the other, and bid you to choose, you would refuse the world and choose this rest.

But if you are yet *unsanctified*, then you do in your heart prefer your worldly happiness before God; and though your *tongue* may say that God is your chief good, your *heart* does not esteem Him so. For the world is the chief end of your desires and endeavors. Your very heart is set upon it. Your greatest care and labor is to maintain your credit or fleshly delights. But the life to come has little of your care or labor. You never perceived so much excellence in the unseen glory of another world, as to draw your heart after it, and bring you to labor heartily for it. The little pains you give for it are but a secondary effort. God has but the world's leftovers — only that time and labor which you can spare from the world, or those few cold and careless thoughts which follow your constant, earnest, and delightful thoughts of earthly things. Neither would you do anything at all for heaven, if you knew how to keep the world. But lest you be turned into hell when you can no longer keep the world, you therefore do something. For the same reason, you think that the way of God is too strict, and you won't be persuaded to the constant labor of walking according to the Gospel rule. And when it comes to the trial — that you must forsake either Christ, or your worldly happiness — you would risk heaven rather than earth, and wilfully deny your obedience to God. And certainly if God would but let you live in health and wealth forever on this earth, you would think it was a better state than rest. Let those who would, seek heaven; you think *this world* is your chief happiness. This is your case if you are still an unregenerate person, and have no title to the *Saints' Rest*.

If you are *sanctified*, then just as you take God for your chief good, you heartily *accept Christ* as your only Savior and Lord, to bring you to this rest. The former mark was the sum of the first and great command of the law, "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart." ^{Mat 22:37} The second mark is the sum of the command of the Gospel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." ^{Act 16:31} And the performance of these two is the whole of godliness and Christianity. This mark is but the definition of faith. Do you heartily consent that Christ alone will be your Savior, and trust to your duties and works no further than as means appointed in subordination to him? Are you looking at them as not able in the least measure to satisfy the curse of the law, or as a legal righteousness or any part of it — but consent to trust your salvation on the redemption made by Christ? Are you also content to take him for your only Lord and King, to govern and guide you by his laws and Spirit, and to obey him even when he commands the hardest duties, and those which most cross the desires of the flesh? Is it your sorrow

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

when you break your resolution in this, and your joy when you keep closest in obedience to him? Would you not exchange your Lord and Master for all the world? This is how it is with every true Christian.

But if you are a *hypocrite*, it is far otherwise. You may call Christ your Lord and your Savior, but you never found yourself so lost without him, that it drove you to seek him, and trust him, and lay your salvation on him alone — at least, you never heartily consented that he should govern you as your Lord, nor resigned your soul and life to be ruled by him, nor took his word as the law of your thoughts and actions. Doubtless you are willing to be saved from hell by Christ when you *die*; but in the meantime, he commands you no further than is consistent with your credit, or pleasure, or other worldly ends! And if he let you, you would far rather live after the world and the flesh, than after the Word and the Spirit. Though you may now and then have a motion or purpose to the contrary, yet what I have mentioned is the ordinary desire and choice of your heart. You are therefore *not* a true believer in Christ. For though you confess him in *words*, yet you deny him in *works*, “being abominable and disobedient, a reprobate unto every good work.” ^{Tit 1.16} This is the case of those who will be shut out of the *Saints' Rest*.

Observe, it is *the consent of the heart*, or *will*, which I especially lay down to be inquired about. I don't ask whether you are assured of salvation, or whether you can believe that your sins are pardoned, and that you are beloved by God in Christ. These are not parts of justifying faith, but excellent *fruits* of it; and those who receive them are comforted by them. But perhaps you may never receive them while you live, and yet you can be a true heir of rest. Don't say then, “I cannot believe that my sins are pardoned, or that I am in God's favor; and therefore I am not a true believer.” This is a most mistaken conclusion. The question is whether you heartily accept Christ, so that you may be pardoned, reconciled to God, and thus saved. Do you consent that He will be your Lord, who has bought you, and that he will bring you to heaven in his own way? *This* is justifying, saving faith, and the mark by which you must try yourself.

Yet still observe that all this consent must be hearty and real, not feigned or with reservations. It is not like the consent of the dissembling son, who said, “I go, sir, but did not go.” ^{Mat 21.30} If any govern you more than Christ, you are not his disciple. I am sure these two marks are what every Christian has, and none but sincere Christians. O that the Lord would now persuade you to the close performance of this self-trial! that you may not tremble with horror of soul when the Judge of the world tries you, but be able to prove your title to rest; that the prospect and approach of death and judgment may raise your spirits and fill you with joy.

On the whole, if Christians want comforts that won't deceive them, let them make it the great labor of their lives to grow in grace, to strengthen and advance the interest of Christ in their souls, and to weaken and subdue the interest of the flesh. Don't deceive yourselves with a persuasion that Christ has done it all, and left you nothing to do. It is of great importance to our assurance and salvation, to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. And in order to do that, we stand always armed upon our watch, and valiantly and patiently fight it out. Indeed, it is so great a part of our baptismal obligations, that the one who doesn't perform it, is no more than a nominal Christian. It is not to everyone who presumptuously believes, but “to him that overcomes, that Christ will give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and written in the stone a new name which no man knows, except the one who receives it;” ^{Rev 2.17} “He will eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God, and will not be hurt by the second death.” ^{Rev 2.7, 11} “Christ will confess his name before his Father, and before his angels,” ^{Rev 3.5} “and make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he will go no more out; and he will write upon him the name of his God, and the name of the city of his God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from his God, and will write upon him his new name.” ^{Rev 3.12} Indeed, “He will grant to sit with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and has set down with his Father on his throne. He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ^{Rev 3.21-22}

VIII. How to Discern our Title to the Saints' Rest

CHAPTER IX.

THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO EXCITE OTHERS TO SEEK THIS REST.

The author laments that Christians do so little to help others to obtain the Saints' Rest: I. Shows the nature of this duty; particularly, 1. In having our hearts affected with the misery of our brother's souls; 2. In taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation; 3. In promoting their profit by public ordinances. II. Assigns various reasons for why this duty is so neglected, and answers some objections against it. III. Urges the discharge of it, by several considerations: 1. Addressed to those who have knowledge, learning, and utterance; 2. Those who are acquainted with sinners; 3. Physicians who attend dying men; 4. Persons of wealth and power; 5. Ministers; and 6. Those who are entrusted with the care of children or servants. The chapter concludes with an earnest request to Christian parents to be faithful to their trust.

Hasn't God set before us such a glorious prize as the *Saints' Rest*, and made us capable of such inconceivable happiness? Why, then, don't all the children of this kingdom exert themselves more to help others to enjoy it? Alas! How little are the poor souls around us beholden to most of us!

We see the glory of the kingdom, and they don't; we see the misery of those who are outside of it, and they don't; we see some who are wandering quite out of the way, and we know that if they keep on, they will never come there; and they themselves don't discern it. And yet we won't seriously show them their danger and error, and help to bring them into the way, that they may live. Alas! How few Christians are to be found who set themselves with all their might to save souls! It is no thanks to us if heaven is not empty, and if the souls of our brothers don't perish forever. Considering how important this duty is to the glory of God and the happiness of men, I will show you *how* it is to be performed, and *why* it is so neglected; and then I will offer some considerations to persuade you to it.

I. First. THE DUTY of exciting and helping others to discern their title to the Saints' Rest.

This doesn't mean that every man should become a public preacher, or that anyone should go beyond the bounds of their particular calling. It consists much less in promoting a party spirit — and least of all, in speaking against men's faults behind their backs, while being silent before their faces. This duty is of another nature, and it consists of the following things: in having our hearts affected with the misery of our brothers' souls; in taking all opportunities to instruct them in the way of salvation; and in promoting their profit by public ordinances.

1. Our *hearts must be affected* with the misery of our brothers' souls. We must be compassionate toward them, and yearn for their recovery and salvation. If we earnestly longed for their conversion, and our hearts were solicitous to do them good, it would set us to work, and God would bless it.

2. We must take *every opportunity* that we possibly can to instruct them how to attain salvation. If the person is ignorant, labor to make him understand the chief happiness of man; how far man was once possessed of it; the covenant that God then made with man; how man broke it; and what penalty he incurred; and into what misery he brought himself. Teach him his need of a Redeemer; how Christ mercifully interposed and bore the penalty; what the new covenant is; how men are drawn to Christ; and what are the riches and privileges which believers have in him. If he is not moved by these things, then show him the excellence of the glory he neglects; the extremity and eternity of the torments of the damned; the justice of enduring them for wilfully refusing grace; the certainty, nearness, and terrors of death and judgment; the vanity of all things below; the sinfulness of sin; the preciousness of Christ; the necessity of regeneration, faith, and holiness, and their true nature. If after all this, you find him entertaining false hopes, then urge him to examine his state; show him the necessity of doing so; help him in it; don't leave him till you have convinced him of his misery and remedy. Show him how vain and destructive it is to join Christ with his own duties, as if to compose his own justifying righteousness. Yet be sure to draw him to use all means: such as hearing and reading the word, calling upon God, and associating with the godly. Persuade him to forsake sin, avoid all temptations to sin (especially evil companions), and to wait patiently on God in the use of means, as the way in which God will be found.

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

But because the manner of performing this work is of great moment, observe these rules:

Enter upon it with *right intentions*. Aim at the glory of God in the person's salvation. Don't do it to get a name or esteem for yourself, or to bring men to depend upon you, or to get followers; do it in obedience to Christ, in imitation of him, and in tender love toward men's souls. Don't be like those who labor to reform their children or servants from those things which are against their own profit or humor, but who never seek to save their souls in the way which God has appointed.

Do it *speedily*. Just as you wouldn't have them delay their return, don't delay seeking their return. While you are purposing to teach and help him, the man goes deeper in debt; wrath is heaping up; sin is taking root; habit fastens him; temptations to sin multiply; conscience grows seared; the heart is hardened; the devil rules; Christ is shut out; the Spirit is resisted; God is daily dishonored; His law is violated; He is robbed of that service which he should have; time runs on; death and judgment are at the door; and what if the man dies and drops into hell while you are still purposing to prevent it! If a man were in bodily distress, you "must not say to him, 'Go, and come back tomorrow; I will give it to you then;' when you have it with you *now*." ^{Pro 3.28} How much less may you delay the succor of his soul! That physician who negligently delays till his patient is dead or past cure, is no better than a murderer. Set aside your excuses, then, and all lesser business, and "exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." ^{Heb 3.13} Let your exhortation proceed from compassion and love. To jeer and scoff, to rail and vilify, is not a likely way to reform men, nor convert them to God. Go to poor sinners with tears in your eyes, so they may see that you believe they are miserable, and you unfeignedly pity their case. Deal with them with earnest, humble entreaties. Let them perceive that it is the desire of your heart to do them good; that you have no other end but their everlasting happiness; and that it is your sense of their danger, and your love for their souls, that forces you to speak — even because you "know the terror of the Lord," ^{2Cor 5.11} and you fear that you might see them in eternal torments. Say to them, "Friend, you know I seek no advantage of my own: the method to please you and to keep your friendship, would be to soothe you in your ways, or to leave you alone; but love won't allow me to see you perish, and be silent. I seek nothing from your hands but what is necessary to your own happiness. It is you who will have the gain and comfort if you come to Christ." If we were thus to go to every ignorant and wicked neighbor, what blessed fruit we would quickly see!

Do it with all possible *plainness and faithfulness*. Don't make their sins less than they are, nor encourage them in a false hope. If you see the case is dangerous, speak plainly:

"Neighbor, I am afraid God has not yet renewed your soul; I fear you are not yet recovered 'from the power of Satan to God;' ^{Act 26.18} I fear you haven't chosen Christ above all, nor unfeignedly taken him for your sovereign Lord. If you had, surely you wouldn't dare to so easily disobey him, or neglect his worship in your family and in public; you couldn't so eagerly follow the world, and talk of nothing but the things of the world. If you were 'in Christ,' you would be 'a new creature; old things' would be 'passed away, and all things' would 'become new.' ^{2Cor 5.17} You would have new thoughts, new conduct, new company, new endeavors, and a new life. Certainly without these you can never be saved. You may *think* otherwise, and *hope* otherwise, as long as you will; but your hopes will all deceive you, and perish with you."

You must faithfully deal with men this way if you ever intend to do them good. It isn't the same in curing men's souls, as it is in curing their bodies, where they mustn't know their danger lest it hinder the cure. Here they are agents in their own cure; and if they don't know their misery, they will never bewail it, or know their need of a Savior.

Also, do it *seriously, zealously, and effectually*. Labor to make men know that heaven and hell are not matters to be played with, or passed over with a few careless thoughts. Say to them,

"It is most certain that one of these days, you will be in everlasting joy or torment; and doesn't that awaken you? Are there so few who find the way of life, and so many who go the way of death? Is it so hard to escape or so easy to miscarry? And yet you sit still and trifle? What do you mean by that? The

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

world is passing away; its pleasures, honors, and profits are fading and leaving you. Eternity is a little before you. God is just and jealous; his threatenings are true; the great day will be terrible; time is running out; your life is uncertain; you are far behind; your case is dangerous. If you die tomorrow, how unready are you! With what terror your soul will leave the body! And are you still loitering? Consider, all this while God is waiting on your leisure; his patience bears; his long-suffering forbears; his mercy entreats you; Christ offers you his blood and merits; the Spirit is persuading; conscience is accusing; Satan waits to have you. *This* is your time: it's *now* or *never*. Would you rather burn in hell than repent on earth; have devils be your tormentors, than Christ be your governor? Would you renounce your part in God and glory, rather than renounce your sins? O friends, what do you think of these things? God has made you men. Don't renounce your reason where you should chiefly use it."

Alas! It is not a few dull words between jest and earnest, between sleeping and waking, that will rouse a dead-hearted sinner. If a house is on fire you won't make a cold oration on the nature and danger of fire; you will run and cry, *Fire! fire!* To tell a man about his sins as softly as Eli told his sons; or to reprove him as gently as Jehoshaphat reproved Ahab — "Let the king not say so" ^{1Kng 22.8} — usually does as much harm as good. Loathness to displease men makes us undo them.

Yet, lest you run to extremes, I advise you to do it with *prudence and discretion*. Choose the fittest season. Don't deal with men when they are in a passion, or where they will take it as a disgrace. When the earth is soft, the plough enters. Take a man when he is under affliction, or newly impressed under a sermon. Christian faithfulness requires us to do good not only when it falls in our way, but to watch for opportunities. ^{Gal 6.10} Suit yourself also to the quality and temper of the person. You must deal with the ingenious more by argument than persuasion. There is need of both, for the ignorant. The affections of the convinced should be chiefly excited. The obstinate must be sharply reproved. The timorous must be dealt with tenderly. Love, and plainness, and seriousness must be taken with everyone; but some can hardly bear words of terror. Also, use the most apt expressions. Unseemly language makes the hearers loathe the food they should live by, especially if they are men of curious ears ²³ and carnal hearts.

Let all your reproofs and exhortations be backed with the authority of God. Let sinners be convinced that you don't speak merely your own thoughts. Turn them to the very chapter and verse where their sin is condemned, and their duty is commanded. The voice of man is contemptible, but the voice of God is awful and terrible. Those who may reject your words, dare not reject the words of the Almighty.

Be frequent with men in this duty of exhortation. If we are "always to pray, and not to faint," ^{Luk 18.1} because God would have us be importunate with *Him*, then the same course will no doubt most prevail with men. Therefore, we are commanded "to exhort one another daily," ^{Heb 3.13} and "with all long-suffering." ^{2Tim 4.2} The fire isn't always ignited by the flint in one stroke; nor are men's affections kindled at the first exhortation. And even if they were, if they aren't followed up, they will soon grow cold again. Follow sinners with your loving and earnest entreaties, and give them no rest in their sin. This is true charity, the way to save men's souls, and it will afford you comfort upon review.

Strive to bring all your exhortations to a result. If we speak the most convincing words, but all our care is done with our speech, then we will seldom prosper in our labors. But God usually blesses the labors of those whose very heart is set upon the *conversion* of their hearers, and who are therefore inquiring about the success of their work. If you reprove a sin, don't cease till the sinner promises you to leave it, and to avoid its occasions. If you are exhorting to a duty, urge their promise to begin without delay. If you would draw men to Christ, don't leave them till they are brought to confess the misery of their present unregenerate state, the necessity of Christ and of a change, and they have promised you to be faithful in the use of means. O that all Christians would take this course with all their neighbors who are enslaved to sin, and strangers to Christ!

Once more, be sure *your example* exhorts as well as your words. Let them see you constant in all the duties to which you persuade them. Let them see in your life, that supremacy over the world, which

²³ *Curious*: deviating from the usual or expected. There are those who are naturally prone to mishear what is said.

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

your lips recommend. Let them see by your constant labors for heaven, that you indeed believe what you would have them believe. A holy and heavenly life is a continual sting to the consciences of sinners around you, and it continually solicits them to change their course.

3. Besides the duty of private admonition, you must endeavor to *help men profit by public ordinances*. In order to do that, endeavor to procure faithful ministers for them where they are lacking. “How will they hear without a preacher?” ^{Rom 10.14} Improve your interest and diligence to this end, till you prevail. Extend your purposes to the utmost. How many souls may be saved by the ministry you have procured! It is a higher and nobler charity than relieving their bodies. What abundance of good might great men do, if they would support in academic education, those youth whom they have first carefully chosen for their talents and piety, till they are fit for the ministry! And when a faithful ministry is obtained, help poor souls to receive the fruit of it; draw them to constantly attend it; remind them often of what they heard; if possible, let them hear it repeated in their families or elsewhere. Promote their frequent meeting together, besides meeting publicly in the congregation — not as a separate church, but as a part of the church, more diligent than the rest in redeeming time and helping each other’s souls heavenward. Also labor to keep the ordinances and ministry in esteem. No man is worked on by what is despised. An apostle says, “We beseech you, brothers, to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work’s sake.” ^{1Th 5.12-13}

II. Secondly. *Let us inquire what may be the CAUSES OF THE GROSS NEGLECT of this duty, so that the hindrances, being discovered, may more easily be overcome.*

One hindrance is *men’s own sin and guilt*. They haven’t been enthralled with heavenly delights; how then would they draw others to earnestly seek them? They haven’t felt their own lost condition, nor their need of Christ, nor the renewing work of the Spirit; how then can they reveal these to others? They are guilty of the sins they should reprove, and this makes them ashamed to reprove others.

Another is a *secret infidelity* prevailing in men’s hearts. If we truly believed that all the unregenerate and unholy will be eternally tormented, how could we refrain from speaking out, or avoid bursting into tears when we look them in the face — especially when they are our near and dear friends? Thus, secret unbelief consumes the vigor of each grace and duty. O Christian, if you truly believed that your ungodly neighbors, wife, husband, or child, would certainly lie forever in hell unless they are thoroughly changed before death snatches them away, would this not make you address them day and night till they were persuaded? If it were not for this cursed unbelief, our own souls and those of our neighbors would gain more by us than they do.

These attempts are also greatly hindered by our *lack of charity and compassion* for men’s souls. We look at miserable souls and pass by, like the priest and Levite passed by the wounded man. ^{Luk 10.30-32} Though the sinner, wounded by sin and captivated by Satan, doesn’t desire your help himself, yet his misery cries aloud to you. If God had not heard the cry of our miseries before he heard the cry of our prayers, and been moved by his own pity before he was moved by our importunity, we might have long continued to be the slaves of Satan. You pray to God for them to open their eyes and turn their hearts; why not endeavor for their conversion if that’s what you desire? And if you don’t desire it, why do you ask for it? Why don’t you ask them to consider and turn, as well as pray to God to convert and turn them? If you saw your neighbor had fallen into a pit, and prayed for God to help him out, but didn’t put out your hand to help him, or direct him to help himself, would no one censure you for your cruelty and hypocrisy? It is as true of the soul as of the body. If any man “sees his brother in need, and closes off his compassion from him, how does the *love of God dwell in him?*” ^{1Joh 3.17} or what love does he have for his brother’s soul?

We are also hindered by a base *man-pleasing* disposition. We are so desirous to keep in credit and favor with men, that it makes us most unreasonably neglect our own duty. He is a foolish and unfaithful physician who would let a sick man die for fear of troubling him. If our friends are deranged, we do nothing that tends to their hurt. And yet, when they are beside themselves as to salvation, and in their

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

madness they are rushing to damnation, we won't stop them for fear of displeasing them. How can we be Christians, if we "love the praise of men more than the praise of God?" ^{Joh 12.43} For if we "seek to please men, we will not be the servants of Christ." ^{Gal 1.10}

It is common to be hindered by sinful *bashfulness*. When we should be shaming men out of their sins, we are ashamed of our own duties. These sinners condemn us, when they wouldn't blush to swear, get drunk, or neglect the worship of God. Why would we blush to tell them about it, and dissuade them from it? Bashfulness is unseemly in cases of necessity. This isn't a work to be ashamed of — to obey God in persuading men to turn from their sins to Christ. Reader, hasn't your conscience told you of your duty many a time, and urged you to speak to poor sinners? And yet you have been ashamed to open your mouth; so you left them alone to sink or swim. O read and tremble: "Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." ^{Mar 8.38}

An *idle and impatient* spirit hinders us. It is an ungrateful work, and sometimes it makes men our enemies. Besides, it seldom succeeds at first, unless it is followed up. You must be long in teaching the ignorant, and persuading the obstinate. We don't consider the patience that God showed us when we were in our sins. Woe to us if God had been as impatient with us as we are with others!

Another hindrance is, *self-seeking*. "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," and their brothers'. ^{Phi 2.21} With many, *pride* is a great impediment. If they were to speak to a great man, and it wouldn't displease him, they would do it. But go among the poor, and take pains with them in their cottages — where is the person who will do it? Many will rejoice in being instrumental to convert a gentleman, and they have good reason; but they overlook the multitude, as if all souls were not alike to God. Alas! These men little consider how low Christ stooped to us! Few rich, and noble, and wise are called. ^{1Cor 1.26} It is the poor who received the glad tidings of the Gospel. ^{Luk 2.8-10} And yet with some, their ignorance of the duty hinders them from performing it. They think it isn't a duty, or at least it isn't *their* duty. If this is your case, reader, I hope you are now acquainted with your duty, and will set upon it.

Don't object to this duty by claiming you are *unable* to manage an exhortation. Either set those to work who are more able, or else faithfully and humbly use the small ability that you have; tell them, as a weak man may, what *God says in his word*.

Don't decline the duty because it is your superior who needs advice and exhortation, Order must be dispensed with in cases of necessity. Even if it is a husband, a parent, or a minister, you must teach him in such a case. If parents are in want, children must relieve them. If a husband is sick, the wife must take his place in family affairs. If the rich are reduced to beggary, they must receive charity. If the physician is sick, somebody must look after him. Thus, the meanest servant must admonish his master, and the child his parent, and the wife her husband, and the people their minister — so that it may be done when there is real need, but with all possible humility, modesty, and meekness.

Don't say, this will make us all preachers — for *every* good Christian is a teacher, and has charge of his neighbor's soul. Every man is a physician when a regular physician can't be had, and when the hurt is so small that any man may relieve it. And in the same cases, every man must be a teacher. Don't despair of success. Can't God give it? And must it not be done by *means*?

Don't plead that it will only be casting pearls before swine. When you are in danger of being torn in pieces, Christ would have you forbear; but what is that to you who are in no such danger? As long as they are willing to hear, you have encouragement to speak; and you may not toss them aside like contemptible swine.

Don't say, "It is a friend on whom I much depend; and by telling him his sin and misery, I may lose his love, and be undone." Is his love more valued than his safety, or your own benefit, than the salvation of his soul? Or will you connive in his damnation, because he is your friend? Is that your best requital of his friendship? Would you rather he burn in hell forever, than lose his favor, or the maintenance you have from him?

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

III. Thirdly. So that all who fear God may be excited to do their utmost to help others to this blessed rest, *let me entreat you to consider the following* MOTIVES:

For instance, not only *nature*, but especially *grace*, disposes the soul to communicate good. Therefore, to neglect this work is a sin against both nature and grace. Wouldn't you think someone is unnatural if he allowed his children or neighbors to starve in the streets, while he has provision at hand? And isn't someone more unnatural, who would let them perish eternally, and not open his mouth to save them? An unmerciful, cruel man is a monster to be abhorred by all. If God had asked you to give them your whole estate, or lay down your life to save them — and you won't expend a little breath to save them — then you would surely have refused. Isn't the soul of a husband, wife, child, or neighbor, worth a few words? Cruelty to men's bodies is a most damnable sin; but cruelty to their souls is much more so; for the soul is of greater worth than the body, and eternity than time. Little do you know what many a soul may now be feeling in hell, who died in their sins for lack of your faithful admonition. ²⁴

Consider *what Christ did* to save souls. He thought they were worth his blood; don't we think they are worth our breath? Won't you do a little, where Christ has done so much? Consider what fit objects of pity ungodly people are. They are dead in trespasses and sins; they don't have hearts to feel their miseries, nor to pity themselves. If others don't pity them, they will have no pity; for it is the nature of their disease to make them pitiless to themselves — indeed, they are their own cruelest destroyers.

Consider, *this was once your own case*. It was God's argument to the Israelites, to be kind to strangers because they themselves had been "strangers in the land of Egypt." ^{Exo 22.21} So you should pity those who are strangers to Christ, and to the hopes and comforts of the saints, because you were once strangers to them yourselves. Consider your relation to them. It is your neighbor, your *brother* — one whom you are bound to love as yourself. Someone who doesn't love his brother whom he sees daily, doesn't love God whom he never saw. ^{1Joh 4.20} And does someone love his brother, who would see him go to hell, and never hinder him?

Consider what *a load of guilt* this neglect lays upon your own soul. You are guilty of the murder and damnation of all those souls whom you thus neglect; and of every sin they now commit; and of all the dishonor done to God by it; and of all those judgments which their sins bring upon the town or country where they live. Consider what it will be like to look at your poor friends in eternal flames, and think that your neglect was a great cause of it. If you were to perish there with them, it would be no small aggravation of your torment. If you are in heaven, it would surely be a sad thought (if it were possible for any sorrow to dwell there) to hear a multitude of poor souls cry out, forever, "O, if you had but told me plainly of my sin and danger, and brought it home to me, I might have escaped all this torment, and now be at rest!" What a sad voice this will be! Consider what a joy it will be in heaven, to meet those whom you have been the means to bring there; to see their faces, and join with them forever in the praises of God, whom you were the happy instruments of bringing to the knowledge and obedience of Jesus Christ!

Consider how many souls you may have *drawn into the way of damnation*, or hardened in it. We have had in the days of our ignorance, our companions in sin, whom we enticed or encouraged. And doesn't it become us to do as much to *save* men as we have done to *destroy* them? Consider how diligent all the enemies of these poor souls are, to draw them to hell. The devil is tempting them day and night; their inward lusts are still working for their ruin; the flesh is still pleading for its delights; their old companions are increasing their dislike of holiness. And if nobody is diligent in helping them to heaven, what is likely to become of them?

Consider how deep the neglect of this duty will wound *when conscience is awakened to it*. When a man comes to die, conscience will ask him, "What good have you done in your lifetime? The saving of souls is the greatest good work; what have you done toward it? How many have you dealt faithfully with?" I have often observed that the consciences of dying men very much wounded them for this omission. For

²⁴ What follows is Baxter's view that a sinner's salvation does not depend on Christ alone, but also on us. — WHG

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

my own part, when I have been near death, my conscience has accused me more for this, than for any sin. It would bring every ignorant, profane neighbor to my remembrance, to whom I never made known their danger. It would tell me, “You should have gone to them in private, and told them plainly of their desperate danger, though it was when you should have eaten or slept, if you had no other time.”

Conscience would remind me how at some such time, I was in company with the ignorant, or riding by the way with a wilful sinner, and had a fit opportunity to deal with him, but didn’t; or at least, I did it to little purpose. The Lord grant that I may better obey my conscience while I have time, that it may have less to accuse me of at death! Consider what a seasonable time you now have for this work. There are times in which it is not safe to speak — it may cost you your liberty or your life. Yet, your neighbors will shortly die and so will you. Speak to them, therefore, while you may.

Consider, though *this is a work of greatest charity*, every one of you may perform it; the poorest as well as the richest: everyone has a tongue to speak to a sinner.

Once more, consider *the happy consequences* of this work where it is faithfully done. You may be instrumental in saving souls for whom Christ came down and died, and in whom the angels of God rejoice. Such souls will bless you here and hereafter; God will have much glory by it; the church will be multiplied and edified by it; your own soul will enjoy more improvement and vigor in the divine life, more peace of conscience, more rejoicing in spirit. Of all the personal mercies that I ever received, next to the love of God in Christ to my own soul, I most joyfully bless him for the plentiful success of my endeavors upon others. O what fruits, then, I might have seen, if I had been more faithful! I know we need to be very jealous of our deceitful hearts on this point, lest our rejoicing come from our pride. Naturally, we would have the praise of every good work ascribed to ourselves. Yet, to imitate our Father in goodness and mercy, and to rejoice in the degree of them that we attain to, is the duty of every child of God. I therefore tell you my own experience to persuade you that if you but knew what a joyful thing it is, you would follow it night and day through the greatest discouragements.

Up, then, every man who has a tongue and is a servant of Christ, and do some of your Master’s work. Why has He given you a tongue, if not to speak in his service? And how can you serve him more eminently than in laboring for the salvation of souls? He that will pronounce you *blessed* at the last day, and invite you to “the kingdom prepared for you” because you “fed him, and clothed him, and visited him” in his poor members, ^{Mat 25:34f} will surely pronounce you blessed for so great a work as bringing souls to his kingdom. He that says, “you have the poor with you always,” ^{Mat 26:11} has left the ungodly with you always too, that you might still have them to exercise your charity upon. If you have the heart of a Christian or of a man, let it yearn towards your ignorant, ungodly neighbors. Say, as the lepers of Samaria said, “We are not doing well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” ^{2Kng 7:9} Does God have so much mercy on you, and will you not have mercy on your poor neighbors? This duty belongs to all Christians, but especially to some as God has called them to it, or qualified them for it. Therefore, I will more particularly address the exhortation:

1. God especially expects this duty at your hands, to whom he has given more *learning and knowledge*, and endued with better utterance than your neighbors. The strong are made to help the weak, and those who see must direct the blind. God looks for this faithful improvement of your powers and gifts which, if you neglect them, it would be better if you had never received them; for they will but aggravate your condemnation, and be as useless to your own salvation as they were to others.

2. All those who are *particularly acquainted* with some ungodly men, and who have a peculiar interest in them, God looks for this duty at your hands. Christ himself ate and drank with publicans and sinners; but it was only to be their physician, and not their companion. Who knows but that God gave you an interest in them to this end: that you might be the means of their recovery? Those who won’t regard the words of a stranger, may regard a brother, or sister, or husband, or wife, or near friend. Besides that, the bond of friendship engages you to special kindness and compassion.

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

3. *Physicians*, who are much about dying men, should in a special manner, be conscientious of this duty. It is their peculiar advantage that they are at hand with men in sickness and danger, when the ear is more open and the heart less stubborn than in a time of health; and that men look at their physician as a person whose life is in their hands, or at least, who may do much to save them; and therefore they will regard his advice more. You who are of this honorable profession, don't think this a work outside your calling, as if it belonged to none but ministers — unless you think it is outside your calling to be compassionate, or to be Christians. O help, therefore, to fit your patients for heaven! And whether you see they are for life or death, teach them both how to live and die, and point them to a remedy for their souls, just as you do for their bodies. Blessed be God that very many of the chief physicians of this age have, by their eminent piety, vindicated their profession from the common imputation of atheism and profaneness.

4. Men of *wealth and authority*, and who have many dependents, also have excellent advantages for this duty. O what a world of good such gentlemen might do, if they but had hearts to improve their influence over others! Don't you have all your honor and riches from God? Doesn't Christ say, "To whom much is given, much will be required?" If you speak to your dependents for God and their souls, *you* may be regarded, when even a *minister* would be despised. As you value the honor of God, your own comfort, and the salvation of souls, improve your influence over your tenants and neighbors; visit their houses; see whether they worship God in their families; and take all opportunities to press them to their duty. Don't despise them. Remember, God is no respecter of persons. Let men see that you excel others in piety, compassion, and diligence in God's work, just as you do in the riches and honors of the world. I confess that by this means you will be singular, but then you will be singular in glory; for few of the "mighty and noble are called." ^{1Cor 1.26}

5. As for the *ministers of the Gospel*, it is the very work of their calling to help others to heaven. Be sure to make it the main end of your studies and preaching. The able, skilful minister is best skilled in the art of instructing, convincing, persuading, and consequently, of winning souls; and the best sermon is best in these things. When you don't seek God, but yourselves, God will make you the most contemptible of men. What Christ says of your life is true of your reputation: "He that loves it will lose it." ^{Joh 12.25} Let the vigor of your persuasions show that you are sensible of how weighty a business you are sent to. Preach with seriousness and fervor, as men who believe their own doctrine, and know their hearers must be prevailed with, or be damned.

Don't think that all your work is in your studies and pulpit. You are shepherds; you must know every sheep, and what their disease is, and mark their strayings, and help to cure them, and fetch them home. Learn from Paul not only to teach your people "publicly," but "from house to house." ^{Act 20.20} Inquire how they grow in knowledge and holiness, and on what grounds they build their hopes of salvation, and whether they walk uprightly, and perform the duties of their several relations. See whether they worship God in their families, and teach them how to do it. Be familiar with them, that you may maintain your interest in them, and improve it all for God. Know how they profit by public teaching. If any "savor the things of the Spirit" too little, ^{1Cor 2.14} let them be *pitied*, but not *neglected*. If any walk in a disorderly way; recover them with diligence and patience. If they are ignorant, it may be your fault as much as theirs. Don't be asleep while the wolf is awake. Don't deal slightly with anyone. Some ministers won't tell their people plainly of their sins, because those are great men; and some, because they are godly — as if none but the poor and the wicked should be dealt with plainly. Yet, labor to be skilful and discreet, so that your manner may correspond to the excellence of the matter.

Every reasonable soul has both judgment and affection; and every rational, spiritual sermon must have both. Study and pray, and pray and study, till you have become "workmen who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." ^{2Tim 2.15} Thus your people may not be ashamed, nor weary in hearing you. Let your *conduct* teach men, as well as your *doctrine*. Be as forward in a holy and heavenly life as you are in pressing others to it. Let your discourse be edifying and spiritual. Suffer anything, rather than let the Gospel and men's souls suffer. Let men see that you don't use the ministry only for a trade to live

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

by; but that your hearts are set upon the welfare of souls. Whatever meekness, humility, condescension, or self-denial you teach them from the Gospel, teach it to them also by your unfeigned example. Study and strive after unity and peace. Whenever you promote the kingdom of Christ and your people's salvation, do it in a peaceful and loving way. It is a hard thing to maintain in your people a sound understanding, a tender conscience, a lively, gracious, heavenly frame of spirit, and an upright life, amidst contention. It is as hard as keeping your candle lit in the greatest of storms. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he comes, will find so doing." Mat 24.46

6. All you whom God has entrusted with *the care of children and servants*, I would also persuade to this great work of helping others to the heavenly rest. Consider what plain and pressing commands of God *require this* at your hands. "These words you will teach diligently to your children, and will talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up." Deu 6.7 "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Pro 22.6 "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph 6.4 Joshua resolved that "he and his house would serve the Lord." Jos 24.15 And God himself says of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord." Gen 18.19

Consider, it is a duty that you owe your children in point of *justice*. They received from you the defilement and misery of their nature; and therefore you owe them all possible help for their recovery. Consider how near your children are to you: they are part of you. If they prosper when you are dead, you may view it as if you had lived and prospered in them; and shouldn't you be of the same mind for their everlasting rest? Otherwise, you will be witnesses against your own souls. Your care, and pains, and cost for their bodies, will condemn you for your neglect of their precious souls. Indeed, all the brute creation may condemn you. Which of them is not tender of its young?

Consider, God has made your children *your charge*, and your servants too. Everyone would confess that they are the *minister's* charge. But don't you have a greater charge of your own families than any minister can have of them? Doubtless at your hands God will require the blood of their souls. It is the greatest charge you were ever entrusted with, and woe to you, if you allow them to be ignorant or wicked for lack of your instruction or correction. Consider what work there is for you in their dispositions and lives. Theirs is not one sin, but thousands. They have hereditary diseases bred in their nature. The things you must teach them are contrary to the interests and desires of their flesh. May the Lord make you sensible of what a work and charge lie upon you!

Consider what sorrows you prepare for yourselves by the neglect of your children. If they prove thorns in your eyes, they are of your own planting. If you were to repent and be saved, is it nothing to think of their damnation, and of yourself as the occasion of it? And if you die in your sins, how they will cry out against you in hell! "All this was wrong of you; you should have taught us better, and didn't; you should have restrained us from sin and corrected us, but didn't." What an addition such outcries will be to your misery! On the other hand, think what a comfort you may have if you are faithful in this duty! Even if you don't succeed, you have freed your own souls, and may have peace in your own consciences. If you succeed, the comfort is inexpressible, in their love and obedience, their supplying of your wants, and delighting you in all your remaining path to glory. Yes, all your family may fare better for one pious child or servant. But the greatest joy will be when you say, "Lord, here am I, and the children you have given me;" and you will joyfully live with them forever. Consider how much the welfare of the church and the state depends on this duty. Good laws will not reform us, if reformation does not begin at home. This is the cause of all our miseries in the church and the state: the lack of a holy education of children.

I also entreat parents to consider what excellent *advantages* they have for promoting the salvation of their children. They are with you while they are tender and flexible. You have a twig to bend, not an oak. None in the world have such an interest in their affections as you have. You also have the greatest authority over them. Their whole dependence is upon you for maintenance. You best know their temper and inclinations. And you are ever with them, and can never lack opportunities. Especially you mothers, remember this: you are with your children while young, more than their fathers. What pains you take

IX. Our Duty to Excite Others to Seek This Rest

for their bodies! What you suffer to bring them into the world! And won't you take as much pains for saving their souls? Your affections are tender, and doesn't it move you to think of them perishing forever? I beseech you, for the sake of the children of your own flesh, *teach* them, *admonish* them, *watch over* them, and *give them no rest*, till you have brought them to Christ.

I will conclude with this earnest request to all Christian parents who read these lines, that they would have compassion on the souls of their poor children, and be faithful to the great trust that God has put on them. If you cannot do what you *would* for them, do what you *can*. Both the church and the state, the city and the country, groan under the neglect of this weighty duty. Your children don't know God or his laws, but "take his name in vain," ^{Exo 20.7} and slight his worship — and you neither instruct them nor correct them; therefore God corrects both them and you. You are so tender of them, that God must be less tender of both them and you. Don't wonder that God makes you smart for your children's sins; for you are guilty of all they commit by your neglect of your duty to reform them.

Will you resolve, therefore, to enter upon this duty, and neglect it no longer? Remember Eli. Your children are like Moses in the bulrushes, ready to perish if they have no help. If you would not be charged before God as murderers of their souls, nor have them cry out against you in everlasting fire, see that you teach them how to escape it, and bring them up in holiness and in the fear of God. I charge every one of you, upon your allegiance to God, as you will very shortly answer the contrary at your peril, that you neither refuse nor neglect this most necessary duty. If you are not willing to do it, now that you know it is so great a duty, you are rebels, and not true subjects of Jesus Christ. If you are willing, but don't know how, I will add a few words of direction to help you.

Lead them by your own example to prayer, reading, and other religious duties; inform their understandings; store up their memories; rectify their wills; quicken their affections; keep tender their consciences; restrain their tongues, and teach them gracious speech; reform and watch over their outward conduct. To these ends, get them Bibles and pious books, and see that they read them. Examine them often as to what they learn; especially spend the Lord's day in this work; and don't allow them to spend it in sports or idleness. Show them the meaning of what they read or learn. Instruct them out of the holy Scriptures. Keep them out of evil company, and acquaint them with the godly. Especially show them the necessity, excellence, and pleasure of serving God, and labor to fix all upon their hearts.

CHAPTER X.

THE SAINTS' REST IS NOT TO BE EXPECTED ON EARTH.

In order to show the sin and folly of expecting rest here, I. The reasonableness of present afflictions is considered; 1. That they are the way to rest; 2. Keep us from mistaking our rest; 3. From losing our way to it; 4. Quicken our pace toward it; 5. Chiefly trouble our flesh; 6. Under them the sweetest foretastes of rest are often enjoyed. II. How unreasonable to rest in present enjoyments; 1. That it is idolatry; 2. That it contradicts God's end in giving them; 3. Is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered; 4. That to be allowed to take up our rest here is the greatest curse; 5. That it is seeking rest where it is not; 6. That the creatures, without God, would aggravate our misery; 7. And all this is confirmed by experience. III. The unreasonableness of our unwillingness to die, and possess the Saints' Rest, is largely considered.

We have not yet come to our resting place; and does it remain? How great, then, is our sin and folly to seek and expect it *here!* Where is the Christian who doesn't deserve this reproof? We all want continual prosperity, because it is easy and pleasing to the flesh; but we don't consider the unreasonableness of such desires. And when we enjoy convenient houses, goods, lands, and revenues, or the necessary means God has appointed for our spiritual good, we seek rest in these enjoyments. Whether we are in an afflicted or prosperous state, it is apparent that we excessively make the creature our rest. Don't we desire earthly enjoyments more intensely when we want them, than we desire God himself? Don't we delight more in possessing them, than in our enjoyment of God? And if we lose them, doesn't it trouble us more than our loss of God? Isn't it enough that they are refreshing helps on our way to heaven, without making them our heaven itself? Christian reader, I would as willingly make you sensible of this sin as of any sin in the world, if I knew how to do it, for the Lord's great controversy with us is in this point. In order to do this, I most earnestly beseech you to consider the reasonableness of present afflictions, and the unreasonableness of resting in present enjoyments, and also our unwillingness to *die*, that we may possess eternal rest.

I. First. To show the *reasonableness of present afflictions*, consider that they are the way to rest; they keep us from mistaking our rest and losing our way to it; they quicken our pace toward it; they chiefly discomfort our flesh; and God's people often have the sweetest foretastes of their rest under them.

1. Consider that labor and trouble are *common ways* to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Don't you travail and toil first, and rest afterwards? The day for labor is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted any more than the course of nature? It is an established decree "that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God;"^{Act 14:22} and that, "if we suffer, we will also reign with Christ."^{2Tim 2:12} And what are we that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure?

2. Afflictions are exceedingly useful to us, to keep us from *mistaking* our rest. A Christian's motion toward heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Therefore, those means are most profitable, which help the Christian's understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls is to mistake the creature for God, and earth for heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts we have of the world, till afflictions cool and moderate them! Afflictions speak convincingly, and *they* will be heard when *preachers* cannot. Many a poor Christian sometimes bends his thoughts to wealth, flesh-pleasing, or applause, and so he loses his relish of Christ and the joy above — till God breaks in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and breaks down his mountain which he thought was so strong. And then, when he lies in Manasseh's fetters,^{2Chr 33:11} or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is *nothing*, and heaven is *something*. If our dear Lord didn't put these thorns under our head, we would sleep out our lives, and lose our glory.

3. Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from *losing our way* to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns on the right hand and the left, we would hardly keep the way to heaven. If there is but one gap open, how ready we are to find it, and turn off at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

proud, how much sickness or other affliction reduces us! Every Christian may say with Luther, that affliction is one of the best schoolmasters; and say with David, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Your word." ^{Psa 119.67} Many thousands of recovered sinners may cry, "O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that I was ever afflicted!" Not only the "green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff, they comfort us." ^{Psa 23.2, 4} Though the word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word has an easier entrance.

4. Afflictions likewise serve to *quicken our pace* on the way to our rest. It would be well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were drawn to heaven, rather than driven. But seeing that our hearts are so bad that mercy won't do it, it is better to be urged onward with the sharpest scourge, than to loiter, like the foolish virgins, till the door is shut. O what a difference there is between our prayers in health, and those in sickness! between our repentings in prosperity, and those in adversity! Alas! If we didn't sometimes feel the spur, what a slow pace most of us would keep toward heaven! Since our vile natures require it, why should we be unwilling for God to do us good, by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether you go more watchfully and speedily on the way to heaven in your sufferings, than you do in your more pleasing and prosperous state.

5. Consider further, *it is but the flesh* that is chiefly troubled and grieved by afflictions. In most of our sufferings, the soul is free, unless we ourselves wilfully afflict it.

"Why then, O my soul, do you side with this flesh, and complain as it complains? It should be your work to keep it under, and to bring it into subjection. And if God does it for you, should you be discontented? Has pleasing the flesh not been the cause of almost all your spiritual sorrows? Why then may displeasing the flesh not *further* your joy? Should Paul and Silas not sing because their feet are in the stocks? Their *spirits* were not imprisoned. Ah, you unworthy soul! Is this your thanks to God for preferring you so far above your body? When the body is rotting in the grave, you will be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just. In the meantime, don't you have consolation which the flesh knows nothing about? Don't murmur then at God's dealings with your body. If it were for lack of love to you, He would not have dealt this way with all his saints. Never expect your flesh to truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call *love* 'hatred,' and say, 'God is destroying,' when He is *saving*. The flesh is the suffering party in this, and therefore it is not fit to be the judge of it."

If we could but once believe God, and judge his dealings by his word, and by their usefulness to our souls, and with reference to our rest — and if we could shut our ears against all the clamors of the flesh — then we would have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

6. Once more, consider that God seldom gives his people so sweet a *foretaste* of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them when he knows they are needed and will be valued, and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people will be rejoiced by them. Especially when our sufferings are more directly for His cause, he will seldom fail to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys. When did Christ preach greater comfort to his disciples than when "their hearts were sorrowful" at his departure? ^{Joh 16.22} When did he appear among them and say, "Peace be unto you," but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? ^{Joh 20.19} When did Stephen see heaven opened, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? ^{Act 7.55} Isn't that our best state, in which we have the most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we will find ourselves mistaken. Conclude, then, that affliction is not so bad a state for a saint on his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Doesn't he know what is good for us, as well as we? Or isn't He as careful of our good as we are of our own? Woe to us if He weren't much more so, and if he didn't love us better than we love either him or ourselves!

Don't say, "I could bear any other affliction but this." If God had afflicted you where you could bear it, your idol wouldn't have been revealed or removed. Neither say, "If God delivered me soon, I could be

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

content to bear it." Is it nothing, that he has promised it "will work for your good?" Rom 8.28 Isn't it enough that you are sure to be delivered at death? Nor let it be said, "If my affliction didn't disable me from my duty, I could bear it." It doesn't disable you for that duty which tends to your own personal benefit; rather, it is the greatest quickening help you can expect. As for your duty to others, it isn't your duty when God disables you from it. Perhaps you would say, "The godly are my afflictors; if it were ungodly men, I could easily bear it." Whoever may be the instrument, *the affliction is from God*, and the deserving cause is yourself; and isn't it better to look more to God than to yourself? Don't you know that the best men are still sinful in part? Don't plead, "If I but had that consolation which God reserves for suffering times, I would suffer more contentedly; but I don't perceive any such thing." The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Aren't the comforts you desire neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not *suffering* that prepares you for comfort, but the success and *fruit* of that suffering upon your heart.

II. Secondly. To show *the unreasonableness of resting in our present enjoyments*, consider that it is idolizing them. It contradicts God's end in giving them. It is the way to have them refused, withdrawn, or embittered. To be allowed to take up our rest here, is the greatest curse. It is seeking rest where it is not to be found. Created things, without God, only aggravate our misery. To confirm all this, we may consult our own and others' experience.

1. It is gross *idolatry* to make any creature, or means, our rest. Being the soul's rest is *God's* own prerogative. Just as it is evident idolatry to place our rest in riches or honor, so it is but a more refined idolatry to take up our rest in excellent means of grace. How we must offend our dear Lord, when we give him cause to complain, as he did of our fellow idolaters: "My people have been lost sheep; they have forgotten their resting-place. Jer 50.6 My people can find rest in anything rather than in me. They can delight in one another, but not in me. They can rejoice in my creatures and ordinances, but not in me. Indeed, they seek rest in their very labors and duties, but not in me. They would rather be anywhere than be with me. Are *these* their gods? Have *these* redeemed them? Will *these* be better to them than I have been, or than I would be?" If you yourselves had a wife, a husband, a son, who would rather be anywhere than in your company, and was never so merry as when farthest from you, wouldn't you take it badly? So must our God.

2. You *contradict the purposes* of God in giving these enjoyments. He gave them to help you come to him, and yet you take up with them in his stead? He gave them to be refreshments on your journey, and would you dwell in your inn and go no farther? It may be said of all our comforts and ordinances, as it is said of the Israelites, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting-place for them." Num 10.33 So do all God's mercies here. They are not that rest, just as John professed that he was not the Christ — rather, they are "voices crying in this wilderness," Joh 1.23 to bid us prepare; "for the kingdom of God," our true rest, "is at hand." Mat 3.2 Therefore, to rest here, would be to turn all mercies contrary to their own ends and to our own advantage, and to destroy ourselves with that which should help us.

3. It is the way to cause God either to deny the mercies we ask for, or to take from us those we enjoy, or at least embitter them to us. God is nowhere so jealous as here. If you had a servant whom your wife loved better than yourself, wouldn't you take it badly from such a wife, and rid your house of such a servant? So too, if the Lord sees you begin to settle in the world, and you say, "I will rest here," it is no wonder if, in his jealousy, he soon unsettles you. If he loves you, it is no wonder if he takes from you that with which he sees you are destroying yourself. It has long been my observation of many, that when they have attempted great works and have just finished them, or have aimed at great things in the world and have just obtained them; or have lived in much trouble and have just overcome it; and they begin to look at their condition with contentment, and rest in it — they are then usually near to death or ruin. Once a man uses this language, "Soul, take your ease," the next news is usually, "You fool! This night," or this month, or this year, "your soul will be required; and then whose will these things be?" Luk 12.19-20

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

What house is there where this fool doesn't dwell? Let you and I consider whether it isn't our *own* case. Many a servant of God has been destroyed from the earth by being over-valued and over-loved. I am persuaded that our discontentments and murmurings are not so provoking to God, nor so destructive to the sinner, as are too sweetly enjoying and resting in a pleasing state here. If God has crossed you in wife, children, goods, or friends — either by taking them away, or taking away the comfort of them — test whether this isn't the cause. For wherever your desires stop, and you say, "Now I am well," you make that condition your god, and you engage the jealousy of God against it. Whether you are a friend to God or an enemy, you can never expect God to allow you to quietly enjoy your idols.

4. If God were to allow you to take up your rest here, it is one of the greatest *curses* that could befall you. It would be better to never have a day of ease in the world — for then weariness might make you seek true rest. But if you are allowed to sit down and rest here, you will be a restless wretch through all eternity. To "have their portion in this life," ^{Psa 17.14} is the lot of the most miserable, perishing sinners. Does it become Christians, then, to expect so much here? Our rest is our heaven; and wherever we take our rest, we make our heaven there. Would you have only such a heaven as this world?

5. It is seeking rest where it *is not to be found*. Your labor will be lost; and if you proceed, your soul's eternal rest will be lost too. Our rest is only in fully obtaining our ultimate end. But that isn't to be expected in this life; therefore, neither is rest to be expected here. Is God to be as enjoyed in the best church here, as he is in heaven? Let their own complaints testify how little of God the saints enjoy under the best means. The best ordinances are poor comforters without God. Should a traveller take up his rest along the way? No; because his home is his journey's end. When you have all that creatures and means can afford, do you yet have what you believed, prayed, suffered for? I think you dare not say so. We are like little children who have strayed from home, and God is now bringing us home. And yet, we are ready to turn into any house, to stay and play with everything on our way, and to sit down on every green bank — and so, there is much ado to get us home.

We are also in the midst of our labors and dangers; is there any resting here? What painful duties lie upon our hands, to our brothers, to our own souls, and to God! What an arduous work lies before us in respect to each of these! And can we rest in the midst of all our labors? Indeed, we may rest on earth, as the ark is said to have "rested in the midst of Jordan" ^{Jos 3.13} — it was a short and small rest. Or we may rest as Abraham desired the "angels to turn in and rest themselves" at his tent, ^{Gen 18.4-6} where they would have been loath to have taken up their dwelling. Should Israel have fixed their rest in the wilderness, among serpents, enemies, weariness, and famine? Should Noah have made the ark his home, and been loath to come out when the waters receded? Should the mariner choose his dwelling on the sea, and settle his rest in the midst of rocks, sands, and raging tempests? Should a soldier rest in the thickest of his enemies? And are not Christians such travellers, such mariners, and such soldiers? Don't you have fears within and troubles without? Aren't we in continual dangers? We cannot eat, drink, sleep, labor, pray, hear, or converse, except in the midst of snares; and would we sit down and rest here?

O Christian, follow your work, look to your dangers, hold onto the end, win the field, and come off the ground before you think of a settled rest. Whenever you talk of a rest on earth, it's like Peter on the mount, "You know not what you say." ^{Mar 9.5-6} If instead of telling the converted thief "this day you will be with me in paradise," ^{Luk 23.43} Christ had said he should rest there on the cross, wouldn't he have taken it as derision? I think it would be difficult to rest in the midst of sickness and pain, persecutions and distresses. But if nothing else will convince us, then surely the remains of sin, which so easily beset us, would quickly satisfy a believer that his rest is not here. ^{Heb 12.1} Therefore, I say to everyone who thinks of rest on earth, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." ^{Mic 2.10} These things cannot, in their nature, be a true Christian's rest. They are too poor to make us rich; too low to raise us to happiness; too empty to fill our souls; and too short a continuance to be our eternal contentment. If prosperity and whatever we desire here are too base to make gods of, they are too base to be our rest. The soul's rest must be sufficient to afford it perpetual satisfaction. But the contentment which creatures afford waxes old, and abates after a short enjoyment. If God were to rain down angel's food,

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

we would soon loathe the manna. If it weren't for novelty, our delights on earth would grow dull. All creatures are to us like flowers are to the bee; there is little honey on any one of them. Therefore, after a superficial taste, it moves on to the next. The more the world is known, the less it satisfies. Those who are taken with it, see no further than its outward beauty, without discerning its inward vanity. When we thoroughly know the condition of other men, and have discovered the evil as well as the good, the defects as well as the perfections, we then cease our admiration of them.

6. To have creatures and means, without God, is *an aggravation of our misery*. If God were to say, "Take my creatures, my word, my servants, my ordinances, but not myself;" would you take this for happiness? If you had the word of God, and not "the Word" who is God; ^{Joh 1.1} or the bread of the Lord, and not the Lord who "is the true bread," ^{Joh 6.32} or if we could cry with the Jews, "The temple of the Lord," ^{Jer 7.4} and didn't have the Lord of the temple — this would be a poor happiness. Was Capernaum happier, or more miserable, for seeing the mighty works which they had seen, and hearing the words of Christ which they heard? ^{Mat 11.23} Surely that which aggravates our sin and misery cannot be our rest.

7. To confirm all this, let us consult our own and others' *experience*. Millions have tested these things, but did any ever find a sufficient rest for their soul on earth? I don't deny that they have found delights; but they never found rest and satisfaction. And do we think to find what no one could find before us? Ahab's kingdom is nothing to him without Naboth's vineyard; and did that satisfy him when he obtained it? ^{1Kng 21} If, like Noah's dove, you were to look throughout the earth for a resting-place, you would return confessing that you could find none. Go ask *honor*, Is there rest here? You may as well rest on top of tempestuous mountains, or in Aetna's flames. Ask *riches*, Is there rest here? It is rest like in a bed of thorns. If you inquire about the rest of worldly *pleasure*, it is like the fish has in swallowing the bait — when the pleasure is sweetest, death is nearest. Go to *learning*, and even to divine *ordinances*, and inquire whether your soul may rest there. You might indeed receive from these an olive branch of hope because they are means to your rest, and are related to eternity. But in regard to any satisfaction in themselves, you would remain as restless as ever. All these might well answer us, as Jacob did Rachel, "Am I in God's stead?" ^{Gen 30.2} that you come to me for soul-rest? Not all the estates of men in the world; neither court nor country, towns nor cities, shops nor fields, treasures, libraries, solitude, society, studies, nor pulpits — can afford any such thing as *this* rest. If you could inquire of the dead of all generations, or of the living through all dominions, they would all tell you, "there is no rest." Or, if other men's experience doesn't move you, take a view of your own. Can you remember the state that fully satisfied you? And, if you could, will it prove lasting? I believe we may all say of our earthly rest, as Paul said of our hope, "If it were in this life only, we are of all men the most miserable." ^{1Cor 15.19}

If neither Scripture, nor reason, nor the experience of ourselves and all the world, will convince us, then we may see there is no resting here. And yet, how guilty most of us are of this sin! How many halts and stops we make before we make the Lord our rest! How God must *drive* us, and *fire* us out of every condition, lest we sit down and rest there! If he gives us prosperity, riches, or honor, we dance before them in our hearts, as the Israelites danced before their calf; and we say, "These are our gods," ^{Neh 9.18} and we conclude "it is good to be here." ^{Mat 17.4} If he embitters all these to us, how restless we are till our condition is sweetened, so that we may sit down again and rest where we were! If he proceeds in the cure, and takes away the creature, we labor, cry, and pray that God would restore it, that we may make it our rest again! And while we are deprived of our former idol, rather than come to God, we delight ourselves in the hope of recovering it. We make that very hope our rest, or search around from creature to creature to find something to take its place. Indeed, if we can find no replacement, we would rather settle in this misery, and make a rest out of being wretched, than leave it all and come to God.

O the cursed aversion of our souls from God! If any place in hell were tolerable, the soul would rather take its rest there than come to God. Indeed, when he is bringing us to him, and has convinced us of the worth of his ways and service, the last deceit of all is here: that we would rather settle in those ways that lead to him, and those ordinances that speak of him, and those gifts which flow from him, than come to him entirely.

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

Christian, don't marvel that I speak so much about resting in these. Beware, lest it prove to be your own case. I suppose you are so far convinced of the vanity of riches, honor, and pleasure, that you can more easily disclaim these — and it is good if it is so. But you look at the means of grace with less suspicion, and think you cannot delight in them too much, especially seeing that most of the world despises them, or delights in them too little. I know these means must be loved and valued; and whoever delights in any worldly thing more than in them, is not a Christian. But when we are content with His ordinances, without God, and would rather be at public worship than in heaven, and be a member of the church *here* than of the perfect church *above*, this is a sad mistake. Let your soul take comfort in ordinances only so far as God accompanies them. Remember, this is not heaven, but only the first-fruits. "While we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord;" ^{2Cor 5.6} and while we are absent from him, we are absent from our rest. If God were as willing to be absent from us as we are from him, and as loath to be our rest as we are to rest in him, we would be left to an eternal restless separation. In a word, just as you are sensible of the sinfulness of your earthly discontents, be sensible of your irregular satisfaction, and ask God to pardon them much more. And above all the plagues on this side hell, see that you watch and pray against settling anywhere short of heaven, or reposing your soul on anything below God.

III. Thirdly. The next thing to be considered is our *unreasonable unwillingness to die, that we may possess the Saints' Rest*. We linger, like Lot in Sodom, till "the Lord, being merciful to us," ^{Gen 19.6} plucks us away against our will. I confess that death, of itself, is not desirable; but the soul's rest with God is — to which death is the common passage. Because we are apt to make light of this sin, let me set before you its nature and remedy, in a variety of considerations.

It has much *infidelity* in it. If we truly believed that the promise of this glory is the word of God, and that God truly means what he says, and is fully resolved to make it good — if we truly believed that there is indeed such blessedness prepared for believers — then surely we would be as impatient of living as we are now fearful of dying; we would think every day is like a year, till our last day comes. Is it possible that we can truly believe that death will remove us from misery to such glory, and yet be loath to die? If the doubts of our own interest in that glory make us fear, yet a true belief of the certainty and excellence of this rest would make us restless till our title to it is cleared. Though there is much faith and Christianity in our mouths, there is much infidelity and paganism in our hearts, which is the chief reason we are so loath to die.

It is also owes much to the *coldness of our love*. If we love our friend, then we love his company; his presence is comfortable and his absence is painful; when he comes to us, we entertain him with gladness; and when he dies, we mourn and usually over-mourn. To be separated from a faithful friend, is like tearing a member from our body. And wouldn't our desires for God be this way, if we really loved him? Indeed, wouldn't it be much more than this, because he is, above all friends, most lovely? May the Lord teach us to look closely at our hearts, and take heed of self-deceit in this point! Whatever we pretend, if we love father, mother, husband, wife, child, friend, wealth, or life itself, more than Christ, we are "none of his" ^{Rom 8.9} sincere "disciples." ^{Joh 8.31}

When it comes to the trial, the question will not be, Who has preached most, or heard most, or talked most? — but who has *loved* most? ^{Joh 21.17} Christ will not accept sermons, prayers, fastings, "giving our goods," nor "burning our bodies," instead of love. ^{1Cor 13.3} And can we love him, and yet not care how long we are away from him? Wasn't it such a joy for Jacob to see the face of Joseph in Egypt? ^{Gen 46.30} And would we be content without the sight of Christ in glory, and yet say we love him? I dare not conclude that we have no love at all, when we are so loath to die; but I dare say, if our love were more, we would die more willingly. If this holy flame were thoroughly kindled in our breasts, we would cry out with David, "As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so my soul pants after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when will I come and appear before God?" ^{Psa 42.1-2}

By our unwillingness to die, it appears that we are *little weary of sin*. If we felt sin is the greatest evil, we would not be willing to have its company so long.

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

“O foolish, sinful heart! Have you been so long a cage of all unclean lusts, a fountain incessantly pouring forth the bitter waters of transgression, and are you not more weary yet? Wretched soul! Have you been wounded so long in all your faculties, so grievously languishing in all your performances, been so fruitful a soil for all iniquities, and are you not more weary yet? Would you still lie under your imperfections? Has your sin proved so profitable a commodity, so necessary a companion, such a delightful employment, that you so dread the parting day? Wouldn't God be just, to grant you your wishes, and seal a release for you at your desired distance from him, and nail your ears to these doors of misery, and exclude you eternally from his glory?”

It shows that we are *insensible of the vanity* of earth, when we are so loath to hear or think of a removal from it.

“Ah, foolish, wretched soul! Does every prisoner groan for freedom; and every slave desire his jubilee; and every sick man long for health; and every hungry man long for food? And do you alone abhor deliverance? Does the sailor wish to see land? Does the farmer desire the harvest, and the laborer to receive his pay? Does the traveller long to be at home, and the racer to win the prize, and the soldier to win the field? And are you loath to see your labors finished, and to receive the end of your faith and sufferings? Have your griefs been only dreams? If they were, I think you would not be afraid of waking. Or isn't it rather the world's delights that are all mere dreams and shadows? Has the world become more kind recently? We may reconcile ourselves to the world at our peril, but it will never reconcile itself to us. O unworthy soul, who would rather dwell in this land of darkness, and wander in this barren wilderness, than be at rest with Jesus Christ! — who would rather stay among the wolves, and daily suffer the scorpion's stings, than praise the Lord with the host of heaven.”

This unwillingness to die actually impeaches us of high treason against the Lord. Isn't it choosing earth before him, and taking present things for our happiness, and consequently making them our true god? If indeed we made God our end, our rest, our portion, and our treasure, then how is it possible for us not to desire to enjoy him? Moreover, it reveals some dissimulation. Would you have any man believe you when you call the Lord your only hope, and speak of Christ as all in all, and of the joy to be found in his presence — if you would rather endure the hardest life than die and enter into his presence? What a self-contradiction this is, to talk so harshly about the world and the flesh, to groan and complain about sin and suffering, and yet fear no day more than that which you expect will bring your final freedom!

What hypocrisy this is to profess to strive and fight for heaven, which we are loath to come to! And to spend one hour after another in prayer, for that which we would not have! By this we wrong the Lord and his promises, and we disgrace his ways in the eyes of the world. It is as though we would persuade them to question whether God is true to his word or not; and whether there is any such glory as the Scripture mentions. When they see those who are so loath to let go of present things, who have professed to live by faith, and have boasted of their hopes in another world, and spoken disgracefully of all things below in comparison to things above — how this *confirms* the world in their unbelief and sensuality! “Surely,” they say, “if these professors expected so much glory, and made so light of the world as they seem to, they would not be so loath to change.” O how are we ever able to repair the wrong we do to God and to souls by this scandal? And what an honor it would be to God, what a strengthening to believers, what a conviction to unbelievers, if Christians matched their profession in this, and cheerfully welcomed the news of rest!

It also evidently shows that we have spent much time *to little purpose*. Have we not had a lifetime to prepare to die; so many years to make ready for one hour; and yet, are we so unready and unwilling? What have we done? Why have we lived? Did we have any greater matters to mind? Would we have wished for more frequent warnings? How often has death entered the habitations of our neighbors! How often has it knocked at our own door! How many diseases have vexed our bodies, that we have been forced to receive the sentence of death! And despite all this, are we still unready and unwilling? O careless, dead-hearted sinners! unworthy neglecters of God's warnings! faithless betrayers of our own souls!

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

Consider, *not to die is never to be happy*. To escape death is to miss our blessedness, unless God were to translate us, as with Enoch and Elijah, which he never did before or since. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." ^{1COR 15.19} If you were not to die and go to heaven, what would you have that is more than an epicure or a beast has? Why do we pray, and fast, and mourn; why do we suffer the contempt of the world; why are we Christians, and not pagans and infidels, if we didn't desire a life to come? Would you lose your faith and labor, Christian — all your duties and sufferings, all the end of your life, and all the blood of Christ — and be content with the same portion as a worldling or a brute? Rather say, as someone did on his deathbed, when asked whether he was willing to die or not, "Let him be loath to die who is loath to be with Christ." Is God willing to glorify us by death, and are we unwilling to die, that we may be glorified? I think if a prince were willing to make you his heir, you would hardly be unwilling to accept it; refusing such a kindness would reveal ingratitude and unworthiness. God has resolved *against* those who make excuses, when they should come to Christ. "None of those men who were invited, will taste of my supper." ^{LUK 14.24} So it is just with Him to resolve against those of us who frame excuses, when we should come to glory.

The Lord Jesus Christ was willing to come from heaven to earth for us, and would we be unwilling to go from earth to heaven for ourselves and for Him? He might have said, "What is it to me if these sinners suffer? If they value their flesh above their spirits, and their lusts above my Father's love; if they would sell their souls for nothing, then who is fit to be the loser? Should I, whom they have wronged? Must they wilfully transgress my law, when I undergo their deserved pain? Must I come down from heaven to earth, and clothe myself with human flesh — be spit upon and scorned by man, and fast, and weep, and sweat, and suffer, and bleed, and die a cursed death — and all this for wretched worms who would rather risk their souls than forbear one forbidden morsel? If they throw themselves away so lightly, must I redeem them so dearly?" Thus we see Christ had reason enough to be unwilling; and yet he voluntarily condescended. But we have no reason against coming to him, unless we would reason against our hopes, and plead for a perpetuity of our own calamities. Christ came down to raise us up; and would we have him lose his blood and labor and go back without us? Has he bought our rest at so dear a rate? Is our inheritance "purchased with his blood?" ^{ACT 20.28} And after all this, are we loath to enter? Ah, sirs! It was Christ, and not we, who had cause to be loath. May the Lord forgive and heal this foolish ingratitude!

Don't we *join with our cruelest foes* in their most malicious designs, when we are loath to die and go to heaven? What is the devil's daily business? Isn't it to keep our souls from God? Are we content with this? Isn't it the one half of hell which we wish for ourselves, while we desire to be absent from heaven? What sport this is for Satan, that his desires and yours, Christian, should so concur! — that when he sees that he can't get you to hell, he can keep you out of heaven so long, and make you an earnest petitioner for hell yourself! O don't gratify the devil so much to your own injury! Don't our daily fears of death make our lives a continual torment? Those lives which might be full of joy in the daily contemplation of the life to come, and in sweet, delightful thoughts of bliss — how we fill them with causeless terrors! Thus we consume our own comforts, and prey upon our truest pleasures. When we might lie down, and rise up, and walk abroad, with our hearts full of the joys of God, we instead continually fill them with perplexing fears. For he that fears dying, must *always* fear, because he always has reason to expect it. And how can that man's life be comfortable who lives in continual fear of losing his comforts? Aren't these fears of death self-created sufferings? It is as if God had not inflicted enough upon us, but we must inflict more upon ourselves! Isn't death bitter enough to the flesh, without us doubling and trebling its bitterness? All the sufferings laid upon us by God, lead to happy outcomes; the progress is from tribulation to patience, from there to experience, and so to hope, and at last to glory. But the sufferings we make for ourselves are circular and endless, from sin to suffering, from suffering to sin, and so to suffering again. And not only this, but they multiply in their course. Every sin is greater than the former, and so every suffering is greater also. So that, unless we think God has made us to be our own tormentors, we have little reason to nourish our fears of death.

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

And aren't they useless, unprofitable fears? All our care "cannot make one hair white or black, nor add one cubit to our stature." ^{Mat 5:36} So too, our fear cannot prevent our sufferings, nor delay our death one hour. Whether willing or unwilling, we must be away. Many a man's fears have hastened his end, but no man's fears ever averted it. It is true, a cautious fear concerning the danger *after* death has profited many, and it is very useful to prevent that danger. But for a member of Christ, and an heir of heaven, to be afraid of entering his own inheritance, is a sinful, useless fear. And don't our fears of dying ensnare our souls, and add strength to many temptations? What made Peter deny his Lord? What makes apostates in suffering times forsake the truth? Why does the green blade of unrooted faith wither before the heat of persecution? Fear of imprisonment and poverty may do much, but fear of death will do much more. However much fear we have of death, that is how much cowardice we usually have in the cause of God. Besides this, it makes us guilty of a multitude of unbelieving contrivances, and discontentment with the wise disposal of God, and harsh thoughts about most of his providences.

Let us further consider what *sufficient time* most of us have had. Why should a man who would die at all, not be as willing to die at thirty or forty (if God sees fit), as he is at seventy or eighty? Length of time doesn't conquer corruption; it never withers or decays through age. Unless we receive an addition of *grace* as well as *time*, we naturally grow worse.

"O my soul, depart in peace! Just as you shouldn't desire an unlimited estate in wealth and honor, don't desire it in point of time. If you were sensible of how little you deserve one hour of that patience which you have enjoyed, you would think you had a large portion. Isn't it divine wisdom that sets the bounds? God will honor himself by various persons and ages, and not by one person or age. Seeing that you have acted your own part, and finished your appointed course, come down contentedly now, that others may succeed you, who must have their turns as well as yourself. Much time has much duty. Therefore, beg for grace to improve it better; but be content with your share of time."

You have also had sufficient *comforts of life*. God might have made your life a burden, till you had been as weary of possessing it, as you are now afraid of losing it. He might have allowed you to consume your days in ignorance, without the true knowledge of Christ. But he has opened your eyes in the morning of your days, and acquainted you in time with the business of your life. Has your heavenly Father caused your lot to fall in Europe, not in Asia or Africa; in England, not in Spain or Italy? Has he filled all your life with mercies, and you now think your share is too small? What a multitude of hours of consolation, of delightful Sabbaths, of pleasant studies, of precious companions, of wonderful deliverances, of excellent opportunities, of fruitful labors, of joyful tidings, of sweet experiences, of astonishing providences, has your life partaken of! But has your life been so sweet that you are loath to leave it? Is this your thanks to Him who is thus drawing you to his own sweetness? O foolish soul! If only you were as covetous for eternity as you are for a fading, perishing life, and for the presence of God in glory, as you are for continuance on earth! Then you would cry, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why do the wheels of his chariot tarry?' 'How long, Lord? how long?' What if God let you live many years, but denied you the mercies which you have enjoyed up to now? Might he not give you life, as he gave the murmuring Israelites quails? He might give you life till you are weary of living, and be as glad to be rid of it as Judas or Ahithophel; and make you like many miserable creatures in the world, who can hardly keep from laying violent hands on themselves. Therefore, don't be so importunate for life, which may prove to be a judgment instead of a blessing. How many of the precious servants of God, of all ages and places, have gone before you! You are not to enter an untrodden path, nor were you appointed to break the ice first. Except for Enoch and Elijah, which of the saints have escaped death? And are you better than they? There are many millions of saints who are dead, more than now remain on earth. A number of your own bosom friends and companions in duty are now gone; and why should you be so loath to follow? Indeed, hasn't Jesus Christ himself gone this way? Has he not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with his own body — and are you loath to follow *him* too? You should rather say, with Thomas, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ^{Joh 11:16}

X. The Saints' Rest is Not to be Expected on Earth

If what has been said won't persuade you, then Scripture and reason have little force. I have said more on this subject, finding it so needful for myself and others; finding among so many Christians who *could* do and suffer much for Christ, so few who willingly die; and finding among many who have somewhat subdued other corruptions, so few who have conquered this one.

I have no need to persuade the ungodly from fearing death; it is a wonder that they don't fear it more, and spend their days in continual horror.

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.

The reasonableness of delighting in thoughts of the Saints' Rest. Christians exhorted to it by considering, 1. It will evidence their sincere piety; 2. It is the highest excellence of the Christian temper; 3. It leads to the most comfortable life; 4. It will be the best preservative from temptations to sin; 5. It will invigorate their graces and duties; 6. It will be their best cordial in afflictions; 7. It will render them most profitable to others; 8. It will honor God; 9. Without it, we disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God; 10. It is more reasonable to have our hearts with God, because his is much on us; and, 11. To be in heaven, where we have so much interest and relation; 12. Besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts on.

Is there such a rest remaining for us? Why then are our thoughts not more upon it? Why are our hearts not continually there? Why don't we dwell there in constant contemplation? What is the cause of this neglect? Are we reasonable in this, or are we not? Has the eternal God provided us such a glory, and promised to take us up to dwell with himself, and yet this isn't worth thinking about? Shouldn't the strongest desires of our hearts be after it? Do we believe this, and yet forget and neglect it? If God won't give us leave to approach this light, what do all his earnest invitations mean? Why does he so condemn our earthly-mindedness, and command us to set our affections on things above? Ah, vile hearts! If God were against it, we would likelier be for it. But when he commands our hearts toward heaven, they will not stir one inch. Like our predecessors, the sinful Israelites, when God would have them march for Canaan, they mutiny, and won't move. But when God bids them *not* to go, then they would quickly march. If God says, "Don't love the world, or the things of the world," ^{1Joh 2.15} we dote upon the world. How freely, how frequently can we think of our pleasures, our friends, our labors, our flesh and its lusts — indeed, our wrongs and miseries, our fears and sufferings! But where is the Christian whose heart is set on his rest? What is the matter?? Are we so full of joy that we need no more? Or is there nothing in heaven for our joyous thoughts? Or rather, are our hearts carnal and stupid? Let us humble these sensual hearts that don't have more of Christ and glory in them. If this world was the only subject of our discourse, all would call us ungodly. Why, then, may we not call our hearts ungodly, which take so little delight in Christ and heaven?

Am I not speaking only to those whose portion is in heaven, whose hopes are there, and who have forsaken all to enjoy this glory — and will I be discouraged from persuading them to be heavenly-minded? Fellow-Christians, if *you* will not hear and obey, then who will? We may well be discouraged to exhort the blind, ungodly world; and we might say, as Moses did, "Behold, the children of Israel have not listened to me; how then will Pharaoh hear me?" ^{Exo 6.12} I require you, reader, if you ever hope for a part in this glory, that you quickly take your heart to task. Chide it for its wilful strangeness to God. Turn your thoughts from the pursuit of vanity; bend your soul to study eternity; busy it about the life to come; habituate yourself to such contemplations. Don't let those thoughts be seldom and cursory, but bathe your soul in heaven's delights. And if your backward soul begins to flag, and your thoughts begin to scatter, *call them back*. Hold them to their work. Don't bear with their laziness, nor connive ²⁵ at even one neglect. And when, in obedience to God, you have tried this work, gotten acquainted with it, and kept a guard on your thoughts till they are accustomed to obey, you will then find yourself in the suburbs of heaven. And you will find there is indeed a sweetness in the work and way of God, and that the life of Christianity is a life of joy. You will meet with those abundant consolations which you have prayed for, panted and groaned after, which so few Christians ever obtain here, because they don't know this way to them; or else they don't make it a matter of conscience to walk in it.

Don't say, "We are unable to set our own hearts on heaven; this must be the work of God alone." Though God is the chief disposer of your hearts, under Him you have the greatest command of them yourselves. Though without Christ you can do nothing, yet under him you may do much, and must do it,

²⁵ *Connive*: give silent approval to something.

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

or else it will be undone, and you yourselves will be undone through your neglect. Christians, if your souls were healthy and vigorous, they would perceive incomparably more delight and sweetness in believing and having joyful thoughts of your future blessedness, than the soundest stomach finds in its food, or the strongest senses find in the enjoyment of their objects. Thus this work would be little pain to you. I know that while we have flesh about us, and any remains of that “carnal mind which is enmity against God” and this noble work, ^{Rom 8.7} all our motives are little enough. I will therefore lay down here some considerations which, if you deliberately weigh them with impartial judgment, I have no doubt they will prove effectual with your hearts, and make you resolved to this excellent duty. More particularly, consider that it will evidence your sincere piety. It is the highest excellence of the Christian temper. It is the way to live most comfortably; it is the best preservative from temptations to sin; it will enliven your graces and duties; it will be your best cordial in all afflictions; it will render you most profitable to others; and it will honor God. Without it, you will disobey the commands, and lose the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God. It is also more reasonable to have your hearts with God, because His heart is so much on you, and to have your hearts in heaven, where you have so much interest and relation. Besides, there is nothing but heaven worth setting your hearts upon.

1. Consider that a heart set upon heaven will be *one of the most unquestionable evidences of your sincerity*, and a clear revelation of a true work of saving grace upon your souls. You often ask, “How do we know we are truly sanctified?” Here you have an infallible sign from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself: “Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.” ^{Mat 6.21} God is the saints’ treasure and happiness; heaven is the place where they must fully enjoy him. A heart set upon heaven is therefore a heart set upon God; and surely a heart set upon God through Christ, is the truest evidence of saving grace. When learning is no proof of grace; when knowledge, duties, and gifts fail; when arguments from your tongue or hand may be confuted — this bent of your heart will prove you to be sincere. Take a poor Christian, with a weak understanding, a feeble memory, a stammering tongue — yet his heart is set on God. He has chosen God for his portion; his thoughts are on eternity; his desires are there; he cries out, “O that I was there!” He takes a day in which he hasn’t had one refreshing view of eternity, as a time of imprisonment. I would rather die in this man’s condition, than in the case of one who has the most eminent gifts, and is most admired for his performances, but whose heart is not thus taken up with God. The man who Christ finds at the last day, and is condemned for lack of a “wedding garment,” ^{Mat 22.12} will lack this frame of heart. The question will not then be, ‘How much have you known, or professed, or talked?’ — but, ‘How much have you loved, and where was your heart?’ Christians, if you would have proof of your title to glory, labor to get your hearts above. If sin and Satan don’t keep your *affections* from there, they will never be able to keep your *persons* away.

2. A heart in heaven is *the highest excellence of Christian temper*. Just as there is a common excellence by which Christians differ from the world, so there is this peculiar dignity of spirit by which the more excellent differ from the rest. As with the noblest of creatures, so the noblest of Christians are those whose faces are set most directly for heaven. Such a heavenly saint, who has been rapt up to God in his contemplations, and has newly come down from his views of Christ, what revelations he will make of those superior regions! How high and sacred is his discourse! It is enough to convince an understanding hearer that he has seen the Lord, and that no man could speak such words unless he had been with God. This, *this* is the noble Christian. The most famous mountains and trees are those that reach nearest to heaven; and he is the choicest Christian whose heart is most frequently and most delightfully there. If a man has lived near the king, or has seen the sultan of Persia, or the grand Turk, he will be thought a step higher than his neighbors. What then will we judge of the one who daily travels as far as heaven, and has seen the King of kings there, who has frequent admittance into the divine presence, and feasts his soul upon the tree of life? For my part, I value this man before the noblest, the richest, the most learned in the world.

3. A heavenly mind is *the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort*. The countries far north are cold and frozen because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen, uncomfortable Christians, if not their living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, if not their living

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws nearer to our part of the earth, how all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, the trees blossom, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us! How soon we would forget our winter sorrows! How early we would rise to sing the praise of our great Creator! O Christian, *get above!* Those who have been there have found it warmer; and I have no doubt that you have sometimes tried it yourself. When do you have the largest comforts? Isn't it when you have conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled your soul with forethoughts of glory? If you know by experience what this practice is, I dare say you know what spiritual joy is. If, as David professes, "the light of God's countenance more gladdens the heart than corn and wine," Psa 104.15 then surely those who draw nearest, and most behold it, must be most full of these joys. Whom should we blame, then, if we are void of such consolation, but our own negligent hearts?

God has provided us a crown of glory, and promised to shortly set it on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it. He bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it. And yet we complain for lack of comfort. It is by believing that we are "filled with joy and peace," Rom 15.13 and only so long as we continue believing. It is in hope that the saints rejoice, and only so long as they continue hoping. God's Spirit works our comforts by setting our own spirits at work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. Just as you would delight a covetous man by showing him gold, so God delights his people by leading them into heaven, as it were, and showing them himself and their rest with him. He doesn't kindle our joys while we are idle or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing — so too he gives the joys of the soul. I entreat you, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as you value the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast, to enter upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly-mindedness. Then you will find the increase a hundred-fold, and the benefit will abundantly exceed your labor. But this is the misery of man's nature: though every man naturally hates sorrow and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few love the *way* to joy, or are willing to endure the *pains* by which it is obtained. They take the first thing that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than ascend to heaven to seek it. And yet, when all is done, they must have it *there*, or be without it.

4. A heart in heaven will be a most excellent *preservative against temptations to sin*. It will keep the heart well employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us, just as careless persons make thieves. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come." Neh 6.3 Such a heart has no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were only busy in your *lawful* callings, you wouldn't be so ready to hearken to *temptations*; and much less if you were also busy above, with God. Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting on a case of life and death, to go and play with children in the streets? No more would a Christian, when taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom. And this employment is one of the saints' chief preservatives from temptations.

One with a heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because he has truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. He has so deep an insight into the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the brutishness of fleshly, sensual delights, that temptations have little power over him. "In vain the net is spread," says Solomon, "in the sight of any bird." Pro 1.17 And it is usually in vain that Satan lays his snares to entrap the soul that plainly sees them. *Earth* is the place for his temptations, and for the *ordinary* bait. And how will these ensnare the Christian who has left the earth and walks with God? Is converse with wise and learned men the way to make one wise? Then much more is converse with God. If travellers return home with wisdom and experience, then how much more is the one who travels to heaven! If our bodies are suited to the air and climate we most live in, then the understanding of the one who lives with the Father of lights must be more filled with light. As for the men of the world who dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly, it is no wonder if their "understanding is darkened," Eph 4.18 and Satan

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

“takes them captive at his will.” ^{2Tim 2.26} How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in their eyes, it is no wonder that they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and in the end, hell for heaven.

But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, I think he is taken like Nebuchadnezzar from the beasts of the field to the throne, and “his reason returns to him.” ^{Dan 4.36} When he has a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how he charges with folly his neglects of Christ, his fleshly pleasures, and his earthly cares! How he says of his laughter, ‘It is mad;’ and of his vain mirth, ‘What good is it?’ He truly thinks there is no man in Bedlam so truly mad as wilful sinners, and unworthy slights of Christ and glory! This usually makes a dying man wiser than others, because he looks at eternity as near, and has more heart-piercing thoughts of it than he ever had in health and prosperity. It is then that many of the most bitter enemies of the saints have their eyes opened. Like Balaam, they cry out, “O that I might die the death of the righteous, and that my end might be like his!” ^{Num 23.10} Yet, let the same men lose their apprehensions of the life to come, and how quickly they lose their understanding with it! Tell a dying sinner of the riches, honors, or pleasures of the world, and wouldn’t he answer, “What is all this to me, who must shortly appear before God, and give an account of all my life?” Christian, if the apprehended nearness of eternity works such strange effects on the ungodly, and makes them so much wiser than before, then O what rare effects it would produce in you, if you could always dwell in the views of God, and in lively thoughts of your everlasting state! Surely a believer, if he improves his faith, may ordinarily have more quickening apprehensions of the life to come in the time of his health, than an unbeliever has at the hour of his death.

A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. The one that *loves* most, and not the one that *knows* most, will most easily resist the motions of sin. The will sweetly relishes goodness as much as understanding relishes truth; and here lies much of a Christian’s strength. When you have had a fresh, delightful taste of heaven, you won’t be so easily persuaded from it. You cannot persuade a child to part with his sweets while the taste is in his mouth. O that you would feed much on hidden manna, and frequently taste the delights of heaven! How this would confirm your resolutions, and make you despise the fooleries of the world, and scorn to be cheated with such childish toys. If the devil had set upon Peter at the mount of transfiguration when he saw Moses and Elijah talking with Christ, would Peter have been so easily drawn to deny his Lord? What! With all that glory in his eye? No! So if the devil were to set upon a believing soul when he is taken up into the mount with Christ, what would such a soul say? “Get behind me, Satan; would you persuade me from here with trifling pleasures, and steal my heart from this rest of mine? Would you have me sell these joys for nothing? Is any honor or delight like this? Or can it be profit, for which I must lose this?” But Satan waits till we have come down from the mount, and the taste of heaven is out of our mouths, and the glory we saw is even forgotten; and *then* he easily deceives our hearts. Though the Israelites below eat and drink, and rise up to play before their idol, ^{Exo 32.6} Moses in the mount will not do so. O if we could keep the taste of our souls continually delighted with the sweetness above, then with what disdain we would spit out the baits of sin!

Besides, while the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God’s protection. If Satan then assaults us, God is more engaged for our defence, and He will doubtless stand by us and say, “My grace is sufficient for you.” ^{2Cor 12.9} When a man is in the way of God’s blessing, he is in less danger of sin’s enticing. Amidst your temptations, Christian reader, use this powerful remedy much: keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this is a surer help than any other. “The way of life to the wise is above, that he may depart from hell beneath.” ^{Pro 15.24} Remember that “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation;” for he “walked with God;” ^{Gen 6.9} and God said to Abraham, “Walk before me, and be perfect.” ^{Gen 17.1}

5. Diligently keeping your hearts in heaven *will maintain the vigor of all your graces, and put life into all your duties.* The heavenly Christian is the lively Christian. It is our strangeness to heaven that makes

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

us so dull. The soldier will risk his life, and the mariner will pass through storms and waves, with no difficulty keeping them back, if they think of an uncertain, perishing treasure! What *life* would put be into a Christian's endeavors, then, if he frequently thought of his everlasting treasure! We run so slowly, and strive so lazily, because we pay so little mind to the prize. Just observe the man who is much in heaven, and you will see that he is not like other Christians; something of what he has seen above appears in all his duty and conversation. If it is a preacher, how heavenly are his sermons! If it is a private Christian, what heavenly converse, prayers, and deportment! Set yourself upon this employment, and others will see the face of your conversation shine; and they will say, Surely he has been "with God on the mount." ^{Exo 34-35} But if you lie complaining about deadness and dullness; that you cannot love Christ, nor rejoice in his love; that you have no life in prayer, or any other duty, and yet you neglect this quickening employment, then *you* are the cause of your own complaints. Isn't your life "hidden with Christ in God?" ^{Col 3.3} Where can you go for it, if not to Christ? And where is that, if not to heaven "where Christ is?" ^{Col 3.1} "You will not come to Christ, that you may have life." ^{Joh 5.40} If you want light and heat, why aren't you in the sunshine longer? For lack of this recourse to heaven, your soul is like a lamp that isn't lighted, and your duties are like a sacrifice without fire. Fetch one coal daily from this altar, and see if your offering won't burn. Light your lamp at this flame, and feed it daily with oil from there, and see if it won't shine gloriously. Keep close to this reviving fire, and see if your affections won't be warm. In your lack of love to God, lift up your eye of faith to heaven, behold his beauty, contemplate his excellencies, and see whether his amiableness and perfect goodness won't ravish your heart. Just as exercise gives appetite, strength, and vigor to the body, so these heavenly exercises will quickly cause the increase of grace and spiritual life.

Besides, it isn't a false or strange fire which you fetch from heaven for your sacrifices. The zeal which is kindled by your meditations on *heaven*, is most likely a *heavenly* zeal. Some men's fervency is only drawn from their books; some from the sharpness of affliction; some from the mouth of a moving minister; and some from the attention of an audience. But the one who knows this way to heaven, and derives it daily from the true fountain, will have his soul revived with the water of life, and enjoy that quickening which is peculiar to the saints. By this faith you may offer Abel's sacrifice, which is more excellent than that of common men, and "by it obtain witness that you are righteous, God testifying of your gifts" ^{Heb 11 4} that they are sincere. When others are ready, like Baal's priests, to "cut themselves" because their sacrifice won't burn, ^{1Kng 18.28} you may breathe the spirit of Elijah, and soar aloft in the chariot of contemplation till your soul and sacrifice gloriously flame, even if the flesh and the world tossed upon them all the water of their opposing enmity. Don't ask, How can mortals ascend to heaven? Faith has wings, and meditation is its chariot. Faith is like a burning glass to your sacrifice, and meditation sets it to the face of the sun. ²⁶ Only, don't take it away too soon. Just hold it there awhile, and your soul will feel the happy effect. Reader, when you see a lively Christian, and hear his fervent prayers and edifying discourse, aren't you thinking, "O how happy a man this is! O that my soul were in this blessed condition!" Why, I hereby advise you from God, to set your soul conscientiously to this work: wash frequently in this Jordan, and your leprous, dead soul will revive. "You will know that there is a God in Israel," ^{1Sam 17.46} and that you may live a vigorous and joyful life, if you don't wilfully neglect your own mercies.

6. *Frequent and believing views of glory are the most precious cordials in all afflictions.* These cordials, by cheering our spirits, render our sufferings far easier to bear, enable us to endure them with patience and joy, and so strengthen our resolve, that we won't forsake Christ for fear of trouble. ^{Col 1.9-13} However rough the way, can it be tedious if it leads to heaven? O sweet sickness, reproaches, imprisonments, or death, that are accompanied with these tastes of our future rest! This keeps the suffering from the *soul*, so that it can only touch the *flesh*. If it hadn't been for that little (alas! too little) taste which I had of rest, my sufferings would have been grievous, and death more terrible. I may truly say, "I would have fainted if I hadn't believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the

²⁶ That is, a glass lens that focuses light onto dry timber, causing it to burst into flame. – WHG

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

living.” Psa 27.13 Unless this promised rest “had been my delight, I would then have perished in my affliction.” Psa 119.92

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he will hide me in his pavilion; in the secret place of his tabernacle he will hide me; he will set me upon a rock. And now my head will be lifted up above my enemies round about me. Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in his tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.” Psa 27.4-6

All sufferings are nothing to us, so far as we have these supporting joys. When persecution and fear have shut the doors, Christ can yet come in, and stand in their midst, and say to his disciples, “Peace be to you.” Luk 24.36 Paul and Silas can be in heaven, even when they are thrust into the inner prison, their bodies scourged with “many stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks.” Act 16.23-24 The martyrs find more rest in their flames than their persecutors find in their pomp and tyranny,²⁷ because they foresee the flames that they escape, and the rest to which their fiery chariot is conveying them. If the Son of God walks with us, we are safe in the midst of those flames which devour those who throw us in. Abraham went out of his country, “not knowing where he went,” because “he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Heb 11.8, 10 Moses “esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, because he regarded the recompense of the reward. He left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, because he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Heb 11.26-27 “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Heb 11.35 Even Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb 12.2

This is the noble advantage of faith: it can look at the means and end together. The great reason for our impatience and censuring of God, is that we gaze at the evil itself, but don’t fix our thoughts on what is beyond it. Those who saw Christ only on the cross, or in the grave, shook their heads and thought he was lost; but God saw him dying, buried, rising, and glorified — and all this at one view. Faith will imitate God in this, so far as it has the mirror of a promise to help it. We see God burying us in the ground; but we don’t foresee the spring, when we will all revive. If we could but clearly see heaven as the end of all God’s dealings with us, surely none of his dealings could be grievous. If God would once raise us to this life, we’d find that though heaven and sin are at a great distance, yet heaven and a prison or banishment — heaven and the belly of a whale or a den of lions; heaven and consuming sickness or invading death — are at no such distance. But just as “Abraham saw Christ’s day and rejoiced,” Joh 8.56 so we, in our most forlorn state, might see that day when Christ will give us rest, and rejoice in it. I beseech you, Christian, for the honor of the Gospel and for your soul’s comfort, don’t leave this heavenly art to be learned when you are in your greatest extremity, and most need to use it. The one who, with Stephen, “sees the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,” Act 7.55 will comfortably bear the shower of stones. “The joy of the Lord is our strength;” Neh 8.10 and that joy must be drawn from the place of our joy. If we walk without our strength, how long are we likely to endure?

7. *He whose conversation is in heaven, is the profitable Christian to all those about him.* When a man is in a strange country, how glad he is of the company of one of his own nation! How delightful it is to talk of their own country, their acquaintances and affairs at home! With what pleasure Joseph talked with his brothers, and inquired about his father and his brother Benjamin! Isn’t it so to a Christian, to talk with his brothers who have been above, and inquire about his Father, and Christ his Lord? When a worldly man talks about nothing but the world, and a politician about state affairs, and a mere scholar about human learning, and a common professor about his duties — the heavenly man will be speaking about heaven, and the strange glory that his faith has seen, and our speedy and blessed meeting there. O how refreshing and useful his expressions are! How his words pierce and melt the heart, and transform the hearers into other men! How his “doctrine drops as the rain, and his speech distills as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass,” Deu 32.2 while his lips

²⁷ A reference to the many reformers who were burned at the stake.

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

proclaim the name of the Lord, and ascribe greatness to his God! His sweet discourse about heaven is like the “box of precious ointment” which, being “poured upon the head of Christ,” ^{Mat 26.7} “filled the house with the fragrance.” ^{Joh 12.3} All who are near may be refreshed by it.

Happy are the people who have a heavenly minister! Happy are the children and servants who have a heavenly father, or master! Happy are you if you have a heavenly companion to watch over your ways, strengthen you when you are weak, cheer you when you are drooping, and “comfort you with the comfort with which he himself” has so often been comforted by God! ^{2Cor 1.4} This is someone who always blows on the spark of your spiritual life, draws your soul to God, and says to you as the Samaritan woman said, “Come and see the one who told me all that ever I did;” one who has loved our souls to the death. “Is this not the Christ?” ^{Joh 4.29} Isn’t this “the knowledge of God, and eternal life?” ^{Joh 17.3} Isn’t it the glory of the saints to see his glory? Come to this man’s house, sit at his table, and he will feast your soul with the delicacies of heaven; travel with him by the way, and he will direct and quicken you on your journey to heaven; trade with him in the world, and he will counsel you to buy “the pearl of great price.” ^{Mat 13.46} If you wrong him, he can pardon you, remembering that Christ had pardoned his greater offences. If you are angry, he is meek, considering the meekness of his heavenly Pattern; or if he falls out with you, he is soon reconciled when he recollects that in heaven you must be everlasting friends. This is the Christian of the right stamp, and all about him are better for him. How unprofitable is the society of all other sorts of Christians in comparison with this! If a man came from heaven, how men would long to hear what reports he would make of the other world, and what he had seen, and what the blessed enjoy there! Wouldn’t they think this man is the best companion, and his discourses the most profitable? Why then don’t you value the company of saints more, and inquire more of them, and relish their discourse better? For every saint will go to heaven in person, and is frequently there in spirit, and has often viewed it in the mirror of the Gospel. For my part, I would rather have the company of a heavenly-minded Christian, than that of the most learned disputants or princely commanders.

8. No man so highly *honors God*, as the one whose conversation is in heaven. Isn’t a parent dishonored when his children feed on husks, and are clothed with rags, and keep company with none but rogues and beggars? And isn’t our heavenly Father likewise dishonored when we, who call ourselves his children, feed on earth, and the garb of our souls is like that of the world; and our hearts familiarly converse with and “cling to the dust,” ^{Psa 119.25} rather than stand continually in our Father’s presence? Surely we live *below* the children of the King, and not according to the height of our hopes, nor the provision of our Father’s house, and the great preparations made for his saints. It is well that we have a Father of tender compassion, who will own his children in rags. If he didn’t first claim an interest in us, neither we nor others could know us to be His people. But when a Christian can live *above*, and rejoice his soul with the things that are unseen, how God is honored by such a one! The Lord will testify for him: This man believes me, and takes me at my word, he rejoices in my promise before he has possession; he can be thankful for what his bodily eyes never saw. His rejoicing is not in the flesh; his heart is with me; he loves my presence, and he will surely enjoy it in my kingdom forever. “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.” ^{Joh 20.29} “Those who honor me, I will honor.” ^{1Sam 2.30} God esteemed himself honored by Caleb and Joshua when they went into the promised land and brought back to their brothers a taste of the fruits, and spoke well of the good land, and encouraged the people! ^{Num 14.6 ff} What a promise and recompense they received!

9. A soul that doesn’t set its affections on things above, *disobeys the commands, and loses the most gracious and delightful discoveries of the word of God*. The same God who has commanded you to believe, and to be a Christian, has commanded you to “seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God: and set our affections on things above, not on things of the earth.” ^{Col 3.1-2} The same God who has forbidden you to murder, steal, or commit adultery, has forbidden you the neglect of this great duty, and do you dare to wilfully disobey him? Why not be as conscientious of the one as of the other? He has made it your duty, as well as the means of your comfort, that a double bond may engage you not to forsake your own mercies. Otherwise, all the most glorious descriptions of heaven, all those discoveries of our future blessedness and precious promises of our rest, are lost to you.

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

Aren't these the stars in the firmament of Scripture, and the golden lines in that book of God? I think you shouldn't part with even one of these promises — no, not for a world. Just as heaven is the perfection of all our mercies, so the promises of it in the Gospel are the very soul of the Gospel. Isn't a comfortable word from the mouth of God of such worth, that all the comforts in the world are nothing compared to it? And yet you neglect and overlook so many of them? Why would God reveal so much of his counsel, and tell us beforehand of the joys we will possess, if not to make us know it for our joy? If it hadn't been to fill us with the delights of our foreknown blessedness, he might have kept his purpose to himself, and never have let us know till we came to enjoy it. Indeed, when we had gotten possession of our rest, he might *still* have concealed its eternity from us — and then our fears of losing it would have diminished the sweetness of our joys. But it has pleased our Father to open his counsel, and to let us know the very intent of his heart, so that our joy might be full, and we might live as the heirs of such a kingdom. And will we now overlook all that? Will we live in earthly cares and sorrows, and not rejoice more in these discoveries, than if the Lord had never written them? If your prince had sealed for you a patent of some lordship, how often you would have cast your eyes upon it, and made it your delightful study, till you came to possess the dignity itself! God has sealed for you a patent of heaven, and yet you let it lie beside you as if you had forgotten it? O that our hearts were as high as our hopes, and our hopes were as high as these infallible promises!

10. It is only fair that our hearts should be on God, *when the heart of God is so much on us*. If the Lord of glory can stoop so low as to set his heart on sinful dust, I think we should easily be persuaded to set our hearts on Christ and glory, and in our daily affections, ascend to the one who so condescends to us. Christian, don't you perceive that the heart of God is set upon you, and that he is still minding you with tender love, even when you forget both yourself and him? Isn't he following you with daily mercies, moving upon your soul, providing for your body, and preserving both? Doesn't he bear you continually in the arms of love, and promise that "all works together for your good," Rom 8.28 and suits all his dealings to your greatest advantage, and "gives his angels charge over you?" Psa 91.11 Can you be so taken up with the joys below, that you forget your Lord, who doesn't forget you? Unkind ingratitude! When he speaks of his own kindness for us, hear what he says:

"Zion said, 'The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.' Can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me." Isa 49.14-16

But when he speaks of our regards toward him, the case is otherwise. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten Me days without number." Jer 2.32 It is as if he said, "You won't rise even one morning without remembering to cover your nakedness, or forgetting your vanity of dress. Are these of more worth than your God? Are they of more importance than your eternal life? Yet you can forget these, day after day." Don't give God cause to thus expostulate with us. Rather, let our souls rise to God, and visit him every morning, and our hearts be towards him every moment.

11. *Our interest in heaven, and our relation to it*, should continually keep our hearts upon it. There our Father keeps his court. We call him "Our Father, who is in heaven." Mat 6.4 They are unworthy children, who can be so taken up in their play as to be mindless of such a Father. There too is Christ, our head, our husband, our life — and will we not look to him, and send to him as often as we can, till we come to see him face to face? Since "the heavens must receive him until the times of the restoration of all things," Act 3.21 let them also receive our hearts with him. *There* is the "New Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all." Gal 4.26 And *there* are multitudes of our elder brothers. *There* are our friends and old acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure from here we so much lamented; and is this not attractive to your thoughts? If they were within your reach on earth, you would go and visit them. Why not visit them oftener in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of meeting them there?

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

“Socrates rejoiced that he would die, because he believed he would see Homer, Hesiod, and other eminent persons. How much more do I rejoice,” said a pious old minister, “who am sure to see Christ my Savior, the eternal Son of God, in his assumed flesh; besides so many wise, holy, and renowned patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.”

A believer should look to heaven, and contemplate the blessed state of the saints, and think to himself,

“Though I am not yet so happy as to be with you, yet this is my daily comfort: that you are my brothers and fellow-members in Christ; and therefore, your joys are my joys; and by this near relation, your glory is my glory — especially while I believe in the same Christ; and hold fast to the same faith and obedience by which you were thus dignified; and rejoice in spirit with you; and congratulate your happiness in my daily meditations.”

Moreover, our house and home are above, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” ^{2Cor 5.1} Why then don’t we look more often towards it, and “groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our house which is from heaven?” ^{2Cor 5.2} If our home were far meaner, surely we would remember it, *because* it is our home. If you were banished into a strange land, how frequently your thoughts would be at home! And why isn’t it this way with us in respect to heaven? Isn’t that more truly and properly our home, where we must take up our everlasting abode, than *this* is, where every hour we expect to be separated from it, and see it no more? We are strangers here, and *that* is our country. We are heirs, and *that* is our inheritance — even “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled; and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for us.” ^{1Pet 1.4} *Here* we are in continual distress and want, and *there* lies our substance; even “a better and an enduring substance.” ^{Heb 10.34} Yes, the very hope of our souls is there; all our hope of relief from our distresses; all our hope of happiness when we are miserable here — all this “hope is laid up for us in heaven.” ^{Col 1.5}

Why, beloved Christians, do we have so much interest, and so few thoughts there — so near a relation, and so little affection? Does it become us to delight in the company of strangers, so as to forget our Father and our Lord? Or to be so well pleased with those who hate and grieve us, as to forget our best and dearest friends? Or to be so fond of borrowed trifles, as to forget our eternal joy and rest? God usually pleads we are his property; and thereby He concludes he will do us good — *because* we are his people whom he has chosen out of all the world. Why then don’t we plead our interest in him, and so raise our hearts above — *because* he is our God, and *because* that place is our own possession? Men commonly over-love and over-value their own things, and mind them too much. O that we could mind our own inheritance, and value it half as much as it deserves.

12. Once more, consider that *there is nothing but heaven worth setting our hearts on*. If God doesn’t have our hearts, who will? If you don’t mind your rest, what *will* you mind? Have you discovered some other god, or something that will serve you instead of rest? Have you found on earth an eternal happiness? Where is it? What is it made of? Who was the man that discovered it? Who was the one that last enjoyed it? Where did he dwell? What was his name? Or are you the *first* one who ever discovered heaven on earth? Ah, wretch! Don’t trust to your discoveries; don’t boast of your gain till experience of it bids you to boast. Don’t disquiet yourself in looking for what isn’t on earth, lest you learn your experience with the loss of your soul. You might have learned it on easier terms — by the warnings of God in his word, and the loss of thousands of souls before you. If Satan took you up to the mountain of temptation, to “show you all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,” ^{Mat 4.8} he could show you nothing that is worthy your thoughts, much less anything to be preferred before your rest. Indeed, so far as duty and necessity require it, we must be content to mind the things below. But who contains himself within the compass of those limits? Yet, if we ever so diligently contract our cares and thoughts, we will find the least of them to be bitter and burdensome.

Christian, see the emptiness of all these things below, and the preciousness of the things above. If your thoughts, like the laborious bee, were to go all over the world from flower to flower, from creature to

XI. The Importance of Leading a Heavenly Life

creature, they would bring no honey or sweetness home, save what they gathered from their relations to eternity. Though every truth of God is precious and ought to be defended, all our study of truth would still be in reference to our rest. For this observation is too true, that “the lovers of controversies in religion have never been warmed with one spark of the love of God.” As for minding the “affairs of church and state,” so far as they illustrate the providence of God, and tend toward settling the Gospel and the government of Christ (and consequently, toward saving our own souls and those of our posterity), they are well worth our diligent observation; but only regarding their relation to eternity. All our dealings in the world — our buying and selling, our eating and drinking, our building and marrying, our peace and war — so far as they do not relate to the life to come, but tend only to pleasing the flesh, they aren’t worthy of the frequent thoughts of a Christian. Does your conscience now say that there is nothing but heaven and the way to it, that is worth your minding?

Now, reader, are these considerations weighty or not? Have I proved it to be your duty to keep your heart on things above, or have I not? If you say, ‘No,’ then I am confident that you contradict your own conscience. If you acknowledge you are convinced of the duty, that very tongue of yours will condemn you, and that confession will be pleaded against you, if you wilfully neglect such a confessed duty. Be thoroughly *willing*, and the work is more than half done.

I now have a few plain directions to give you for your help in this great work. But, alas! It is in vain to mention them, unless you are willing to put them into practice. However, I will propose them to you, and may the Lord persuade your heart to the work!

CHAPTER XII.

DIRECTIONS HOW TO LEAD A HEAVENLY LIFE UPON EARTH.

I. *The hindrances to a heavenly life; 1. Living in any known sin; 2. An earthly mind; 3. Ungodly companions; 4. A notional religion; 5. A haughty spirit; 6. A slothful spirit; 7. Resting in preparatives for a heavenly life, without the thing itself. II.* *The duties which will promote a heavenly life: 1. Be convinced that heaven is the only treasure and happiness; 2. Labor to know your interest in it; 3. And how near it is; 4. Frequently and seriously talk of it; 5. Endeavor in every duty, to raise your affections nearer to it; 6. To the same purpose, improve every object and event; 7. Be much in the angelic work of praise; 8. Possess your souls with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God; 9. Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God; 10. Never neglect the due care of your bodily health.*

As you value the comforts of a heavenly conversation, I must charge you here, from God, to carefully avoid some dangerous *hindrances*; and then faithfully and diligently practice those *duties* which will especially assist you in attaining to a heavenly life.

I. *First.* Let us consider those HINDRANCES which are to be avoided with all possible care.

1. *Living in any known sin* is a grand impediment to a heavenly life. What havoc this wreaks in your soul! O the joys this has destroyed; the ruin it has made among men's graces; the soul-strengthening duties it has hindered! Christian reader, have you done violence to your conscience? Are you a wilful neglecter of known duty, either public, private, or secret? Are you a slave to your appetite or to any other commanding sense? Are you a proud seeker of your own esteem? Are you a peevish and passionate person, ready to be inflamed at every word, or look, or supposed slight? Do you deceive others in your dealings, and would be rich, whether right or wrong? If this is your case, I dare say that heaven and your soul are very great strangers. These "beams in your eye" ^{Mat 7:3-5} won't allow you to look to heaven; they will be "a cloud between you and your God." ^{Isa 59:2} When you but *attempt* to study eternity, and to gather refreshment from the life to come, your sin will quickly look you in the face, and say, "These things don't belong to you. How can you take comfort from heaven, when you take so much pleasure in the lusts of the flesh?" How this will damp your joys, and make thoughts of that day and state become your trouble and not your delight! Every wilful sin will be to your joy, like water is to fire — when you think to enliven them, it will quench them. It will utterly indispose and disable you, so that you can no more ascend in divine meditation than a bird can fly when its wings are clipped. Sin cuts the very sinews of this heavenly life. O man! What a life you lose! What daily delights you sell for vile lusts! If heaven and hell could meet together, and God become a lover of sin, *then* you might live in your sin and also in the foretastes of glory, and have a conversation in heaven even though you cherish your corruption. Take heed lest it banish *you* from heaven, as it banishes your *heart*. And even if you aren't guilty, and know of no reigning sin in your soul, think what a sad thing it would be if this ever proved to be your case. *Watch* therefore! Especially resolve to keep from occasions of sin, and out of the way of temptations. What need you have to pray daily, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

2. An *earthly mind* is another hindrance to be carefully avoided. God and mammon, earth and heaven, cannot both have the delight of your heart. While the *heavenly* believer blesses himself in his God, and rejoices in hope of the glory to come, perhaps you bless yourself in your *worldly* prosperity, and rejoice in hope of thriving *here*. The heavenly believer comforts his soul in views of Christ, angels, and saints with whom he will live forever. But you may be comforting yourself with your wealth — in looking over your bills and bonds, your goods, your cattle, or your buildings; and in thinking of the favor of the great, of the pleasure of a plentiful estate, of larger provisions for your children after you, of the advancement of your family, or the increase of your dependents. If Christ pronounced the person a fool who said, "Soul, take your ease; you have much goods laid up for many years" ^{Luk 12:19} — how much more of a fool are you, who knowingly says the same words in your heart! Tell me, what difference is there between this fool's expressions and your affections? Remember, you must deal with the Searcher of hearts. It is certain that so much as you delight in and take your rest on earth, that much of your delight in God is abated. Your earthly mind may consist with your outward profession and common duties, but it cannot

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

consist with this heavenly duty. You yourself know how seldom and cold, how cursory and reserved, your thoughts have been about the joys above, ever since you traded so eagerly for the world.

O the cursed madness of many who seem to be religious! They thrust themselves into a multitude of employments, till they are so loaded with labors and clogged with cares, that their souls are as unfit to converse with God, as a man is to walk with a mountain on his back; and as apt to soar in meditation, as their bodies are to leap above the sun! And when they have lost that heaven on earth which they might have had, they take up a few rotten arguments to prove it is lawful — though indeed, they cannot. I advise you Christian, who have tasted the pleasures of a heavenly life, if you would taste them more, avoid this devouring gulf of an earthly mind. Once you come to this mind, that you “will be rich,” ^{1Tim 6.9} you fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts. Keep these things loose about you, like your upper garments, so you may lay them aside whenever there is need; but let God and glory be next to your heart. Ever remember that “friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever, therefore, would be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God.” ^{Jas 4.4} “Don’t love the world, or the things in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” ^{1Joh 2.15} This is plain dealing, and happy is the one who faithfully receives it!

3. *Beware of the company of the ungodly.* I wouldn’t dissuade you from necessary converse, or from doing them any duties of love; especially not from endeavoring for the good of their souls, as long as you have any opportunity or hope. Nor would I have you conclude they are dogs and swine, in order to evade the duty of reproof; nor even to judge them to be such at all, as long as there is any hope for the better. Much less can I approve of the practice of those who conclude that men are dogs or swine before they ever faithfully and lovingly admonish them, or perhaps before they’ve known or spoken with them. But what I would dissuade you from is the unnecessary society of ungodly men, and being too familiar with unprofitable companions. It isn’t only the profane, the swearer, the drunkard, and the enemies of godliness who will prove hurtful companions to us — though these indeed are chiefly to be avoided. But also too frequent society with persons who are merely civil and moral, whose conversation is empty and unedifying; it may greatly divert our thoughts from heaven. Our backwardness is such that we need the most constant and powerful helps. A stone or a clod is as fit to rise and fly into the air, as our hearts are naturally fit to move toward heaven. You don’t need to keep rocks from flying into the sky; it is enough not to help them. But surely, if our spirits don’t have great assistance, they may easily be kept from soaring upward, even if they never meet with the least impediment. O think of this in the choice of your company! When your spirits are so disposed for heaven that you need no help to lift them up — but like flames, you are always mounting, and carrying with you all that is in your way — then indeed, you may be less careful of your company. But till then, if you love the delights of a heavenly life, be careful in this. What advantage is it to you in a divine life, to hear how the market is doing, or what the weather is likely to be, or what news is stirring? This is the discourse of *earthly* men.

How will it conduce to raising your heart to God, to hear that this is an able minister, or that is an eminent Christian; or this is an excellent sermon, or that is an excellent book; or to hear some difficult but unimportant controversy? Yet, for the most part, this is the sweetest discourse you are likely to have from a formal, speculative, dead-hearted professor of Christ. Indeed, if you had been newly warming your heart in the contemplation of the blessed joys above, wouldn’t this discourse numb your affections and quickly freeze your heart again? I appeal to the judgment of any man who has tried it, and makes observations on the frame of his spirit. Men cannot well talk of one thing and mind another, especially things of such different natures. You young men, who are most liable to this temptation, think seriously about what I say. Can you have your hearts in heaven while you are among your roaring companions in an alehouse or tavern? Or when you work in your shops with those whose common language is oaths, “filthiness, or foolish talking or jesting?” ^{Eph 5.4} No; let me tell you, if you choose such company when you might have better, and you find great delight in them, you are so far from a heavenly conversation that as yet, you have no title to heaven at all — and in that state, you will never come there. If your treasure was there, your heart couldn’t be on things that are so distant. In a word, our company will be a part of our happiness in heaven; it is either a singular part of our furtherance to it, or else a hindrance.

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

4. *Avoid frequent disputes about lesser truths, and a religion that lies only in opinions.* Those who are usually least acquainted with a heavenly life, violently dispute about the circumstantial of religion.²⁸ Someone whose religion is all in his opinions, will most frequently and zealously speak of his opinions; and the one whose religion lies in the knowledge and love of God in Christ, will most delightfully speak of that happy time when he enjoys them. It is a rare and precious Christian who is skilful to improve well-known truths. Therefore, let me advise those of you who aspire to a heavenly life, not to spend too much of your thoughts, time, zeal, or speech, on disputes that less concern your souls. While hypocrites are feeding on husks or shells, you should feed on the joys above. I wish you were able to defend every truth of God, and that you would read and study to this end. But I would still have you chiefly study the chief truths, and none that would push aside your thoughts of eternity. The least controverted points are usually the most weighty, and of the most necessary and frequent use to our souls. Therefore, study well such Scripture precepts as these: “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not as to doubtful disputations.”^{Rom 14.1} “Avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they generate strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive.”^{2Tim 2.23-24} “Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.”^{Tit 3.9}

“If anyone teaches otherwise, and does not consent to wholesome words — even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness — he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing godliness is a means of gain; from such, withdraw yourself.”^{1Tim 6.3-5}

5. *Take heed of a proud and lofty spirit.* There is such an antipathy between this sin and God, that you will never get your heart near him, nor get Him near your heart, as long as this prevails in it. If it cast angels out of heaven, then it must keep your heart from heaven. If it cast our first parents out of paradise, and separated the Lord and us, and brought his curse on all the creatures here below, then it will certainly keep our hearts from paradise, and increase the cursed separation from our God. Intercourse with God keeps men lowly, and that lowliness promotes their intercourse. When a man is used to being with God much, and is taken up in the study of His glorious attributes, he abhors himself in dust and ashes. That self-abhorrence is his best preparative to obtain admittance to God again. Therefore, after a soul-humbling day, or in times of trouble, when the soul is lowest, it usually has its freest access to God, and most savors the life above. The delight of God is in “him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at his word;”^{Isa 66.2} and the delight of such a soul is in God. And where there is mutual delight, there will be the freest admittance, heartiest welcome, and most frequent converse. But God is so far from dwelling in the soul that is proud, that He won’t allow it near access. “The proud he knows afar off;”^{Psa 138.6} “God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.”^{Jas 4.6} A proud mind is high in conceit, self-esteem, and carnal aspiring; a humble mind is high in God’s esteem, and in holy aspiring. These two sorts of high-mindedness are most of all, opposite to each other; just as we see that most wars are between princes and princes, and not between a prince and a ploughman.

Well, then, are you a man of worth in your own eyes? Are you delighted when you hear of your esteem with men, and greatly dejected when you hear that they slight you? Do you love those best who honor you, and think meanly of those who don’t, though otherwise they are men of godliness and honesty? Must you have your desires fulfilled, and your judgment be a rule, and your word be a law to all about you? Are your passions kindled if your word or will is crossed? Are you ready to judge that humility is a sordid baseness, and you don’t know how to submit to humble confession when you have sinned against God, or injured your brother? Are you someone who looks askance at the godly poor, and are most ashamed to be their companion? Can’t you serve God in a low place as well as a high? Are your boastings restrained more by prudence, or artifice, than by humility? Do you desire to have all men’s eyes upon you, and to hear them say, “Is this him?” Are you unacquainted with the deceitfulness and wickedness of your heart? Are you more ready to defend your innocence, than to accuse yourself, or to

²⁸ *Circumstantial*: Something incidental to the main subject, but of less importance.

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

confess your fault? Can you hardly bear a close reproof, or digest plain dealing? If these symptoms are undeniably in your heart, then you are a proud person. There is too much of hell abiding in you, to have any acquaintance with heaven; your soul is too much like the devil, to have any familiarity with God. A proud man makes himself his god, and sets himself up as his idol. How then can his affections be set on God? How can he possibly have his heart in heaven? Invention and memory may possibly furnish his tongue with humble and heavenly expressions, but in his spirit, there is no more of heaven than there is of humility. I speak more about this, because it is the most common and dangerous sin in morality, and it most promotes the great sin of infidelity.

O Christian! If you would live continually in the presence of your Lord, lie in the dust, and He will pick you up from there. “Learn from him to be meek and lowly; and you will find rest for your soul.” ^{Mat 11.29} Otherwise your soul will be “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” ^{Isa 57.20} Instead of these sweet delights in God, pride fills you with perpetual disquiet. Just as the one who humbles himself as a little child will hereafter be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, ^{Mat 18.4} so now he will be greatest in the foretastes of that kingdom. God “dwells with a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” ^{Isa 57.15} Therefore, “humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.” ^{Jas 4.10} And when “others are cast down, then you will say, there is lifting up; and he will save the humble person.” ^{Job 22.29}

6. *A slothful spirit is another impediment to this heavenly life.* And I truly think there is nothing that hinders it more than this in men of a good understanding. If it were only the exercise of the body, the moving of the lips, the bending of the knee, men would as commonly step to heaven as they go to visit a friend. But to separate our thoughts and affections from the world, to draw upon all our graces and increase each in its proper object, and hold them to it till the work prospers in our hands — this, *this* is the difficulty. Reader, heaven is above you; and do you think to travel this steep ascent without labor and resolve? Can you get that earthly heart to heaven, and bring that backward mind to God, while you lie still and take your ease? If lying down at the foot of the hill, and looking toward the top, and wishing we were there, would serve the turn, then we would have daily travellers for heaven. But “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” ^{Mat 11.12} Violent action must be used to get these first-fruits, as well as to take full possession. Don’t you feel it so, even if I didn’t tell you? Will your heart get upward, unless you drive it? You know that heaven is all your hope; that nothing below can yield you rest; that a heart which seldom thinks of heaven, can draw but little comfort from there — and yet, do you lose your opportunities and lie here below, when you should walk above and live with God? Don’t you commend the sweetness of a heavenly life, and judge those to be the best Christians who use it? And yet, do you never try it yourself? The sluggard stretches himself on his bed and cries, O that this were working! So you talk, and trifle, and live at ease, and say, O that I could get my heart to heaven! How many read books and hear sermons, expecting to hear of some *easier* way, or to meet with a *shorter* course to comfort than they are ever likely to find in Scripture! Or they ask for directions for a heavenly life, and if merely *hearing* them would serve the purpose, they would be heavenly Christians. But if we show them their work, and tell them they cannot have these delights on easier terms, then they leave us, as the young man left Christ — *sorrowful*. ^{Mar 10.22}

If you are convinced, reader, that this work is necessary to your comfort, then set upon it resolutely. If your heart draws back, force it onward with the command of reason. If your reason begins to dispute with you, then produce the command of God, and urge your *own* necessity, along with the other considerations suggested in the previous chapter. Don’t let such an incomparable treasure lie before you, with your hands in your pockets; nor let your life be a continual vexation, when it might be a continual feast, only because you won’t exert yourself. Don’t sit still with a disconsolate spirit, while comforts grow before your eyes. That would be like a man in the midst of a garden of flowers, who won’t rise to get them, and take in their sweetness.

This I know: CHRIST IS THE FOUNTAIN. But the well is deep, and you must get this water out before you can be refreshed with it. I know that so far as you are *spiritual*, you don’t need all this striving and

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

violence. But you are also *carnal* in part; and as long as this is true, you need to labor. It was the custom of the Parthians not to give their children any food in the morning before they saw the sweat on their faces with some labor. And you will find that this is God's usual course too — not to give his children the tastes of his delights till they begin to sweat in seeking them. Judge, therefore, whether a heavenly life or your carnal ease is better; and as a wise man, make your choice accordingly. Yet, let me add for your encouragement, that you need not employ your thoughts more than you now do; you only need to fix them on better and more pleasant objects. Just employ as many serious thoughts every day upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as you do now upon worldly affairs — indeed, upon vanities and impertinences — and your heart will soon be in heaven.

On the whole, it is “the field of the slothful that is all grown over with thorns and nettles;” ^{Pro 24.30} and “the desire of the slothful kills his joy, for his hands refuse to labor;” ^{Pro 21.25} and “it is the slothful man who says, There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets.” ^{Pro 26.13} “As the door turns on its hinges, so does the slothful man turns on his bed.” ^{Pro 26.14} The slothful buries his hand in the bowl; it grieves him to bring it back to his mouth” ^{Pro 19.24} — even though it is to feed himself with the food of life. What is this if not throwing away our consolations, and consequently the precious blood that bought them? For “he that is slothful in his work, is a brother to him who is a great destroyer.” ^{Pro 18.9} Apply this to your spiritual work, and study well the meaning of it.

7. *Contentment with mere preparatives to the heavenly life, while we are utter strangers to the life itself*, is also a dangerous and secret hindrance. This happens when we take up with the mere study of heavenly things and their notions, or talking with one another about them — as if this were enough to make us heavenly. None are in more danger of this snare, than those who are employed in leading the devotions of others, especially preachers of the Gospel. O how easily they may be deceived! They do nothing so much as read and study about heaven; they preach, and pray, and talk of heaven. Is *this* the heavenly life? Alas! All this is but mere preparation: this is but collecting the materials, not erecting the building itself; it is but gathering the manna for others, and not eating and digesting it ourselves. It is like someone sitting at home, drawing exact maps of countries, and yet he never sees them or travels to them. So too, you may describe to others the joys of heaven, and yet never come near it in your own hearts. A blind man, by learning, may dispute about light and colors. So too, you may present to others that heavenly light which never enlightened your own souls; and you may evoke that fire from the hearts of your people, which never warmed your own hearts. What heavenly passages Balaam had in his prophecies, and yet how little of it in his spirit! No, we are under a more subtle temptation than any other men to draw us away from this heavenly life. Studying and preaching about heaven more resembles a heavenly life than thinking and talking about the world does; but the resemblance is apt to deceive us. This is to die a most miserable death, even to famish ourselves while we have bread on our tables. This is to die of thirst while we draw water for others, thinking it is enough that we have to deal with it daily, even though we never drink to refresh our own souls.

II. Secondly. Having thus shown what hindrances resist the work, I expect you to resolve against them, consider them seriously, and avoid them faithfully, or else your labor will be vain. I must also tell you that here I expect your promise — because you value the delights of these foretastes of heaven — to be conscientious about performing the following DUTIES; particularly,

1. Be convinced that *heaven is the only treasure and happiness*, and labor to know what a treasure and happiness it is. If you don't believe it is the chief good, you will never set your heart upon it. And this conviction must sink into your *affections*; for if it is only a notion, it will have little efficacy. If Eve once supposed there was more worth in the forbidden fruit than in the love and enjoyment of God, then it is no wonder that it had more of her heart than God. Once your judgment prefers the delights of the flesh above the delights of the presence of God, it is impossible for your heart to be in heaven. Just as it is ignorance of the emptiness of things below that makes men so overvalue them, so it is ignorance of the high delights above which is the cause that men so little mind them. If you see a purse of gold, and believe it to be but counterfeits, it won't entice your affections to it. It isn't the real excellence of a thing

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

itself, but its *known* excellence, that excites desire. If an ignorant man sees a book containing the secrets of arts or sciences, he values it no more than a common scroll, because he doesn't know what is in it. But the one who knows it, highly values it, and can even forbear food, drink, and sleep, to read it. Just as the Jews killed the Messiah while they waited for him, because they didn't know him, so the world cries out for rest, and busily seek delight and happiness elsewhere, because they don't know it. For if they thoroughly knew what rest is, they couldn't so slight the everlasting treasure.

2. Labor also to know that heaven is *your own happiness*. We may confess that heaven is the best condition, even if we despair of enjoying it; and we may desire and seek it, even if we see attainment is only probable. But we can never delightfully rejoice in it till we are in some measure persuaded of our title to it. What comfort is it to a man who is naked, to see the rich attire of others? What delight is it for a man who has no house to put his head in, to see the sumptuous buildings of others? Wouldn't these rather increase his anguish, and make him more sensible of his own misery? So too, for a man to know the excellencies of heaven, and not know whether he will ever enjoy them, may raise his desire and urge his pursuit, but he will have little joy. Who sets his heart on another man's possessions? If your houses, goods, cattle, and children are not your own, you would mind them less, and delight in them less. O Christian! Don't rest till you can call this rest *your own!* Bring your heart to the bar of trial; set the qualifications of the saints on one side, and the qualifications of your soul on the other, and then judge how nearly they resemble each other. You have the same word to judge yourself by now, that you will be judged by at the great day. Don't mistake the Scripture's description of a saint, and then acquit or condemn yourself based on that mistake. For just as groundless hopes tend toward confusion, and are the greatest cause of most men's damnation, so groundless doubts tend to (and *are*) the great cause of the saints' perplexity and distress. Therefore, lay your foundation for trial safely, and proceed in the work deliberately and resolutely. Don't give up till you can say that you either have, or don't yet have, a title to this rest. O if men truly knew that God is their own Father, and that Christ is their only Redeemer and Head, and that those are their own everlasting habitations, and that they shall abide and be happy there forever! How could they not be transported with forethoughts of it all? If a Christian could but look at the sun, moon, and stars, and reckon all his own in Christ, and say, "These are the blessings that my Lord has procured for me, and things incomparably greater than these," what holy raptures his spirit would feel!

They sin more against their own comforts, as well as the grace of the Gospel, who plead for their unbelief, and cherish distrustful thoughts of God, and injurious thoughts of their Redeemer. They represent the covenant as if it were of works, and not of grace.²⁹ They represent Christ as an enemy rather than a Savior, as if he were willing that they die in their unbelief, when he has invited them so often and so affectionately, and suffered the agonies that *they* should suffer. Wretches that we are, keeping up jealousies of our Lord, when we should be rejoicing in his love — as if any man could choose Christ before Christ has chosen him; or any man were more willing to *be* happy, than Christ is to *make* him happy. Away with these injurious, if not blasphemous thoughts! If you ever harbored such thoughts in your breast, cast them away from you, and take heed how you ever entertain them more. God has written the names of his people in heaven, just as you write your names or marks on your goods. And will we attempt to erase them, and to write our names on the doors of hell? But blessed be "God, whose foundation stands sure;" ^{2Tim 2.19} and who "keeps us by his power, through faith, unto salvation." ^{1Pet 1.5}

3. Labor to apprehend *how near your rest is*. We are more sensible of what we think is near at hand, than what we behold at a distance. When judgments or mercies are afar off, we talk of them with little concern. But when they draw close to us, we tremble at or rejoice in them. Men think about heaven so insensibly, because they conceive that it is too great a distance; they look at it as twenty, thirty, or forty

²⁹ What follows is the doctrinal inconsistency Beeke and Pederson described (see Editor's Note). He embraces the doctrine of grace, but believes, as he said in chapter ix, that such grace is dependent on the work of those who proclaim, or don't proclaim, the Gospel. Justification isn't dependent on the persuasive abilities of the evangelist, but on the enabling grace of God alone. However, all those who don't hear the Gospel are lost. He also implies that grace is resistible, as John Wesley will later teach; hence his chastisement of them here. How these things square with election is unclear (Eph 1.4). – WHG

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

years off. How much better it would be to receive “the sentence of death in ourselves,” ^{2Cor 1.9} and to look at eternity as near at hand! Even while I am thinking and writing about it, it hastens near, and I am entering into it before I am aware. While you are reading this, whoever you are, time posts on, and your life will be gone “as a tale that is told.” ^{Psa 90.9} If you truly believed you would die tomorrow, how seriously you would think of heaven tonight! When Samuel had told Saul, “Tomorrow you will be with me,” ^{1Sam 28.19} it struck him to the heart. And if Christ were to say to a believing soul, “Tomorrow you will be with me,” this would bring him in spirit to heaven beforehand. Just suppose that you will be entering into heaven, and it will greatly help you to mind it more seriously.

4. Let your eternal rest be *the subject of your frequent serious discourse*, especially with those who can speak from their hearts, and are seasoned themselves with a heavenly nature. It is a pity that Christians should ever meet without some talk of meeting in heaven or of the way to it before they part. It is a pity that so much time is spent in vain conversation and useless disputes, without a serious word of heaven among them. I think we should meet together on purpose to warm our spirits with discoursing about our rest. To hear a Christian set forth that blessed, glorious state, with life and power from the promises of the Gospel, I think should make us say, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ^{Luk 24.32} If Felix trembled when he heard his judgment powerfully represented, ^{Act 24.25} why shouldn’t the believer be revived when he hears his eternal rest described? Wicked men can delight in talking together about their wickedness; shouldn’t Christians then delight in talking of Christ, and the heirs of heaven in talking of their inheritance? This may make our hearts revive, as Jacob’s did to hear the message that called him to Goshen, and to see the chariots that would bring him to Joseph. ^{Gen 46.28-29} O that we were furnished with skill and resolve to turn the stream of men’s common discourse to these more sublime and precious things! And when men begin to talk of unprofitable things, if we could only tell how to put in a word for heaven, and say as Peter said of his bodily food, “Not so, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean!” ^{Act 10.14} O the good that we might both do and receive by this course! It was to deter us from unprofitable conversation, that Christ talked about “giving an account of every idle word in the day of judgment.” ^{Mat 12.36} When in company, then, say as the Psalmist did, “Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy.” ^{Psa 137.6} Then you will find it true that a “wholesome tongue is a tree of life.” ^{Pro 15.4}

5. Endeavor, in every duty, to *raise your affections nearer to heaven*. God’s end in the institution of his ordinances was that they should be like so many steps to advance us to our rest, and by which we might daily ascend in our affections, in subordination to Christ. Let this be your end in using them, and doubtless they will be successful. How have you been rejoiced by a few lines from a friend, when you couldn’t see him face to face! And may we not have intercourse with God in his ordinances, though our persons are still so far remote from Him? May our spirits not rejoice in reading those lines which contain our legacy and charter for heaven? We may read the expressions of divine love, and hear about our celestial country, with gladness and triumph, even if we don’t yet have the happiness to behold it! Men who are separated by sea and land can carry on great and gainful trade by letters. And may not a Christian, in the wise improvement of his duties, drive on this happy trade for rest?

Come then, renounce formality, custom, and applause, and kneel down in secret or public prayer, with hope to get your heart nearer to God before you rise up. When you open your Bible or other book, hope to meet with some passage of divine truth, and with such a blessing of the Spirit, that it will give you a fuller taste of heaven. When you are going to the house of God, say,

“I hope to meet with something from God to raise my affections before I return; I hope the Spirit will give me his presence and sweeten my heart with those celestial delights; I hope Christ will ‘appear to me in that way, and shine about me with light from heaven;’ ^{Act 22.6} let me hear his instructing and reviving voice, and cause the scales to fall from my eyes, ^{Act 9.18} that I may see more of that glory than I ever yet saw. I hope, before I return, that my Lord will bring my heart within the view of rest, and set it before his Father’s presence, that I may return as ‘the shepherds’ did from the heavenly vision, ‘glorifying and praising God for all the things I have heard and seen.’” ^{Luk 2.20}

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

When the Indians first saw that the English could converse together by letters, they thought there was some spirit enclosed in them. So bystanders admire it when Christians have communion with God in their duties — what it is in those Scriptures, in that sermon, in this prayer — that fills their hearts so full of joy, and so transports them above themselves. Therefore, remember to always pray for your minister, that God would put some divine message into his mouth, which may leave a heavenly relish upon your spirit.

6. *Improve*³⁰ every object and every event to remind your soul of its approaching rest. Just as all providences and creatures are means to our rest, so they point us to that rest as their end. God's sweetest dealings with us at present would not be half so sweet as they are, if they didn't intimate some further sweetness. When you receive your mercies and forget your crown, you take but the bare deposit and overlook the principal sum. O that Christians were skilful in this art! You can open your *Bible* — learn to open the volumes of *creation* and *providence*, to read there too of God and of glory. Thus we might have a fuller taste of Christ and heaven in every common meal than most men have in a sacrament. If you prosper in the world, let it make you more sensible of your eternal prosperity. If you are weary with labor, let it make thoughts of your eternal rest sweeter. If things go contrary, let your desires be more earnest to have sorrows and sufferings forever cease. Is your body refreshed with food or sleep? Then remember your inconceivable refreshment with Christ. Do you hear any good news? Then remember what glad tidings it will be to hear the trumpet of God and the applauding sentence of Christ. Are you delighted with the society of the saints? Then remember what that perfect society in heaven will be like. Is God communicating himself to your spirit? Then remember the time of your highest advancement, when both your communion and joy will be full. Do you hear the raging noise of the wicked and the confusions of the world? Then think of the blessed harmony in heaven. Do you hear the tempest of war? Then remember the day when you will be in perfect peace, under the wings of the Prince of Peace forever. Thus, every condition and creature afford us advantages for a heavenly life, if only we had hearts to improve them.

7. *Be much in the angelic work of praise.* The more heavenly the employment, the more it will make the spirit heavenly. Praising God is the work of angels and saints in heaven, and it will be our own everlasting work. If we were more in it *now*, we would be more like what we will be *then*. Just as desire, faith and hope are of shorter continuance than love and joy, so also preaching, prayer, and ordinances, and all means for expressing and confirming our faith and hope, will cease when our triumphant expressions of love and joy abide forever. The liveliest emblem of heaven that I know upon earth, is when the people of God, in the deep sense of his excellency and bounty, from hearts abounding with love and joy, join together in both heart and voice, in the cheerful and melodious singing of his praises. These delights, like the testimony of the Spirit, witness themselves to be of God, and they bring the evidences of their heavenly parentage along with them.

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by excluding the praises of God from our prayers, or allowing them so narrow a space as we usually do, while we are copious enough in our confessions and petitions. Reader, I entreat you, remember this: let praises have a larger place in your duties; keep matter ready at hand to feed your praise, as well as matter for confession and petition. To this end, study the excellencies and goodness of the Lord as frequently as your own wants and unworthiness; study the mercies you have received, and those which are promised, as often as the sins you have committed. "Praise from the upright is beautiful." Psa 33.1 "Whoever offers praise, glorifies God." Psa 50.23 "Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant." Psa 135.3 "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." Heb 13.15 Didn't David have a most heavenly spirit, who was so much in this heavenly work? Doesn't it sometimes raise our hearts when we only read the song of Moses and the psalms of David? How much more would it raise and refresh us to be skilful and frequent in the work ourselves! O the madness of youth, that expends that vigor of body and mind on vain delights and fleshly lusts, which is so fit for the noblest

³⁰ *Improve*: to use or employ to good purpose; to turn to profitable account.

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

work of man! And O the sinful folly of many of the saints, who drench their spirits in continual sadness, and waste their days in complaints and groans, and thus make themselves, in body and mind, unfit for this sweet and heavenly work! Instead of joining with the people of God in his praises, they are questioning their worthiness and studying their miseries; and so they rob God of his glory, and rob themselves of their consolation. But the greatest destroyer of our comfort in this duty, is taking up tune and melody, while allowing the heart to be idle. For the heart ought to perform the principal part of the work, and it should use the melody to revive and exhilarate itself.

8. *Keep your soul ever possessed with believing thoughts of the infinite love of God.* Love is the attractive of love. ^{1Joh 4.19} Few are so vile as those who will only love those who love them. No doubt it is the death of our heavenly life to have hard thoughts of God, to conceive of him as one who would rather damn us than save us. This is to put the blessed God into the likeness of Satan. When our ignorance and unbelief have drawn the most deformed picture of God in our imaginations, then we complain that we cannot love him, or delight in him. This is the case of many thousands of Christians. Alas, that we should thus blaspheme God, and destroy our own joys! Scripture assures us that “God is love;” ^{1Joh 4.8} that “fury is not in him;” ^{Isa 27.4} that “He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” ^{Eze 33.11} He has testified much more of his love to his chosen, and his full resolution to save them. O that we could always think of God as we do of a friend — of one who unfeignedly loves us even more than we love ourselves; whose very heart is set upon us to do us good, and has therefore provided for us an everlasting dwelling with himself! Then it wouldn’t be so hard to keep our hearts ever with him. Where we love most heartily, we think most sweetly and most freely. I fear most Christians think higher of the love of a hearty friend, than of the love of God. What wonder is it then, if they love their friends better than God, and trust them more confidently than God, and would rather live with them than with God?

9. *Carefully observe and cherish the motions of the Spirit of God.* If ever your soul gets above this earth, and gets acquainted with this heavenly life, the Spirit of God will be to you like the chariot was to Elijah; indeed, the very living principle by which you must move and ascend. O, then don’t grieve your guide, quench your life, or knock off your chariot wheel! You little think how much the life of all your graces and the happiness of your soul depend on your ready and cordial obedience to the Spirit. When the Spirit urges you to secret prayer; or forbids your transgressions; or points you to the way in which you should go — and you will not regard him — it is no wonder if heaven and your soul are estranged. If you won’t follow the Spirit while he draws you to Christ and to your duty, how will he lead you to heaven, and bring your heart into the presence of God? What supernatural help, what bold access will the soul find in its approaches to the Almighty, if it constantly obeys the Spirit? And how backward, how dull, how ashamed will someone be in these addresses, if he has often broken away from the Spirit who would have guided him? Christian reader, do you sometimes feel a strong impression to retire from the world and draw near to God? Don’t disobey, but take the offer, and hoist your sails while this blessed gale may be had. The more we resist the Spirit, the deeper it wounds — and the more we obey, the speedier our pace will be.

10. I advise you, as a further help to this heavenly life, *don’t neglect the due care of your bodily health.* Your body is a useful servant if you give it its due, and no more than its due. But it is a most devouring tyrant if you allow it to have what it unreasonably desires; it is like blunting a knife if you unjustly deny what is necessary to its support. When we consider how frequently men offend on both extremes, and how few use their bodies rightly, we cannot wonder if they are greatly hindered in their converse with heaven. Most men are slaves to their appetite, and can scarcely deny their flesh anything. Therefore they are willingly carried by it to their sports, or profits, or vain companions, when they should raise their minds to God and heaven. Because you love your soul, “don’t make provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lust;” ^{Rom 13.14} but remember this: “to be carnally minded is death, because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. So, then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” ^{Rom 8.6-8} “Therefore, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if you live after the flesh, you will die; but if through the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the

XII. How to Lead a Heavenly Life

body, you will live.” Rom 8.12-13 There are a few who greatly hinder their heavenly joy by denying the body its necessities, and so they make it unable to serve them. If such people only wronged their flesh, it would be no great matter; but they also wrong their souls — just as someone who destroys the house, injures its inhabitants. When the body is sick and the spirits languish, how sluggishly we move with the thoughts and joys of heaven!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NATURE OF HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION; WITH THE FITTEST TIME, PLACE, AND TEMPER FOR IT.

The duty of heavenly contemplation is recommended and defined. The definition is illustrated. I. The fittest times for it are represented as, 1. Stated; 2. Frequent; 3. Seasonable, every day, particularly every Lord's day, but more especially when our hearts are warmed with a sense of divine things; or when we are afflicted or tempted; or when we are near death. II. The fittest place for it. III. The fittest temper for it is, 1. When our minds are most clear of the world; 2. When our minds are most solemn and serious.

Once more I entreat you, reader, because you are conscientious about a revealed duty, and dare not wilfully resist the Spirit — and because you value the high delights of a saint, and the soul-ravishing exercise of heavenly contemplation — diligently study, and speedily and faithfully practice the following directions. If you don't find an increase of all your graces by this means; and if you don't grow beyond the stature of a common Christian; and if you're not made more serviceable in your place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons; if your soul doesn't enjoy more communion with God; if your life isn't fuller with comfort, and you don't have more support in a dying hour — then throw these directions away, and forever exclaim that I am a deceiver.

The duty which I press upon you so earnestly, and the practice about which I am now to direct you, is this: “The set and solemn acting of all the powers of your soul, in meditation upon your everlasting rest.” To more fully explain the nature of this duty, I will illustrate a little, the description itself; and then I will point out the fittest time, place, and temper of mind for it.

It isn't improper to illustrate, a little, the manner in which we have described this duty of meditation, or the consideration and contemplation of spiritual things. It is confessed by all that it is *a duty*; but in *practice*, it is denied by most. Many who are conscientious about other duties, easily neglect this. They are troubled if they omit a sermon, a fast, or a prayer, whether in public or private; yet they are never troubled that they have omitted meditation perhaps all their life, to this very day — even though it is that duty by which all other duties are improved, and by which the soul digests truth for its nourishment and comfort. It was God's command to Joshua, “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.”^{Jos 1.8} Just as digestion turns food into chyle³¹ and into blood for vigorous health, so meditation turns the truths received and remembered into warm affection, firm resolution, and holy conversation.

This meditation is the acting of *all the powers of the soul*. It is the work of the living, and not of the dead. It is a most spiritual and sublime work; and therefore it is not well performed by a heart that is merely carnal and earthly. Men must necessarily have some relation to heaven before they can familiarly converse there. When I persuade them to rejoice in their meditations about the heavenly rest, I assume they have a title to that rest. And supposing you to be a Christian, I am now exhorting you to be an *active* Christian. It is the work of the soul that I am setting you to, for bodily exercise profits little here. It must have all the powers of the soul to distinguish it from the common meditation of students — for the understanding isn't the whole soul, and therefore it cannot do the whole work. In the body, the stomach must turn the food into chyle and prepare it for the liver; the liver and spleen turn it into blood for the heart and brain. So too in the soul, the understanding must take in truths and prepare them for the will, and that prepares them for the affections. Christ and heaven have various excellencies; and therefore God has formed the soul with different powers for apprehending these excellencies. How would we be better off for odoriferous flowers, if we had no smell? Or what good would language or music have done us, if we couldn't hear? Or what pleasure would we have found in food and drink, without a sense of taste? So what good could all the glory of heaven have done us, or what pleasure would we have had in the perfection of God himself, if we had been without the affections

³¹ *Chyle*: A milky fluid consisting of lymph and emulsified fats, formed in the small intestine as fats are digested.

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

of love and joy? And what strength or sweetness can you possibly receive by your meditations on eternity, while you don't *exercise* those affections of the soul, by which you are made sensible of this sweetness and strength? It is the mistake of Christians to think that meditation is only the work of the understanding and memory, when every schoolboy can do this, or even persons who hate the things they think about. So you see, there is more to be done than to barely remember and think about heaven. Just as some labors not only stir a hand or a foot, but exercise the whole body, so meditation exercises the whole soul. Because the affections of sinners are set on the world, and are turned to idols and fallen from God, as well as their understanding; so their affections must be reduced to God, as well as their understanding; and because their whole soul was filled with sin before, so the whole must be filled with God now. See David's description of the blessed man: "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Psa 1.2

This meditation is *set and solemn*. As there is solemn prayer when we set ourselves wholly to that duty; and ejaculatory prayer when in the midst of other business, we send up some short request to God, so also there is *solemn* meditation when we apply ourselves wholly to that work; and *transient* meditation when in the midst of other business, we have some good thoughts of God in our minds. And just as solemn prayer is either set in a constant course of duty, or occasionally in an extraordinary season, so also is meditation. Now, though I would persuade you to that meditation which is mixed with your common labors, and also that to which special occasions direct you, I would have you likewise make it a constant standing duty — just as you do hearing, praying, and reading the Scriptures. And intermix other matters with it no more than you would with prayer or other stated solemnities.

This meditation is *upon your everlasting rest*. I wouldn't have you set aside your other meditations. But surely, just as heaven has preeminence in perfection, it should have preeminence in our meditation. What makes us most happy when we possess it, will make us most joyful when we meditate upon it. Other meditations are as numerous as there are lines in the scripture, or creatures in the universe, or particular providences in the government of the world. But this is a walk to Mount Sion — from the kingdoms of the world to the kingdom of saints; from earth to heaven; from time to eternity. It is walking upon sun, moon, and stars in the garden and paradise of God. It may seem far off; but spirits are quick. Whether in the body or out of the body, their motion is swift. You needn't fear, like the men of the world, that these thoughts will make you mad. It is in heaven, and not hell, that I persuade you to walk. It is joy, and not sorrow, that I persuade you to exercise. I urge you to look at no deformed objects, but only upon the ravishing glory of saints, the unspeakable excellencies of the God of glory, and the beams that stream from the face of his Son. Will it distract a man to think of his only happiness? Will it distract the miserable to think of mercy, or the prisoner to foresee deliverance, or the poor to think of approaching riches and honor? I think it would make a man mad to think of living in a world of woe, and abiding in poverty and sickness, among the rage of wicked men, rather than thinking of living with Christ in bliss. "But wisdom is justified by all her children." Mat 11.19 Knowledge has no enemy but the ignorant. This heavenly course was never spoken against by any but those who never knew it, or never used it. I fear the neglect of men who approve it, more than the opposition or arguments of any who are against it.

I. First. As to THE FITTEST TIME for this heavenly contemplation, let me only advise that it be *stated, frequent, and seasonable*.

1. Give it a *stated* time. If you suit your time to the advantage of the work, without placing any religious value in the time itself, you have no need to fear superstition. Stated time is a hedge to duty, and it defends it against many temptations to omit it. Some don't have time at their command, and therefore can't set their hours; and many are so poor that the necessities of their families deny them this freedom. Such persons should be watchful to redeem time as much as they can, and take vacant opportunities as they fall. Especially, join meditation and prayer as much as they can with the labors of their calling. Yet, for those who have more time to spare from their worldly necessities, and are masters of their time, I

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

still advise them to keep this duty to a stated time. Indeed, if every work of the day had its appointed time, we would be better skilled both in redeeming time, and performing our duty.

2. Let it be *frequent*, as well as stated. How often it should be I cannot determine, because men's circumstances differ. But in general, Scripture requires it to be frequent, when it mentions meditating "day and night." For those, therefore, who can conveniently omit other business, I advise that it be once a day at least.

Frequency in heavenly contemplation is particularly important to prevent a shyness between God and your soul. Frequent society breeds familiarity, and familiarity increases love and delight, and makes us bold in our addresses. The chief end of this duty is to have acquaintance and fellowship with God; and therefore, if you seldom come to it, you will keep yourself a stranger. When a man feels his need of God, and must seek his help in a time of necessity, it is great encouragement to go to a God we know and are acquainted with. "O," says the heavenly Christian, "I know both where I go, and to whom. I have gone this way many a time before now. It is the same God that I daily converse with, and the way has been my daily walk. God knows me well enough, and I have some knowledge of him." On the other hand, what a horror and discouragement it will be to the soul, when it is forced to fly to God in straits, to think, "Alas! I don't know where to go. I never went this way before. I have no acquaintance at the court of heaven. My soul doesn't know that God to whom I must speak, and I fear He won't know my soul." But especially when we come to die, and must immediately appear before this God, and expect to enter into his eternal rest, then the difference plainly appears. Then what a *joy* will it be to think, "I am going to the place from where I tasted such frequent delights; and to that God whom I have so often met in my meditation! My heart has been in heaven before now, and it has often tasted its reviving sweetness. If my eyes were so enlightened and my spirits so refreshed when I had but a taste, what will it be when I feed on it freely?" But on the contrary, what a *terror* will it be to think, "I must die, and I don't know where I go — from a place where I am acquainted, to a place where I have no familiarity or knowledge!" It is an inexpressible horror to a dying man to have strange thoughts of God and heaven. I am persuaded that the neglect of this duty so commonly makes death, even to godly men, unwelcome and uncomfortable. Therefore, I persuade you to frequency in this duty.

And just as it will prevent shyness between you and God, it will also prevent unskilfulness in the duty itself. How awkwardly men set their hands to a work in which they are seldom employed! Whereas frequency will habituate your heart to the work, and make it easier and more delightful. The hill which made you pant and blow at first going up, you may easily run up once you are accustomed to it.

You will also prevent the loss of the heat and life you have obtained. If you eat but once every two or three days, you will lose your strength as fast as it comes. If in holy meditation you get near to Christ, and warm your heart with the fire of love, and then come seldom, your former coldness will soon return — especially because the work is so spiritual and against the bent of our depraved nature. It is true that intermixing other duties, especially private prayer, may do much to keep your heart above; but meditation is the life of most other duties; and the view of heaven is the life of meditation.

3. Choose also the most *seasonable* time. All things are beautiful and excellent in their season. ^{Ecc 3.11} Being unseasonable may lose the fruit of your labor; it may raise difficulties in the work; and it may turn a duty into a sin. The same hour may be seasonable to one and unseasonable to another. Servants and laborers must take that season which their business can best afford — either while at work, or in travelling, or when they lie awake at night. Those who can choose what time of the day they will, should observe when they find their spirits most active and fit for contemplation, and fix that as the stated time. I have always found that the fittest time for myself is in the evening, from sunset to the twilight. I mention this, because it was the experience of a better and wiser man. For it is expressly said, "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide." ^{Gen 24.63}

The Lord's day is exceedingly seasonable for this exercise. When could we more seasonably contemplate our rest, than on that day of rest which typifies it to us? It being a day appropriated to

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

spiritual duties, I think we should never exclude this duty which is so eminently spiritual. I truly think this is the *chief* work of a Christian Sabbath, and most agreeable to the design of its positive institution. What fitter time to converse with our Lord, than on the Lord's day? What fitter day to ascend to heaven than that day on which he arose from earth, and fully triumphed over death and hell? The fittest temper for a true Christian is, like John, to "be in the Spirit on the Lord's day." ^{Rev 1.10} And what can bring us to this joy in the Spirit, but the spiritual beholding of our approaching glory? Take notice of this, you who spend the Lord's day only in *public* worship. Allowing no time for *private* duty, and therefore neglecting this spiritual duty of meditation, is very hurtful to your souls. You also, who have time on the Lord's day for idleness and vain discourse, if you were but acquainted with this duty of contemplation, you would need no other pastime. You would think the longest day is short enough, and be sorry that the night had shortened your pleasure. Christians, let heaven have a greater share in your Sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting Sabbaths. Use your Sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and have arrived there. Especially you who are poor, and cannot take time in the week as you desire, see that you well improve this day. Just as your bodies must rest from their labors, let your spirits seek rest from God.

Besides the constant seasonableness of every day, and particularly every Lord's day, there are also more particular seasons for heavenly contemplation. For instance:

When God has more abundantly warmed your spirit with fire from above, you may soar with greater freedom. A little labor will set your heart going at such a time as this; whereas at another time you may take pains to little purpose. Observe the gales of the Spirit, and how the Spirit of Christ moves your spirit. "Without Christ we can do nothing;" ^{Joh 15-5} and therefore let us be doing while *he* is doing! And be sure not to be out of the way or asleep when he comes. When the Spirit finds your heart in prison and in irons, like Peter, and He strikes you and says, "Arise up quickly, and follow me!" ^{Act 12.7-8} be sure you then arise and follow; and you likewise will find your chains fall off, and all doors open, and you will be at heaven before you are aware.

Another particular season for this duty is when you are in a *suffering*, distressed, or tempted state. When should we take our cordials, if not in a time of fainting? When is it more seasonable to walk to heaven, than when we don't know in what corner of earth to live with comfort? Or when should our thoughts converse more above, than when we have nothing but grief below? Where should Noah's dove be if not in the ark, when the waters cover all the earth and she cannot find rest for her foot? What should we think about if not our Father's house, when we don't have even the husks of the world to feed upon? Surely God sends your afflictions for this very purpose. Happy are you, poor man, if you make this use of your poverty! And you who are sick, if you so improve your sickness! It is seasonable to go to the promised land when our burdens are increased in Egypt, and our straits are increased in the wilderness! Reader, if you knew what a cordial to your griefs the serious views of glory are, you would less fear these harmless troubles, and use that preserving, reviving remedy more. "In the multitude of my" troubled "thoughts within me," says David, "Your comforts delight my soul." ^{Psa 94.19} "I reckon," says Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed in us." ^{Rom 8.19} "For this cause, we do not faint. Though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." ^{2Cor 4.16-18}

And another season especially fit for this heavenly duty, is when the messengers of God summon us *to die*. When should we more frequently sweeten our souls with the believing thoughts of another life, than when we find that this life is almost ended? No men have greater need of supporting joys than dying men; and these joys must be drawn from our *eternal* joy. Just as heavenly delights are sweetest when nothing earthly is joined with them, so the delights of dying Christians are often the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetic blessing dying Isaac and Jacob had for their sons! What a heavenly song and

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

divine benediction Moses concluded his life with! What heavenly advice and prayer the disciples had from their Lord when he was about to leave them! When Paul was “ready to be offered,” ^{2Tim 4.6} what heavenly exhortation and advice he gave the Philippians, Timothy, and the elders of Ephesus! How near to heaven was John in Patmos, but a little before his translation there! It is the general temper of the saints to be most heavenly when they are nearest heaven. If you perceive it is your case, reader, that the dying time is drawing near, O where should your heart now be but with Christ? I think you should even behold him standing by you, and should speak to him as your father, your husband, your physician, your friend. I think you should, as it were, see the angels about you, waiting to perform their last office to your soul. Even those angels who didn’t disdain to carry the soul of Lazarus into Abraham’s bosom, will not think it too much to conduct you there. Look at your pain and sickness as Jacob did at Joseph’s chariots, and let your spirit revive within you. Say, “It is enough. Christ is yet alive; and because he lives, I too will live.” Do you need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford; here are all the joys of heaven, even the vision of God and Christ, and whatever the blessed here possess. These delicacies are offered to you by the hand of Christ; he has written the receipt in the promises of the Gospel; he has prepared the ingredients in heaven. Only put out the hand of faith and feed upon them, and rejoice, and live. The Lord says to you, as he did to Elijah, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.” ^{1Kng 19.7} Though it is not long, yet the way is miry. Therefore, obey this voice. Arise and eat, “and in the strength of that food you may go to the mount of God.” ^{1Kng 19.8} And like Moses, you may “die in the mount where you go up;” ^{Deu 32.50} and say, as Simeon did, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eye” of faith “has seen your salvation.” ^{Luk 2.29-30}

II. Secondly. Concerning the FITTEST PLACE for heavenly contemplation, it is sufficient that the most convenient is *some private retirement*. Our spirits need every help, and they need to be freed from every hindrance in the work. If in private prayer Christ directs us to “enter into our closet and shut the door, so that our Father may see us in secret,” ^{Mat 6.6} we should do this in meditation. How often Christ himself retired to some mountain, or wilderness, or other solitary place! I don’t give this advice for occasional meditation, but for that which is set and solemn. Therefore, withdraw yourself from all society, even that of godly men, so that you may enjoy the society of your Lord awhile. If a student cannot study in a crowd when he is merely exercising his invention and memory, then much less should you be in a crowd when you exercise all the powers of your soul on an object so far above nature. We have fled so far from superstitious solitude, that we have even cast off the solitude of contemplative devotion. We seldom read of God’s appearing by himself or by his angels, to any of his prophets or saints in a crowd; but He frequently appears when they are alone.

But observe for yourself what place best agrees with your spirit: within doors or without? I am persuaded that Isaac’s example in “going out to meditate in the field,” ^{Gen 24.63} will best suit most. Our Lord used a solitary garden so much that even Judas, when he came to betray him, knew where to find him. And though Jesus took his disciples there with him, yet he “was withdrawn from them” for more secret devotions; ^{Luk 22.41} and though his meditation is not directly named, but only his praying, yet it is very clearly implied. For his soul is first made sorrowful with bitter meditations on his sufferings and death, and then he pours it out in prayer. So that Christ had his accustomed place, and consequently his accustomed duty; and so must we. He has a place that is solitary, where he retires even from his own disciples; and so must we. His meditations go further than his thoughts; they affect and pierce his heart and soul; and so must ours. Only, there is a wide difference in the object: Christ meditates on the sufferings that our sins deserved, so that the wrath of his Father passed through his entire soul. But we are to meditate on the glory he has purchased, so that the love of the Father and the joy of the Spirit may enter our thoughts, and revive our affections, and overflow our souls.

III. Thirdly. I next advise you concerning the PREPARATION OF YOUR HEART for this heavenly contemplation. The success of the work greatly depends on the frame of your heart. When man’s heart had nothing in it to grieve the Spirit, it was then the delightful habitation of his Maker. God didn’t quit his residence there till man expelled him by unworthy provocations. There was no shyness or reserve till the heart grew sinful, and too loathsome a dungeon for God to delight in. If this soul were reduced to its

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

former innocence, God would quickly return to his former habitation. Indeed, so far as it is renewed and repaired by the Spirit, and purged from its lusts, and beautified with his image, the Lord will yet acknowledge it as his own. Christ will manifest himself to it, and the Spirit will take it for his temple and residence. To the extent the heart is qualified for conversing with God, it will enjoy him. Therefore, “with all diligence keep your heart, for out of it are the issues of life.” ^{Pro 4.23} More particularly,

1. Get your heart as *clear from the world* as you can. Wholly lay aside thoughts of your business, troubles, enjoyments, and everything else that might take up any room in your soul. Get your heart as empty as you possibly can, so that it may be more capable of being filled with God. If you could perform some outward duty with only part of your heart, while the remainder is absent, *this* duty, above all, I am sure you cannot. When you go into the mount of contemplation, you will be like a covetous man before a heap of gold. Though he might take as much as he could carry, he lamented he could carry no more. You will find as much of God and glory as your narrow heart is able to contain, and almost nothing to hinder your full possession but the incapacity of your own spirit. Then you will think,

“O that this understanding and these affections could contain more! It is my unfitness more than anything else, that even this place is not my heaven. ‘God is in this place, and I did not know it.’ ^{Gen 28.16} This ‘mount is full of chariots and fire;’ ^{2Kng 6.17} but my eyes are shut, and I cannot see them. O the words of love that Christ has to speak, and the wonders of love that he has to show, but I cannot hear them yet! Heaven is ready for me, but my heart isn’t ready for heaven.”

Therefore, reader, seeing that your enjoyment of God in this contemplation greatly depends on the capacity and disposition of your heart, seek him here, if ever, with all your soul. Don’t thrust Christ into the stable and the manger, as if you had better guests for the best rooms. Say to all your worldly business and thoughts, as Christ said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go and pray over there;” ^{Mat 26.36} or as Abraham said to his servants when he went to offer Isaac, “You stay here, and I will go over there and worship, and come back to you.” ^{Gen 22.5} Even as “the priests thrust king Uzziah out of the temple,” where he presumed to burn incense, when they saw the leprosy upon him, ^{2Chr 26.18-20} so you must thrust those thoughts from the temple of your heart, which have the badge of God’s prohibition upon them.

2. Be sure to enter upon this work with the *greatest solemnity of heart and mind*. There is no trifling in holy things. “God will be sanctified in those who come near him.” These spiritual, excellent, soul-raising duties are most profitable if used well; but when they are used unfaithfully, they are most dangerous. Labor, therefore, to have the deepest apprehensions of the presence of God and his incomprehensible greatness. If queen Esther must not draw near “till the king holds out the sceptre,” ^{Est 4.11} think then, with what reverence you should approach Him who made the worlds with the word of his mouth, who upholds the earth in the palm of his hand, who keeps the sun, moon and stars in their courses, and sets bounds to the raging sea! You are going to converse with Him before whom the earth will quake and devils tremble, and at whose bar you and all the world must shortly stand and be finally judged. O think! “I will then have lively apprehensions of his majesty. My drowsy spirits will then be awakened, and my irreverence laid aside. Why should I not be roused *now* with the sense of his greatness, and have the dread of his name possess my soul?”

Labor also to apprehend the greatness of the work which you attempt, and to be deeply sensible both of its importance and excellence. If you were pleading for your life at the bar of an earthly judge, you would be serious. And yet, that would be a trifle compared to this. If you were engaged in a work such as David against Goliath, on which the welfare of a kingdom depended, it was nothing compared to this. Suppose you were going to wrestle as Jacob did, ^{Gen 32.24} or to see the sign which the three disciples saw in the mount, ^{Mat 17.2} how seriously, how reverently you would approach and behold! If an angel from heaven made an appointment to meet you at the same time and place of your contemplations, with what dread you would be filled! Consider, then, with what a spirit you should meet the Lord, and with what seriousness and awe you should daily converse with him. Consider also the blessed issue of the work if it succeeds. It will be your admission to the presence of God, and the beginning of your eternal glory on earth — a means to make you live above the rate of other men, and fix you next in place to the

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

angels themselves, so that you may live and die joyfully. The prize being so great, your preparations should be comparable.

None on earth live such a life of joy and blessedness as those who are acquainted with this heavenly conversation. The joys of all other men are like a child's plaything, a fool's laughter, or a sick man's dream of health. He that trades for heaven is the only winner, and he that neglects it is the only loser. How seriously, therefore, this work should be done!

XIII. The Nature of Heavenly Contemplation

CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT USE HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION MAKES OF CONSIDERATION, THE AFFECTIONS, SOLILOQUY, AND PRAYER.

I. *The use of consideration, and its great influence over the heart.* **II.** *Contemplation is promoted by the affections; particularly by, 1. Love; 2. Desire; 3. Hope; 4. Courage, or boldness; 5. Joy.* **III.** *The usefulness of soliloquy and prayer in heavenly contemplation.*

Having set your heart in tune, we now come to the music itself. Having gotten an appetite, now approach the feast and delight your soul as with marrow and fatness.³² Come, for all things are now ready. Heaven and Christ, and the exceeding weight of glory, are before you. Don't make light of this invitation, nor begin to make excuses. Whoever you are, rich or poor, though in an alms-house or hospital, though in the highways or hedges, my commission, if possible, is to compel you to come in; and blessed is he that eats bread in the kingdom of God! The manna lies about your tents; walk out, gather it up, take it home, and feed upon it. In order to do this, I am only to direct you how to use your *consideration, and affections, and your soliloquy and prayer.*

I. First. CONSIDERATION is the great instrument by which this heavenly work is carried on. This must be voluntary and not forced. Some men consider unwillingly; thus God makes the wicked consider their sins when he "sets them in order before their eyes;" Psa 50.21 so the damned consider the excellency of Christ, whom they once despised, and the eternal joys which they have foolishly lost. Great is the power which consideration has for moving the affections and impressing things on the heart, as it will appear by the following particulars:

1. Consideration opens the door between *the head and the heart*, as it were. The understanding having received truths, it lays them up in the memory; and consideration then conveys them from there to the affections. What excellence there would be in much learning and knowledge, if the obstructions between the head and the heart were opened, and the affections corresponded to the understanding! The best scholar is usually the one whose apprehension is quick, clear, and tenacious; but the best Christian, is usually the one whose apprehension is the deepest and most affectionate, and who has the readiest passage, not so much from the ear to the brain, as from the brain to the heart. And though the Spirit is the principal cause, yet on our part, this passage must be opened by consideration.

2. Consideration presents to the affections those things which are *most important*. The most delightful object doesn't entertain where it isn't seen, nor will the most joyful news affect someone who doesn't hear it. But consideration presents to our view those things which seemed absent, and brings them to the eye and ear of the soul. Aren't Christ and glory objects that *affect* us? Wouldn't they work wonders on the soul if they were but clearly discovered, and if our apprehensions of them corresponded in some measure to their worth? It is consideration that presents them to us. This is the Christian's perspective by which he can see from earth to heaven.

3. Consideration also presents the most important things *in the most affecting way*. It reasons the case with a man's own heart. When a believer would reason his heart to heavenly contemplation, how many arguments offer themselves from God and Christ, from each of the divine perfections, from our former and present state, from His promises, from our present sufferings and enjoyments, and from hell and heaven! Everything offers itself to promote our joy, and consideration is the hand to draw them all out. It adds one reason to another, till the scales tip. It does this when persuading us to joy, till it has silenced all our distrusts and sorrows, and our cause for rejoicing lies plain before us. If another's reasoning is powerful with us, even if we aren't certain whether he intends to inform or deceive us, how much more should our own reasoning prevail with us when we are so well acquainted with our own intentions! Indeed, how much more should God's reasoning prevail with us, which we are sure cannot

³² *Marrow and fatness*: The choicest or most essential or most vital part of some idea or experience, as with the finest cut of meat, or the most sumptuous dessert.

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

deceive, or be deceived! Now, consideration is but reading over and repeating God's reasons to our hearts. Just as the prodigal son had many and strong reasons to plead with himself why he should return to his father's house, so we have to plead with our affections, to persuade them to our Father's everlasting mansions.

4. Consideration *exalts reason to its just authority*. It helps to deliver it from its captivity to the senses, and sets it again on the throne of the soul. When reason is silent, it is usually subdued; for when it is asleep, the senses domineer. But consideration awakens our reason till, like Samson, it rouses itself and breaks the bonds of sensuality, and suppresses the delusions of the flesh. What strength can the lion exert while asleep? What is a king when dethroned, more than another man? Spiritual reason, excited by meditation and not by fancy or fleshly sense, must judge heavenly joys. Consideration exalts the objects of faith, and comparatively disgraces the objects of sense. The most inconsiderate men are the most sensual. It is too easy and common to sin against knowledge; but men seldom offend against sober, strong, persevering consideration.

5. Consideration makes reason *strong and active*. Before, it was standing water; but now it is like a river which violently knocks down all before it. Before, it was like the stones in the brook; but now it is like one out of David's sling, which strikes the Goliath of our unbelief in the forehead. Just as wicked men continue to be wicked because they don't bring reason into action and exercise; so godly men are uncomfortable because they let their reason and faith lie asleep, and don't stir them to action by this work of meditation. What fears, sorrows, and joys our very dreams excite! How much more, then, would serious meditation affect us!

6. Consideration can *continue* and persevere in this rational employment. Meditation holds reason and faith to their work, and blows on the fire till it thoroughly burns. To run a few steps won't get a man heated; but walking an hour may. And even if a sudden occasional thought of heaven won't raise our affections to any spiritual heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts till our hearts grow warm. Thus you see the powerful tendency of consideration to produce this great elevation of the soul in heavenly contemplation.

II. Secondly. Let us next see how this heavenly work is promoted by the particular exercise of THE AFFECTIONS.³³ It is by consideration that we first have recourse to the *memory*; and we take from there those heavenly doctrines which we intend to make the subject of our *meditation* — such as promises of eternal life, descriptions of the saints' glory, the resurrection, etc. We then present them to our *judgment*, so that it may deliberately view them and take an exact survey, and rightly weigh the perfection of our celestial happiness against all the dictates of flesh and sense, so as to magnify the Lord in our hearts, till we are filled with a holy admiration. But the principal thing is to exercise not merely our judgment, but our *faith* in the truth of the promises, and of our own personal interest in them, and our title to them. If we really and firmly believed that there is such a glory, and that our eyes will behold it within a few days, then O what passion it would raise within us! What astonishing apprehensions of that life it would produce! What love, what longing it would excite within us! O how it would actuate every *affection*! How it would transport us with joy, upon the least assurance of our title! Never expect to have love and joy move, when faith — which must lead the way — stands still. Therefore, exercise your faith daily. Set before it the freeness of the promise, God's urging us all to accept it, Christ's gracious disposition, all the evidences of the love of Christ, his faithfulness to his engagement, and the evidences of his love in ourselves. Lay all these together, and think whether they testify of the good will of the Lord concerning our salvation, and may properly be pleaded against our unbelief. Thus, when the *judgment* has determined and *faith* has apprehended the truth of our happiness, then our *meditation* may proceed to raise our *affections* — particularly love, desire, hope, courage (or boldness), and joy.

³³ *Affections* are not just emotions. Rather, they describe or measure the strength of our attachment to something or someone, it is the value we place on the object of our desire, and therefore the *attraction* we feel for it. — WHG

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

1. *Love* is the first affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation; its object is goodness. Here, Christian, is the soul-reviving part of your work. Go to your memory, your judgment, and your faith, and produce from them the excellencies of your rest. Present these to your affection of love, and you will find yourself in another world, as it were. Speak out, and love can hear. Only *reveal* these things, and love can *see* them. It is the brutish love of the world that is blind; divine love is exceedingly quick-sighted. Let your faith take hold of your heart and show it the sumptuous buildings of your eternal habitation, and the glorious ornaments of your father's house, even the mansions that Christ is preparing, and the honors of his kingdom. Let your faith lead your heart into the presence of God, as near as you possibly can, and say to your heart,

“Behold the Ancient of Days, the Lord Jehovah, whose name is I AM: this is He who made all the worlds with his word, who upholds the earth, who rules the nations, who disposes of all events, who subdues his foes, who controls the swelling waves of the sea, who governs the winds, and causes the sun to run its race and the stars to know their courses. This is He who loved you from everlasting, formed you in the womb, gave you this soul, brought you forth, showed you the light, and ranked you with the chief of his earthly creatures — the one who endued you with your understanding, and beautified you with his gifts — who maintains your life and all its comforts, and distinguishes you from the most miserable and vilest of men. O *here* is an object worthy of your love! Here you should even pour out your soul in love! Here it is impossible for you to love too much! This is the Lord who has blessed you with his benefits, ‘spread your table in the sight of your enemies, and made your cup overflow!’ ^{Psa 23.5} This is He whom angels and saints praise, and the heavenly host forever magnify!”

Thus you may expatiate ³⁴ on the praises of God, and open his excellencies to your heart, till the holy fire of love begins to kindle in your breast.

If you don't yet feel your love burn, lead your heart further, and show it the Son of the living God, whose name is “Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.” Show it the King of saints on the throne of his glory, “the First and the Last; who is, and was, and is to come: who lives, and was dead, and behold, he lives for evermore;” “who has made your peace by the blood of his cross,” and has prepared you with himself a “habitation of peace.” His office is that of the great peacemaker; his kingdom is the kingdom of peace; his Gospel is the tidings of peace; his voice to you now is the voice of peace! Draw near, and behold him. Don't you hear his voice? He that invited Thomas to come near and see the print of the nails, and to put his finger into his wounds; it is he that calls to you, “Come near, and view the Lord your Savior, and don't be faithless, but believing;” “peace be unto you; fear not, it is I.” Look well upon him. Don't you know him? It is he that brought you up from the pit of hell, reversed the sentence of your damnation, bore the curse which you should have borne, restored you to the blessing you had forfeited, and purchased the advancement which you must inherit forever. And don't you know him yet? His hands were pierced, his head, his side, his heart were pierced, that by these marks you might always know him. Don't you remember when he “found you lying in your blood and took pity on you, and dressed your wounds, and brought you home, and said to you, *Live!*” Have you forgotten, since he wounded himself to cure your wounds, and let out his own blood to stop your bleeding? If you don't know him by the face, the voice, and the hands, you may know him by that heart. That soul-pitying heart is *his*; it can be none *but* his; love and compassion are its certain signatures. This is the one who chose your life before his own; who pleads his blood before his father, and makes continual intercession for you. If *he* hadn't suffered, what would *you* have suffered? There was but a step between you and hell when he interposed and bore the blow. And isn't there fuel enough here for your love to feed on? Doesn't your throbbing heart stop here to ease itself and, like Joseph, “seek a place to weep in?” Or do the tears of your love not bedew these lines? Go on then, for the field of love is large. It will be your eternal work to behold and love; nor need you lack work for your present meditation. ³⁵

³⁴ *Expatiate*: to enlarge or expand upon something, by adding details that will clarify its meaning or import.

³⁵ Isa 9.6; Rev 2.8; 1.18; Col 1.20; Job 5.24; Joh 20.27, 19; Eze 16.6; Heb 7.25; Gen 43.30;

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

How often your Lord has found you, like Hagar, sitting, and weeping, and giving up your soul for lost; he opened to you a well of consolation, and also opened your eyes to see it! How often you have been in the posture of Elijah, desiring to die out of your misery; and He spread for you a table of unexpected relief, and sent you on his work refreshed and encouraged! ^{1Kng 19.4-8} How often, as in the case of the prophet's servant, you cried out, "Alas, what will we do, for an army surrounds us." And he "opened your eyes to see more who were for you than against you!" ^{2Kng 6.15-16} How often, like Jonah, peevish and weary of your life, has he mildly said, "Are you right to be angry" with me, or murmur against me? ^{Jon 4.4} How often has he set you on "watching and praying," repenting and believing, "and when he has returned, found you asleep"? And yet he has covered your neglect with a mantle of love, and gently pleaded for you that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak!" ^{Mat 26.41-43} Can your heart be cold when you think of this? Can it be contained, when you remember these boundless compassions? Thus, reader, hold out the goodness of Christ to your heart; plead with your frozen soul till you can say with David, "My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned." ^{Psa 39.3} If this won't rouse your love, you have all of Christ's personal excellencies to add, all his particular mercies to yourself, all his sweet and near relations to you, and the happiness of your everlasting abode with him. Only follow them close to your heart. Deal with it as Christ dealt with Peter, when he asked him three times, "Do you love me?" till Peter was grieved, and answered, "Lord, you know that I love you!" ^{Joh 21.17} So grieve and shame your heart out of its stupidity, till you can truly say, "I know, and my Lord knows, that I love him."

2. The next affection to be excited in heavenly contemplation, is *desire*. The object of it is goodness, considered as absent or not yet attained. If love is warm, then desire won't be cold. Think to yourself,

"What I have seen! O the incomprehensible glory! O the transcendent beauty! O blessed souls who now enjoy it! — those who see a thousand times more clearly what I have seen at a distance; and I saw through dark, interposing clouds. What a difference between my state and theirs! I am sighing, and they are singing; I am offending God, and they are pleasing Him. I am a spectacle of pity, like Job or Lazarus; but they are perfect and without blemish. I am entangled here in the love of the world, while they are swallowed up in the love of God. They have none of my cares and fears; they don't weep in secret or languish in sorrows; these 'tears are wiped away from their eyes.' ^{Rev 7.17} O happy, a *thousand times* happy souls! Alas, that I must dwell in sinful flesh, when my brothers and companions dwell with God! How far out of sight and reach of their high enjoyment do I live here! What poor feeble thoughts I have of God! What cold affections toward him! How little I have of that life, that love, that joy, in which they continually live! And how soon that little departs, and leaves me in thicker darkness! Now and then a spark falls upon my heart, and while I gaze upon it, it dies (or rather, my cold heart quenches it). But they have their 'light in his light,' ^{Psa 36.9} and drink continually at the spring of joy. Here we vex each other with quarrels, when they are of one heart and voice, and daily sound forth the hallelujahs of heaven with perfect harmony.

"O what a feast my faith has beheld, and what a famine is yet in my spirit! O blessed souls! I may not, I *dare* not, envy your happiness; I rather rejoice in my brothers' prosperity, and am glad to think of the day when I will be admitted into your fellowship. I don't wish to displace you, but to be so happy as to be with you. Why must I stay, and weep, and wait? My Lord is gone; He has left this earth, and has entered into his glory: my brothers are gone; my friends are there; my house, my hope, my *all* is there. When I am so far distant from my God, don't wonder what ails me if I now complain. An ignorant Micah will do so for his idol, ^{Jdg 18.24} and won't my soul do so for the living God? If I had no hope of enjoyment, I would go and hide myself in the deserts, and lie and howl in some obscure wilderness, and spend my days in fruitless wishes. But since it is the land of my promised rest, and the state I must be advanced to, and my soul draws near and is almost there, I will love and long, I will look and desire — I will breathe, 'How long, O Lord! how long will you allow this soul to pant and groan, and not open to the one who waits, and longs to be with you?'"

Christian reader, let your thoughts thus aspire, till your soul longs, like David's, "O that someone would give me a drink from the wells of salvation!" ^{2Sam 23.15} — and till you can say, as he did, "I have longed for

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

your salvation, O Lord!” Psa 119.174 And just as the mother and brothers of Christ, when they couldn’t come to him because of the multitude, sent to him, saying, “Your mother and brothers stand outside, desiring to see you;” Mat 12.47 so let your message be to him, and he will own you; for he has said, “Those who hear my word, and do it, are my mother and my brothers.” Mat 12.50

3. Another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is *hope*. This helps to support the soul under sufferings, animates it in the greatest difficulties, gives it firmness in the severest trials, enlivens it in its duties, and is the very spring that sets all the wheels in motion. Who would believe or strive for heaven, if it weren’t for the hope that he has of obtaining it? Who would pray, if not for the hope of prevailing with God? If your hope dies, your duties die, your endeavors die, your joys die, and your soul dies. And if your hope is not being exercised, but asleep, then it is next to dead. Therefore, Christian reader, when you are raising your affections to heaven, don’t forget to give one lift to your hope. Think and reason this way with your own heart:

“Why shouldn’t I confidently and comfortably hope, when my soul is in the hands of so compassionate a Savior, and when the kingdom is at the disposal of so bountiful a God? Did he ever reveal the least backwardness to my good, or inclination to my ruin? Hasn’t he sworn that ‘he does not delight in the death of him that dies, but rather that he should repent and live?’ Eze 18.23 Haven’t all his dealings witnessed the same? Didn’t he warn me of my danger when I never feared it, because he would have me escape it? Didn’t he tell me of my happiness when I had no thoughts of it, because he would have me enjoy it? How often he has drawn me to himself and to his Christ, when I have drawn back! How his Spirit has incessantly solicited my heart! And would he have done all this, if he was willing that I should perish? Wouldn’t I hope, if an honest man had promised me something that was in his power to give? And won’t I hope when I have the covenant and oath of God? It is true that glory is out of sight; we haven’t beheld the mansions of the saints — but isn’t the promise of God more certain than our sight? We must not be saved by sight, but ‘by hope; and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for what we don’t see, then we wait for it with patience.’ Rom 8.24 I have been ashamed of my hope in an arm of flesh; but hope in the promise of God ‘doesn’t put to shame.’ Phi 1.20 In my greatest sufferings I will say, ‘the Lord is my portion; therefore I will hope in him.’ Lam 3.24

“The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that a man both hopes and quietly waits for the salvation of the Lord; for the Lord will not cast off forever; even if He causes grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.’ Though I languish and die, yet I will hope; for ‘the righteous has hope in his death.’ Pro 14.32 Though I must lie down in dust and darkness, yet there ‘my flesh will rest in hope.’ Psa 16.9 And when my flesh has nothing to rejoice in, I will yet ‘hold fast the rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end;’ Heb 3.6 for ‘the hope of the righteous will be gladness.’ Pro 10.28 Indeed, if I had to satisfy divine justice myself, then there would have been no hope; but Christ has ‘brought in a better hope, by which we draw near to God.’ Heb 7.19 Or, if I had to deal with a feeble creature, there would be little hope; for how could he raise this body from the dust and lift me above the sun? But what is this to the Almighty Power which made the heavens and the earth out of nothing? Can’t that power which raised Christ from the dead, raise me? and that which has glorified the Head, also glorify the members? Doubtless, ‘by the blood of his covenant, God will send his prisoners out of the waterless pit.’ Zec 9.11 Therefore, I will ‘return to the stronghold, as a prisoner of hope.’” Zec 9.12

4. *Courage*, or boldness, is another affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation. It leads to resolve and concludes in action. When you have raised your love, desire, and hope, go on and think this way with yourself:

“Will God indeed dwell with men? And is there such a glory within the reach of hope? Why, then, don’t I lay hold of it? Where is the cheerful vigor of my spirit? Why don’t I ‘gird up the loins of my mind?’ 1Pet 1.13 Why don’t I set upon my enemies on every side, and valiantly break through all resistance? What should stop me, or intimidate me? Is God with me, or against me in the work? Will

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

Christ stand by me, or will he not? ‘If God and Christ are for me, who can be against me?’ Rom 8.31 In the work of sin, almost all things are ready to help us, and only God and his servants are against us; yet how badly that work prospers in our hands! But in my course to heaven, almost all things are against me, but God is for me; and therefore how happily the work succeeds! Do I enter upon this work in my own strength, or rather in the strength of Christ my Lord? And ‘can I not do all things through him who strengthens me?’ Phi 4.13 Was he ever foiled by an enemy? He has indeed been assaulted, but was he ever conquered? Why, then, does my flesh urge the difficulties of the work against me? Is anything too hard for Omnipotence? May Peter not boldly walk on the sea if Christ gives the command? If he begins to sink, is it from the weakness of Christ, or from the smallness of his faith? Don’t I well deserve to be turned into hell, if mortal threats can drive me there? Don’t I well deserve to be shut out of heaven if I can be frightened from there with the reproach of tongues?

“What if it were father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or the nearest friend I have in the world — if they may be called friends who would draw me to damnation. Shouldn’t I forsake all who would keep me from Christ? Will their friendship countervail the enmity of God, or be any comfort to my condemned soul? Will I yield to the desires of men, only to harden myself against the Lord? Let them beseech me on their knees, I will scorn to stop my course to behold them; I will shut my ears to their cries. Let them flatter or frown, let them draw out tongues and swords against me — I am resolved in the strength of Christ, to break through and look upon them as dust. If they would entice me with preferment,³⁶ even with the kingdoms of the world, I will regard them as nothing more than the dung of the earth. O blessed rest! O glorious state! Who would sell you for dreams and shadows? Who would be enticed or frightened from you? Who wouldn’t strive, and fight, and watch, and run, and do it with violence, even to the last breath, in order to obtain you? Surely none but those who don’t know you, and don’t believe your glory.”

5. The last affection to be exercised in heavenly contemplation, is *joy*. Love, desire, hope, and courage, all tend to raise our *joy*. Joy is so desirable to every man by nature, and so essentially necessary to constitute our happiness, that I hope I don’t need to say much to persuade you to anything that would make your life delightful. Therefore, supposing that you are already convinced that the pleasures of the flesh are brutish and perishing, and that your solid and lasting joy must be from heaven — instead of *persuading*, I will proceed in *directing*. Reader, if you have managed well the former work, then you are within sight of your rest. You believe the truth of it; you are convinced of its excellencies; you have fallen in love with it; you long after it; you hope for it; and you are resolved to venture courageously to obtain it. But is there any work of joy in this? We delight in the good that we *possess*; thus it is *present* good that is the object of our joy. And so you say, “Alas, I am still without it!” But think a little further with yourself. Is it nothing to have a deed of gift from God? ³⁷ Are his infallible promises not grounds for joy? Is it nothing to live in daily expectation of entering into the kingdom of God? Isn’t my assurance of being glorified hereafter, a sufficient ground for inexpressible joy here? Isn’t it a delight to the heir of a kingdom to think about what he will soon possess, even if at present he differs little from a servant? Don’t we have both a command and an example for “rejoicing in hope of the glory of God?” Rom 5.2

Here then, reader — take your heart once more, and carry it to the top of the highest mount; show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it; and say to it,

“All this your Lord will give you, who have believed in Him, and been a worshipper of Him. ‘It is the Father’s good pleasure to give you this kingdom.’ Luk 12.32 Do you see this astonishing glory which is above you? All this is your own inheritance. This crown is yours; these treasures are yours; this company, this beautiful place, *all* are yours — *because* you are Christ’s, and Christ is yours. When you were united to him, you gained all these with him.”

³⁶ *Preferment*: a position that provides profit or prestige; basically, an offer of fame and fortune.

³⁷ *Deed of gift*: a document used to give a sum of money or to transfer ownership of property from one person to another, without any conditions, nor in exchange for compensation. “For it is by *grace* you have been saved.” Eph 2.8

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

Thus take your heart into the land of promise. Show it the pleasant hills and fruitful valleys; show it the clusters of grapes which you have gathered, to convince your heart that it is a blessed land, flowing with *better* than milk and honey. Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem, walk about Sion and go all around her; note its towers; mark well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that you may tell your soul, Doesn't it have "the glory of God," and isn't "her light like a most precious stone, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal?" ^{Rev 21.11} See the "twelve foundations of her walls, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." ^{Rev 21.14} Its walls are made of jasper; and the city is pure gold, like clear glass; and the foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones; and the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each gate of one pearl; and the street of the city is pure gold, like transparent glass; there is no temple in it, for the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. It has no need of the sun or moon in it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is its light; and the nations of those who are saved will walk in its light. ^{Rev 21.19-24} "These sayings are faithful and true; and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angels," and his own Son, "to show his servants the things which must shortly be done." ^{Rev 22.6} Now say to all this, "This is your rest, O my soul! And this shall be the place of your everlasting habitation." "Let all the sons of Sion rejoice; let the daughters of Jerusalem be glad; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Mount Sion is beautiful for its situation, the joy of the whole earth. God is known in her palaces as a refuge." ^{Psa 48.11, 1-3}

Yet proceed on. The soul that loves, ascends frequently, and runs familiarly through the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem, visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, and admiring the armies of martyrs. So you must lead your heart on, as if from street to street; bring it into the palace of the Great King; lead it from chamber to chamber, as it were. Say to it,

"Here I must lodge; here I must live; here I must praise; here I must love and be *beloved*. Shortly I must be one of this heavenly choir, and be skilled better in the music. Among this blessed company I must take my place; my voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away; my groans turned to another tune; my cottage of clay be changed to this palace; my prison rags to these splendid robes; my sordid flesh will be put off and such a sun-like, spiritual body be put on — 'for the former things are here passed away.' 'Glorious things are spoken of you, O City of God!' When I look upon this glorious place, what a dunghill and dungeon I think earth is! O what a difference there is between a man — feeble, pained, groaning, dying, rotting in the grave — and one of these triumphant, shining saints! Here I will 'drink of the river of pleasures, the streams of which make glad the city of God.' Must Israel, under the bondage of the law, yet 'serve the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things?' Then surely I will serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of glory. Did persecuted saints 'take joyfully the spoiling of their goods?' and shall I not joyfully take such a full reparation for all my losses? Was it a celebrated 'day in which the Jews rested from their enemies,' because it 'was turned for them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day?' What a day that will be to my soul, then, whose rest and change will be inconceivably greater! 'When the wise men saw the star' that led to Christ, 'they rejoiced with exceeding great joy;' but shortly I will see him who is himself 'the bright and morning Star.' If the disciples 'departed from the sepulchre with great joy,' when they had but heard that their Lord 'was risen from the dead;' then what joy I will have when I see him reigning in glory, and myself raised to a blessed communion with him! Then I will indeed have 'beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,' and Sion will be made 'an eternal excellence, a joy of many generations.' Why, then, don't I arise from the dust, and cease my complaints? Why don't I trample on vain delights, and feed on these foreseen delights of glory? Why isn't my life a continual joy, and the savor of heaven perpetually upon my spirit?" ³⁸

Let me observe here, that there is no need to exercise these affections either exactly in this order, or all at once. Sometimes one of your affections may need more exciting; or it may be livelier than the rest; or

³⁸ Rev 21.4; Psa 87.3; Psa 36.10; Psa 46.4; Deu 28.47; Heb 10.34; Est 9.22; Mat 2.10; Rev 22.16; Mat 28.7-8; Isa 61.3; Isa 60.15.

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

if your time is short, one may be exercised one day and another the next — all of this must be left to your prudence to determine. You also have an opportunity, if inclined to make use of it, to exercise opposite and more mixed affections, such as hatred of sin, which would deprive your soul of these immortal joys; godly fear, lest you abuse your mercy; godly shame and grief, for having abused it; unfeigned repentance; self-indignation; jealousy over your heart; and pity for those who are in danger of losing these immortal joys.

III. Thirdly. We are also to take notice how heavenly contemplation is promoted by SOLILOQUY and PRAYER. Though *consideration* is the chief instrument in this work, it is not by itself so likely to affect the heart. In this respect, *contemplation* is like preaching, where merely explaining truths and duties is seldom attended with as much success, as the lively application of them to the *conscience*; and especially when a divine blessing is earnestly sought to accompany such an application.

1. By *soliloquy*, or “pleading the case with yourself,” you must in your meditation quicken your own heart. Enter into a serious debate with it. Plead with it in the most moving and affecting language, and urge it with the most powerful and weighty arguments. It is what holy men of God have practiced in all ages. Thus David pleads: “Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I will yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” ^{Psa 42.11} And again; “Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits!” ^{Psa 103.2}

This soliloquy is to be used according to the several affections of the soul, and according to its several necessities. It is “preaching to one’s self.” For just as every good master or father of a family is a good preacher to his own family, so every good Christian is a good preacher to his own soul. Therefore, the very same method which a minister should use in his preaching to others, every Christian should endeavor after in speaking to himself. Observe the matter and manner of the most heart-affecting minister; let him be a pattern for your imitation. The same way that he takes with the hearts of his people, you must take with your own heart. Do this in your heavenly contemplation. Explain to yourself the things on which you meditate; confirm your faith in them by Scripture; and then apply them to yourself according to their nature and your own necessity. There is no need to object to this, from a sense of your own inability. Doesn’t God command you to “teach the Scriptures diligently to your children, and talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up”? ^{Deu 6.7} If you must have some ability to teach your children, then even more to teach yourself; if you can talk of divine things to others, why not also to your own heart?

2. Heavenly contemplation is also promoted by speaking to God in *prayer*, as well as by speaking to ourselves in soliloquy. Ejaculatory prayer may very properly be mixed with meditation, as part of the duty. How often we find David, in the same psalm, sometimes pleading with his soul and sometimes with God! The apostle bids us “speak to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs;” ^{Eph 5.19} and no doubt we may also speak to God in them. This keeps the soul sensible of the divine presence, and greatly tends to enliven and raise it. Just as God is the highest object of our thoughts, so viewing him, speaking to him, and pleading with him, elevates the soul and excites the affections more than any other part of meditation. Even if we remain unaffected while we plead the case with ourselves, when we turn our speech to God, it may strike us with awe; and the holiness and majesty of the one to whom we speak may cause both the matter and the words to pierce deeper. When we read that “Isaac went out to *meditate* in the field,” ^{Gen 24.63} the marginal note says, “*to pray*,” for the Hebrew word signifies both.

Thus, intermixing soliloquy and prayer in our meditations — sometimes speaking to our own hearts, and sometimes to God — is (I apprehend) the highest step to which we can advance in this heavenly work. Nor should we imagine it is OK to take up prayer alone, and lay aside meditation — for they are distinct duties, and *both* of them must be performed. We need one as well as the other; and therefore we wrong ourselves by neglecting either. Besides, the mixture of them, like music, will be more engaging, as the one serves to put life into the other.

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

And speaking to *ourselves* in meditation, should go before speaking to *God* in prayer. For want of attending to this due order, men speak to God with far less reverence and affection than they would speak to an angel if one appeared to them; or to a judge if they were speaking for their lives. Speaking to the God of heaven in prayer, is a weightier duty than most are aware of.

XIV. Consideration, Affections, Soliloquy, and Prayer, in Contemplation

CHAPTER XV.

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, AND GUARDED AGAINST A TREACHEROUS HEART.

It is difficult to maintain a lively impression of heavenly things: therefore, I. Heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects; 1. If we draw strong suppositions from sense; and 2. If we compare the objects of sense with the objects of faith. II. Heavenly contemplation may also be protected against a treacherous heart by considering, 1. The great backwardness of the heart to this duty; 2. Its trifling in it; 3. Its wandering from it; and, 4. Its too abruptly putting an end to it.

The most difficult part of heavenly contemplation is to maintain a lively sense of heavenly things upon our hearts. It is easier merely to *think* of heaven a whole day, than to be lively and *affectionate* in those thoughts for a quarter of an hour. Faith is imperfect — for we are renewed but in part — and it goes against a world of resistance. And being supernatural, faith is prone to decline and languish unless it is continually excited. Sense is strong according to the strength of the flesh; and being natural, sense continues while nature continues. The objects of *faith* are far off; but those of *sense* are near. We must go as far as heaven for our joys. To rejoice in what we never saw, and what no one we know ever saw, and do it on a mere promise of the Bible, isn't as easy as rejoicing in what we see and possess. It must therefore be a point of spiritual prudence, to call *sense* to the assistance of *faith*. It is a good work if can make friends of these usual enemies, and make them instruments for raising us to God, considering that our senses are so often the means of drawing us away from him. Why has God given us either our senses or their common objects, if they aren't serviceable to his praise? Why does the Holy Spirit describe the glory of the New Jerusalem in expressions that are so gratifying to the flesh? Is it that we might think heaven is made of gold and pearl, or that saints and angels eat and drink? No! It is only to help us to conceive of them as we are able, and to use these borrowed phrases like a mirror in which we see these things imperfectly represented, until we come to a direct and perfect sight of them.

Besides showing how heavenly contemplation may be assisted by sensible objects, this chapter will also show how it may be preserved from a wandering heart.

I. First. In order that heavenly contemplation may be ASSISTED BY SENSIBLE OBJECTS, let me just advise you to draw strong suppositions from sense, and to compare the objects of your sense with the objects of your faith.

1. To help your affections in heavenly contemplation, draw as *strong a supposition* as possible from your senses. Think about the joys above as boldly as Scripture has expressed them. Bring your conceptions down to the reach of your sense. Both love and joy are promoted by familiar acquaintance. When we attempt to think of God and glory, without the Scripture's way of representing them, we are lost; we have nothing to fix our thoughts upon. We set them so far from us, that our thoughts are foreign, and we are ready to say that what is above us is nothing to us. Conceiving that God and glory are above our conception, begets little love for them; or conceiving of them as above our love, produces little joy in us. Therefore put Christ no farther from you than he has put himself, lest the divine nature be inaccessible in turn. Think of Christ as being in our own glorified nature. Think of glorified saints as men made perfect. Suppose yourself to be a companion with John in his survey of the New Jerusalem — viewing the thrones, the majesty, the heavenly hosts, the shining³⁹ splendor which he saw. Suppose yourself to be his fellow-traveller into the celestial kingdom, and that you had seen all the saints in their white robes, with “palms in their hands;” ^{Rev. 7.9} and that you had heard those “songs of Moses and of the Lamb.” ^{Rev 15.3}

If you had really seen and heard these things, what a rapture you would have been in! The more seriously you put this supposition to yourself, the more your meditations will elevate your heart. Don't

³⁹ *Sensible objects*: tangible, sensory — things accessible to your senses, or from personal experience.

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

draw them in pictures, like the Papists do! But get the liveliest picture of them in your mind that you possibly can, by contemplating Scripture's account of them, till you can say,

"I think I see a glimpse of glory! I think I hear the shouts of joy and praise, and even stand by Abraham and David, Peter and Paul, and other triumphant souls! I think I even see the Son of God appearing in the clouds, and the world standing at his bar to receive their doom. And I hear him say, 'Come, you blessed of my Father;' ^{Mat 25.34} and see them go rejoicing into the joy of their Lord! My very dreams of these things have sometimes greatly affected me; and shouldn't these just suppositions affect me even more? What if I had seen, with Paul, those 'unutterable things?' ^{2Cor 12.4} Or I had seen, with Stephen, 'heaven opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God?' ^{Act 7.56} Surely that one sight was worth his storm of stones. What if I had seen, as Micaiah did, 'the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing at his right hand and at his left?' ^{1Kng 22.19} These men of God saw such things; and I will shortly see far more than they ever saw, till they were loosed from the flesh, as I must be."

Thus you can see how it excites our affections in this heavenly work, if we make strong and familiar suppositions from our bodily senses, concerning the state of blessedness, as the Spirit has expressed it in condescending language.

2. The other way in which our senses may promote this heavenly work, is by *comparing the objects of sense, with the objects of faith*. For instance: You may strongly argue with your heart from the corrupt delights of sensual men, to the joys above. Think to yourself,

"Can it be such a delight for a sinner to do wickedly? And won't it be delightful *indeed* to live with God? Does the drunkard take such delight in his cups, that fears of damnation will not make him forsake them? Would the licentious man rather part with his credit, estate, and salvation, than with his brutish delights? If the way to hell can afford such pleasure to *them*, then what pleasures the saints will have in heaven! If the covetous man has so much pleasure in his wealth, and the ambitious man in his places of power and titles of honor, then what everlasting treasures and heavenly honors the saints will have, where we will be set above principalities and powers, and be made the glorious spouse of Christ! How delightfully the voluptuous follow their recreations from morning till night, or sit at their cards and dice for nights and days together! O the delight, then, *we* will have when we come to our rest, in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing praises to him and the Lamb!"

Compare also the delights above with the lawful and moderate delights of sense. Think to yourself,

"How sweet is food to my taste when I am hungry; especially if it is, as Isaac said, 'what I love,' ^{Gen 27.4} and which my temperance and appetite incline to? What delight, then, my soul will have in feeding upon 'Christ, the living bread,' ^{Joh 6.51} and in 'eating with him at his table in his kingdom!' ^{Luk 22.30} Was a mess of pottage so sweet to Esau in his hunger, that he would buy it at so dear a rate as his birthright? How highly, then, I should value this never-perishing food! It can scarcely be expressed how pleasant a drink is when I am extremely thirsty; it is enough to make the 'strength of Samson revive!' ^{Jdg 15.19} O how delightful it will be to my soul, to drink from that 'fountain of living water, which whoever drinks will thirst no more!' ^{Joh 4.4} How delightful are pleasant aromas to my smell; or music to my ear; or beautiful sights to my eye! What a fragrance, then, is 'the precious ointment which is poured on the head' of our glorified Savior, ^{Mat 26.7} and which will be poured on the head of all his saints, and fill all heaven with its aroma! How pleasing those real beauties above will be! How glorious the 'building not made with hands,' ^{2Cor 5.1} the house that God himself dwells in, the walks and the vistas in 'the city of God,' ^{Psa 87.3} and the celestial paradise!"

Compare also the delights above with those we find in natural *knowledge*. These are far beyond the delights of sense; but how much farther are the delights of heaven! Think, then,

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

“Can an Archimedes ⁴⁰ be so taken up with his mathematical invention, that threats of death cannot disengage him; but he would rather die in the midst of his contemplations? Shouldn't I be much more taken up with the delights of glory, and die with these contemplations fresh on my soul; especially when my death will perfect my delights, while those of Archimedes died with him? What an exquisite pleasure it is to dive into the secrets of nature, and find out the mysteries of arts and sciences — especially if we make a new discovery in any one of them! What high delights there are, then, in the knowledge of God and Christ! If the face of human learning is so beautiful as to make sensual pleasures appear base and brutish, then how beautiful is the face of God! When we find some choice book, we can read it day and night, almost forgetful of food, drink, or sleep! What delights there are, then, at God's right hand, where we will know in a moment all that is to be known!”

Compare, also, the delights above with the delights of *morality* and of *the natural affections*. What delight many sober heathen had in their rules and practice of moral duty. They took as an honest man, only one who did good through his love of virtue, and not merely from fear of punishment. Indeed, so valued was this moral virtue, that they thought a man's chief happiness consisted in it! Think, then,

“What excellence there will be in our heavenly perfection, and in that uncreated perfection of God, which we will behold! What sweetness there is in the exercise of natural love, whether to children, parents, co-workers, or intimate friends! Doesn't David say of Jonathan, 'Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women!' ^{2Sam 1.26} Didn't the 'soul of Jonathan cling to David?' ^{1Sam 18.1} Didn't Christ himself have one 'disciple whom he especially loved, and who usually leaned on his breast?' ^{Joh 21.20} If, then, the delights of close and cordial friendship are so great, what delight we will then have in the friendship of the Most High, and in the dearest love of the saints! Surely this will be a closer friendship than these here, more lovely and desirable friends than the sun ever beheld. And both our affections to our Father, and Savior, and especially theirs to us, will be such as we never knew here. If one angel could destroy an army, then the affections of spirits must be proportionately stronger — such that we will then love a thousand times more ardently than we can now. Just as all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is this attribute of love. He will love us infinitely beyond our most perfect love to Him. What there will be, then, in this mutual love!”

Compare also the excellencies of heaven with those glorious *works of creation* which our eyes now behold. What wisdom, power, and goodness are manifested in them! How the majesty of the Creator shines in this fabric of the world! “His works are great, sought out by all those who take pleasure in them.” ^{Psa 111.2} What divine skill there is in forming the bodies of men or beasts! What excellence in every plant! What beauty in flowers! What variety and usefulness in herbs, plants, fruits, and minerals! What wonders are contained in the earth and its inhabitants — the ocean of waters, with its motions and dimensions; and the constant succession of spring and autumn, of summer and winter! Think, then,

“If these things, which are but servants to sinful man, are so full of mysterious worth, what is that place where God himself dwells, prepared for just men made perfect with Christ! ^{Heb 12.22} What glory there is in the least of yonder stars! What a vast resplendent body is yonder moon, and every planet! What an inconceivable glory the sun has! But all this is *nothing* compared to the glory of heaven. Yonder sun must be laid aside as useless there. Yonder sun is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house. I myself will be as glorious as that sun. This whole earth is but my Father's footstool. This thunder is nothing compared to his dreadful voice. These winds are nothing compared to the breath of his mouth. If 'sending rain, and making the sun to rise on the just and on the unjust,' ^{Mat 5.45} is so wonderful, then how much more wonderful and glorious will that Sun be which must shine on none but saints and angels?”

Compare also the enjoyments above with *the wonders of Providence* in the church and the world. Wouldn't it be an astonishing sight to see “the sea stand as a wall on the right hand and on the left, and the dry land appear in the midst, and the people of Israel pass safely through, and Pharaoh and his host

⁴⁰ Greek mathematician and physicist noted for his work in hydrostatics, mechanics, and geometry (287-212 BC).

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

drowned?” ^{Exo 14.28-29} Or to have seen the ten plagues of Egypt; or the rock gushing forth streams; or manna and quails rained from heaven; or the earth opening and swallowing up the wicked? But we will see far greater things than these; not only sights more wonderful, but more delightful! There will be no blood or wrath intermingled; nor will we cry out like the men of Beth-shemesh, “Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?” ^{1Sam 6.20} How astonishing to see the sun stand still in the firmament, or “the dial of Ahaz go back ten degrees!” ^{Isa 38.8} But we will see when there will be no sun; or rather we will behold forever a Sun of infinitely greater brightness. What a life we would have, if we could have drought or rain upon our prayers; or have fire from heaven to destroy our enemies, as with Elisha; or miraculously cure diseases, and speak all languages, as the apostles did! Alas, these are nothing compared to the wonders we will see and possess with God; and all of them wonders of goodness and love! We ourselves will be the subjects of more wonderful mercies than any of these. Jonah was raised after only three days of being buried in the belly of a fish; but we will be raised from many years of decay and dust — and that dust will be exalted to the glory of the sun; and that glory will be perpetuated through eternity. Surely, if we observe but common providences — such as the motions of the sun; the tides of the sea; the standing of the earth; watering it with rain like a garden; keeping in order a wicked, confused world; with many others — they are all admirable. But what are these compared to the Sion of God, the vision of the divine Majesty, and the order of the heavenly host?

Add to these, those particular providences which you yourself have enjoyed and recorded through your life, and compare them with the mercies you will have above. Look over the mercies of your youth and of a riper age, of your prosperity and adversity, of your different places and relations; aren't they excellent and innumerable, rich and engaging? How sweet it was to you when God resolved your doubts; scattered your fears; prevented the inconveniences into which your own counsel would have thrown you; eased your pains; healed your sickness; and raised you up, such as from death and the grave! Think, then,

“Are all these so sweet and precious, that without them my life would have been a perpetual misery? Has his providence on earth lifted me so high, ‘and his gentleness made me so great?’ ^{Psa 18.35} How sweet, then, will his glorious presence be! How high will his eternal love exalt me! And how great will I be made in communion with his greatness! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what will I find in my home and in my triumph? If God communicates so much to me while I remain a sinner, what will he bestow when I am a perfected saint? If I have had so much at such a distance from him, what will I have in his immediate presence, where I will ever stand before his throne?”

Compare the joys above with the comforts you have received here in *ordinances*. Hasn't the Bible been like an open fountain to you, flowing with comforts day and night? What suitable promises have come into your mind, so that you may say with David, “If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction!” ^{Psa 119.92} Think, then,

“If his word is so full of consolation, what overflowing springs will we find in God himself! If his letters are so comfortable, what will the glory of his presence be! If the promise is so sweet, what will the performance be! If the testament of our Lord with our charter for the kingdom is so comfortable, what will our possession of the kingdom itself be!”

Think further,

“What delights I have also found preached in the word! When I have sat under a heavenly, heart-searching teacher, how my heart has been warmed! I think I have felt myself almost in heaven. How often have I gone to the congregation, troubled in spirit, and returned joyful! How often have I gone doubting, and God has sent me home persuaded of his love in Christ! What cordials I have met with to animate me in every conflict! If the face of Moses shined so gloriously, what glory is there in the face of God! If ‘the feet of those who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings of salvation, are beautiful,’ how beautiful is the face of the Prince of Peace! ^{Isa 52.7} If this treasure is so precious in earthen vessels, what is that treasure laid up in heaven! Blessed are the eyes that see what is seen

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

there, and the ears that hear the things that are heard there. There I will hear Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John, Peter, and Paul — not preaching to opponents in imprisonment, persecution, and reproach — but triumphing in the praises of the one who has raised them to honor and glory.”

Think also,

“What a joy it is to have access and acceptance in prayer — that I may always go to God, and open my case, and unburden my soul to him, as to my most faithful friend! But it will be a more unspeakable joy, when I receive all blessings without asking, and all my necessities and miseries will be removed, and God himself will be the portion and inheritance of my soul.”

As for the Lord’s supper,

“What a privilege it is to be admitted to sit at his table, and to have his covenant sealed to me there! But all the life and comfort that are found there, is to assure me of the comforts hereafter. O the difference between the last supper of Christ on earth, and the marriage supper of the Lamb at the great day! Then his place will be the glorious heavens; his attendants will be all the hosts of angels and saints. No Judas, no unfurnished guest will come there; but humble believers shall sit down by them, and their feast will be their mutual loving and rejoicing.”

Concerning the communion of saints, think to yourself,

“What a pleasure it is to live with intelligent and heavenly Christians! David says of them, they were ‘all his delight.’ Psa 16.3 O what a delightful society, then, I will have above! If I had but seen Job on the dunghill, what a mirror of patience! And what will it be to see him in glory! How delightful to have heard Paul and Silas singing in the stocks! How much more to hear them sing praises in heaven! What melody David made on his harp! But how much more melodious to hear that sweet singer in the heavenly choir! What I would have given for an hour’s free converse with Paul, when he had just come down from the third heaven! But I must shortly see those things myself, and possess what I see.”

Once more, think of praising God in concert with his saints:

“What if I had been in the place of those shepherds who saw and heard the heavenly host singing, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!’ Luk 2.14 But I will see and hear more glorious things. How blessed I would have thought myself if I heard Christ in his thanksgivings to his Father! How much more, when I will hear him pronounce me blessed! If there was such joy at bringing back the ark, or rebuilding the temple, what joy will there be in the New Jerusalem! If the earth split when the people rejoiced at Solomon’s coronation, what a joyful shout there will be at the appearing of the King of the church! If ‘when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy,’ Job 38.6-7 what a joyful song there will be when the world of glory is both founded and finished, when the top-stone is laid, and when ‘the holy city is adorned as the bride, the Lamb’s wife!’” Rev 21.2

Compare the joys you will have in heaven with what *the saints have found on the way to it*, and in the foretastes of it. When did God ever reveal the least of himself to any of his saints, that the joy of their hearts didn’t correspond to the revelation? What ecstasy Peter was in on the mount of transfiguration! “Master,” he says, “it is good for us to be here: let us make three tabernacles; one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Mat 17.4 It is as if he said, “O let us not go back down to that persecuting rabble; let us not return to our mean and suffering state. Isn’t it better to stay here, now that we are here? Isn’t there better company and sweeter pleasure here?” How Paul was lifted up by what he saw! How the face of Moses shined when he had been talking with God! These were all extraordinary foretastes, but they were little compared to the full beatific vision. How often have we read and heard of dying saints who have been full of joy; and when their bodies have felt the extremity of sickness and pain, they have had so much of heaven in their spirits, that their joy has far exceeded their sorrows!

If a spark of this fire is so glorious even amidst the sea of adversity, what then is glory itself! O the joy that the martyrs have felt in the flames! They were flesh and blood, as well as we. It must therefore be

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

some excellent thing that filled their spirits with joy while their bodies were burning. Think, reader, in your meditations,

“Surely it must be some wonderful foretaste of glory that made the flames of fire easy, and the king of terrors welcome. What then is glory itself! What a blessed rest it must be, when thoughts of it made Paul desire to depart and be with Christ; and that make the saints think they are never well till they are dead! Saunders embraced the stake and cried, ‘Welcome, cross!’⁴¹ And will I not more delightfully embrace my blessedness and cry, ‘Welcome, crown?’ Will Bradford⁴² kiss the kindling, and I not kiss the Savior? Will another poor martyr rejoice to have her foot in the same hole of the stocks in which Mr. Philpot’s⁴³ had been before her? And will I not rejoice that my soul will live in the same place of glory where Christ and his apostles have gone before me? Will fire and kindling, prisons and banishment, cruel mockings and scourgings, be more welcome to others, than Christ and glory are to me? God forbid!”

Compare the glory of the heavenly kingdom with *the glory of the church on earth, and of Christ in his state of humiliation*. If Christ’s suffering in place of sinners had such excellence, then what has Christ at his Father’s right hand! If the church has so much beauty under her sins and enemies, then imagine what she will have at the marriage of the Lamb! How wonderful was the Son of God in the form of a servant! — when he was born, a new star had to appear, in order to conduct the strangers to worship him in a manger; heavenly hosts with their songs celebrated his nativity; while he was a child, he disputed with doctors; when he entered his office, he turned water into wine, fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, restored the lame, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead — How wonderful, then, is his *celestial glory*! If there was cutting down of boughs, and spreading of garments, and crying Hosanna, for someone who comes into Jerusalem riding on an ass, what there will be when he comes with his angels in his glory! If those who heard him “preach the Gospel of the kingdom”^{Mat 4.23} confess, “No one ever spoke like this man;”^{Joh 7.46} then those who behold his majesty in his kingdom will say, “There was never glory like this glory.” If his enemies fell to the ground when they came to apprehend him — if when he is dying, the earth quakes, the veil of the temple is torn, the sun is eclipsed, the dead bodies of the saints arise, and bystanders acknowledge, “truly this was the Son of God”^{Mat 27.54} — then O what a day it will be when the dead must all arise and stand before him! — when he “once more shakes not only the earth, but the heavens also!”^{Heb 12.26} — when the sun will be taken out of the firmament, and be everlastingly darkened by his glory! — when every tongue shall confess that he is the Lord and King!^{Phi 2.11}

If, when he rose again, death and the grave lost their power; if angels must “roll away the stone,” terrify the keepers till they are “like dead men,” and send tidings to his disciples; and if he ascended to heaven in their sight — then what power, dominion, and glory he must now possess, that we shall forever possess with him! When he is gone, can a few poor fishermen and tentmakers cure the lame, blind, and sick, open prisons, destroy the disobedient, raise the dead, and astonish their adversaries? Then what a world will that be where everyone can do greater works than these! If the preaching of the Gospel is accompanied with power to reveal the secrets of the heart, humble the proud sinner, and make the most obdurate tremble; if it can make men burn their books, sell their lands, bring in the price, and lay it down at the preacher’s feet; if it can convert thousands and turn the world upside down; if its doctrine from the prisoner at the bar can make the judge on the bench tremble; if Christ and his saints have this power and honor in the day of their abasement, in the time appointed for their suffering and disgrace, then what they must have in their absolute dominion and full advancement in their kingdom of glory!

Compare the glorious change you will have at last, with *the gracious change* the Spirit has wrought on your heart here. There isn’t the smallest sincere grace in you, that isn’t of greater worth than the riches of the Indies; not a hearty desire after Christ, that isn’t more to be valued than the kingdoms of the

⁴¹ Lawrence Saunders (1519-1555) English Reformer; burned at the stake.

⁴² John Bradford (1510-1555) English Reformer, prebendary of St. Paul’s; burned at the stake.

⁴³ John Philpot (1516-1555) Archdeacon of Winchester; Protestant martyr.

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

world. A renewed nature is the very image of God; Christ dwelling in us, and the Spirit of God abiding in us — it is a beam from the face of God; the seed of God remaining in us is the only inherent beauty of the rational soul. It ennobles man above all nobility; fits him to understand his Maker's pleasure, to do His will, and to receive His glory. If this grain of mustard-seed is so precious, what then is "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God!" ^{Rev 2.7} If a spark of life, which but strives against corruptions, and enflames a few desires and groans, is of so much worth, then how glorious the *fountain* of this life must be! If we are said to be like God when we are pressed down with a body of sin, then surely we will be much more like God when we have no such thing as sin within us. If the desire for and love of heaven is so excellent, then what is the thing itself? If our joy in foreseeing and believing is so sweet, then what will be the joy of full possession? How glad a Christian is when he feels his heart begin to melt, and is dissolved with thoughts of sinful unkindness! Even this sorrow, yields him joy. O what will it be *then*, when we will know, and love, and rejoice, and praise in the highest perfection! Think to yourself,

"What a change it was to be taken from that state in which I was born, and in which I was riveted by custom, when thousands of sins lay against me! And if I had died so, I would have been damned forever! What an astonishing change, to be justified from all these enormous crimes, and freed from all these fearful plagues, and made an heir of heaven! How often, when I have thought of my regeneration, I cried out, O blessed day! and blessed be the Lord that I ever saw it! How *then* I will cry out in heaven, O blessed eternity! and blessed be the Lord that brought me to it! Did the angels of God rejoice to see my conversion? Surely they will congratulate my felicity in my salvation. Grace is but a spark raked up in the ashes, covered with flesh from the sight of the world, and sometimes covered with corruption from my own sight. But my everlasting glory will not be so clouded, nor my light be 'under a bushel, but upon a hill,' even upon mount Sion, the mount of God." ^{Mat 5.14-15}

Once more, compare the joys which you will have above, with those *foretastes* of it which the Spirit has given you *here*. Hasn't God sometimes revealed himself extraordinarily to your soul, and let a drop of glory fall upon it? Haven't you been ready to say, "O that it might be this way with my soul continually!" Did you never cry out with the martyr, after your long and mournful expectations, "He has come! He has come!" Did you never, under a lively sermon about heaven, or in your retired contemplations on that blessed state, perceive your drooping spirits revive, and your dejected heart lift up your head, and the light of heaven dawn on your soul? Think to yourself,

"What is this earnest compared to the full inheritance? Alas, all this light that so amazes and rejoices me, is but a candle lit from heaven to lead me there through this world of darkness! If some godly men have been overwhelmed with joy till they cried out, 'Hold, Lord, stay your hand; I can bear no more!' ⁴⁴ —then what will my joys be in heaven, when my soul is so capable of seeing and enjoying God, that even if the light is ten thousand times greater than the sun, my eyes will be able to behold it forever!"

Or if you haven't yet felt these sweet foretastes (for not every believer has felt them), then make use of such delights as you *have* felt, in order to better discern what you will feel hereafter.

II. Secondly. I am now to show how heavenly contemplation may be PRESERVED FROM A WANDERING HEART. Our chief work here is to discover the danger; and that will direct us to the fittest remedy. The heart will prove the greatest hindrance in this heavenly employment — either by *backwardness* to it; or by *trifling* in it; or by *frequently wandering* to other objects; or by *abruptly ending* the work before it has well begun. If you value the comfort of this work, these dangerous evils must be faithfully resisted.

1. You will find your heart is as *backward* to this, I think, as it is to any work in the world. O what excuses it will make! What evasions it will discover! What delays and demurs, when it is ever so much convinced! It will question whether it is a duty or not; or if it is a duty for others, is it also a duty for

⁴⁴ Curious use of 2Sam 24.16, where God said this to the destroying angel.

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

you? It will tell you, “This is a work for ministers who have nothing else to study; or for persons who have more leisure than you have.” If you are a minister, it will tell you, “This is the duty of the people; it is enough for you to meditate for their instruction, and let them meditate on what they have heard.” — as if it was your duty only to cook their meat and serve it up, and they alone must eat it, digest it, and live upon it. If all this won’t do, your heart will tell you about other business, or set you upon some other duty; for it would rather you go to *any* duty than this one. Perhaps it will tell you, “Other duties are greater, and therefore this must give way to them because you have no time for both. Public business is more important; studying and preaching for saving souls must be preferred before these private contemplations.” — as if you had no time to care for your own salvation because you are looking after that of others; or as if your charity to others is so great, that it obliges you to neglect your own eternal welfare; or as if there was any better way to fit us to be useful to others, than making this proof of our doctrine ourselves. Certainly heaven is the best fire to light our candle, and the best book for a preacher to study. If we could be persuaded to study heaven more, the church would be provided with more heavenly lights. When our studies are divine and our spirits divine, our preaching will also be divine, and we may be called divines indeed. Or if your heart has nothing to say against the work, it will trifle away the time in delays, and promise to do it this day or the next, but still avoid the business. Or it will give you a flat denial, and set its own unwillingness against your reason. All this I say about the heart, so far as it is still *carnal*; for I know that, so far as it is *spiritual*, it will judge this to be the sweetest work in the world.

What now is to be done? Will you do it if I tell you? Wouldn’t you say in a similar case, “What should I do with a servant who won’t work, or with a horse that won’t travel? Will I keep them to look at?” Then faithfully deal this same way with your heart: persuade it to the work; take no denial; chide it for its backwardness; use forcefulness with it. Have you no command of your own thoughts? Isn’t the subject of your meditations a matter of choice, especially under the guidance of your judgment? Surely God gave you, with your new nature, some power to govern your thoughts. Have you become a slave again to your depraved nature? Resume your authority! Call in the Spirit of Christ to your assistance. He is never backward to so good a work, nor will He deny his help in so just a cause. Say to him, “Lord, you gave my reason command of my thoughts and affections; the authority I have received over them is from you. And now behold, they refuse to obey your authority. You command me to set them to the work of heavenly meditation, but they rebel and stubbornly refuse the duty. Won’t you assist me to exercise that authority which you have given me? O send down your Spirit, that I may enforce your commands, and effectually compel them to obey your will! This is how you will see your heart submit, its resistance be overcome, and its backwardness be turned into cheerful compliance.

2. Your heart will also likely betray you by *trifling*, when it should be effectually meditating. Perhaps, when you have an hour for meditation, the time will be gone before your heart gets serious. Doing the duty, as if not doing it, ruins as many as omitting it. Here let your eye always be upon your heart. Don’t look so much at the time it spends in the duty, as to the quantity and quality of the work that is done. You can tell by his work, whether a servant has been diligent. Ask yourself, “What affections have been exercised yet? How much nearer am I to heaven?” Don’t think, since your heart is so trifling, that it is better to leave it alone. For by this means you will certainly banish all spiritual obedience, because the best hearts, being sanctified only in part, will resist so far as they are carnal. Rather, consider well the corruptions of your nature; and that its sinful indispositions will not supersede the commands of God; nor will one sin excuse another — and consider that God has appointed means to excite our affections. This self-reasoning, self-considering duty of heavenly meditation, is the most effective means to both excite and increase love. Therefore, you shouldn’t keep from the duty, waiting till you feel your love constrain you, any more than you would keep away from the fire, till you feel warm. Rather, engage in the work till your love is excited, and then your love will constrain you to further duty.

3. Your heart will also *frequently wander* from your heavenly meditation, to other objects. It will turn aside like a careless servant, to talk with everyone who passes by. When there should be nothing in your mind but heaven, it will be thinking of your calling, or your afflictions, or of every bird, tree, or place

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

you see. The cure here is the same as before: use watchfulness and forcefulness. Say to your heart, "What! Did I come here to think about my worldly business, about people, places, news, or vanity, or about anything but heaven, however good those are? 'Can't you watch one hour?' ^{Mar 14.37} Would you leave this world and dwell forever with Christ in heaven, and not leave it one hour to dwell with Christ in meditation? 'Is this your love to your friend?' Do you love Christ, and the place of your eternal, blessed abode, no more than this?" If the ravening fowls of wandering thoughts devour the meditations intended for heaven, they will devour the life and joy of your thoughts. Therefore, drive them away from your sacrifice, and strictly keep your heart to the work.

4. *Abruptly ending* your meditation before it has well begun, is another way in which your heart will deceive you. You may easily perceive this in other duties. In secret prayer, is your heart urging you to cut it short, and frequently making a motion to be done? So too, in heavenly contemplation, your heart will be weary of the work, and will stop your heavenly walk before you are well warmed. Charge it in the name of God to *stay*; and don't do so great a work by halves. Say to it,

"Foolish heart! If you beg a while, and go away before you have your alms, isn't your begging a lost labor? If you stop before the end of your journey, isn't your travel lost? You came here hoping to catch sight of the glory which you shall inherit. Would you stop when you are almost at the top of the hill, and turn back before you have taken your survey? You came here hoping to speak with God; and will you go before you have seen him? You came to bathe yourself in streams of consolation, and to that end you unclothed yourself of your earthly thoughts; will you only touch the bank and return? You came to 'spy out the land of promise;' ^{Num 13.16} Don't go back without 'one cluster of grapes to show your brothers' for their encouragement. ^{Num 13.23} Let them see that you have tasted of the wine by the gladness of your heart; and that you have been anointed with oil by the cheerfulness of your countenance; and have fed on milk and honey, by the mildness of your disposition and the sweetness of your conversation. This heavenly fire would melt your frozen heart, and refine and spiritualize it; but it must have time to operate."

Pursue the work this way till something is done, till your graces are exercised, your affections raised, and your soul refreshed with the delights above. If you cannot attain these ends at once, be more earnest another time.

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he comes, will find so doing." ^{Mat 24.46}

XV. Contemplation Assisted By Sensible Objects

CHAPTER XVI.

HEAVENLY CONTEMPLATION EXEMPLIFIED, AND THE WHOLE WORK CONCLUDED.

The reader's attention excited to the following example of meditation. 1. The excellences of heavenly rest; 2. its nearness; 3. dreadful to sinners; 4. and joyful to saints; 5. its dear purchase; 6. its difference from earth. 7. The heart pleaded with; 8. unbelief banished; 9. a careless world pitied. 10. Heavenly rest is the object of love; 11. and of joy. 12. The heart's backwardness to heavenly joy is lamented. 13. Heavenly rest is the object of desire.

And now, reader, according to the above directions, be conscientious about daily exercising your graces in meditation, as well as prayer. Retire to some secret place, at the time most convenient to yourself, and laying aside all worldly thoughts, with all possible seriousness and reverence, look up towards heaven. Remember, *there* is your everlasting rest. Study its excellence and reality; and rise from sense to faith by comparing earthly with heavenly joys. Then mix ejaculations with your soliloquies till, having pleaded the case reverently with God, and seriously with your own heart, you have pleaded yourself from a clod of earth into a flame; from a forgetful sinner and lover of the world, into an ardent lover of God; from a fearful coward into a resolved Christian; from an unfruitful sadness into a joyful life — in a word, till you have pleaded your heart from earth to heaven; from conversing below, to walking with God above; and till you can lay your heart to rest as in the bosom of Christ, by some meditation about your everlasting rest, such as the one added below for your assistance.

1. “*Rest!* How sweet the sound. It is melody to my ears! It lies as a reviving cordial to my heart; and from there it sends forth lively spirits which beat through all the pulses of my soul! Rest! It isn't like the stone that rests on the earth, nor as this flesh will rest in the grave, nor such a rest as the carnal world desires. O blessed rest, when we ‘do not rest day or night, saying Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!’ ^{Rev 4.8} when we will rest from sin, but not from worship; from suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day, when I will rest with God! when I will rest in the bosom of my Lord! when I will rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising! when my perfect soul and body will together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God! when God, who is love itself, will perfectly love me, and rest in his love to me, as I will rest in my love to him; and rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, as I will rejoice in him!

2. “How *near* is that most blessed, joyful day! It comes apace. ‘He that will come, will come, and will not tarry!’ ^{Heb 10.37} Though my Lord seems to delay his coming, yet a little while and he will be here. What is a few hundred years when they are over? How surely will his sign appear! How suddenly will he seize upon the careless world, even ‘as the lightning comes out of the east and shines to the west!’ ^{Mat 24.27} He who has gone from here will so come back. I think I hear his trumpet sound! I think I see him coming in clouds, with his attending angels, in majesty and glory!

3. “O, *secure sinners!* What will you do now? Where will you hide yourselves? What will cover you? Mountains are gone; the heavens and the earth which were, have passed away; the devouring fire has consumed all except yourselves who must be the fuel forever. O that you could be consumed as soon as the earth, and melt away as the heavens did! Ah, these wishes are now but vain! The Lamb himself would have been your friend; he would have loved you, and ruled you, and now have saved you — but you would not then, and now it is too late. Don't cry, Lord, Lord; it is too late, too late. Why do you look around? Can anyone save you? Where do you run? Can anyone hide you? O, wretch, that you have brought yourself to this!

4. “Now, *blessed saints,* who have believed and obeyed! This is the end of faith and patience. This is what you prayed and waited for. Do you now regret your sufferings and sorrows, your self-denial and holy walking? Are your tears of repentance now bitter or sweet? See how the Judge smiles upon you: there is love in his looks. The titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in his amiable, shining face. Hark, he calls you! He bids you stand here at his right hand: fear not, for there he sets his sheep. O

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

joyful sentence! ‘Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ ^{Mat 25:34} He takes you by the hand; the door is open; the kingdom is his, and therefore it is yours; there is your place before his throne! The Father receives you as the spouse of his Son, and bids you welcome to the Crown of Glory. Ever so unworthy, you must yet be crowned. This was the project of free redeeming grace, the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace! O blessed love! O how love and joy will rise! But I cannot *express* it, I cannot *conceive* it.

5. “This is that joy which was *procured by sorrow*, that crown which was procured by the cross. My Lord wept, so that now my tears might be wiped away; he bled, so that I might now rejoice; he was forsaken, so that I might not now be forsaken; he then died, so that I might now live. O free mercy, that can exalt so vile a wretch! Free to me, though dear to Christ! Free grace, that has chosen me when thousands were forsaken! When my companions in sin must burn in hell, I must here rejoice in rest! Here must I live with all these saints! O comfortable meeting of my old acquaintances, with whom I prayed, and wept, and suffered, and spoke often of this day and place! I see the grave could not detain you — the same love has redeemed and saved you also.

6. “This *isn’t like* our cottages of clay, our prisons, our earthly dwellings. This voice of joy is not like our old complaints, our impatient groans and sighs; nor is this melodious praise like the scoffs and revilings, or the oaths and curses, which we heard on earth. This body is not like what we had, nor this soul like the soul we had; nor is this life like the life we lived. We have changed our place and state, our clothes and thoughts, our looks, language, and company. Before, a saint was weak and despised — so proud and peevish that we could often scarcely discern his graces — but now, how *glorious* is a saint! Where now is their body of sin which wearied them and those about them? Where now are our differing judgments, reproachful names, divided spirits, exasperated passions, strange looks, and uncharitable censures? Now we are all of one judgment, of one name, of one heart, house, and glory. O sweet reconciliation! Happy union! Now the Gospel will no longer be dishonored through our folly. No more, my soul, will you lament the sufferings of the saints, or the church’s ruins; nor mourn your suffering friends, nor weep over their dying beds or their graves. You will never suffer your old temptations from Satan, the world, or your own flesh. Your pains and sickness are all cured; your body will no longer burden you with weakness and weariness; your aching head and heart, your hunger and thirst, your sleep and labor are all gone.

O what a mighty change this is! from the dunghill to the throne! from persecuting sinners to praising saints! from a vile body to this body which ‘shines as the brightness of the firmament!’ ^{Dan 12:3} from a sense of God’s displeasure to the perfect enjoyment of him in love! from all my doubts and fears to this possession which puts me out of doubt! from all my fearful thoughts of death to this joyful life! Blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow forever; farewell my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart; my worldly, sensual, carnal heart; and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell repentance, faith, and hope; and welcome love, and joy, and praise. I will now have my harvest, without ploughing or sowing; my joy, without a preacher or a promise; all of this even from the face of God himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here I will be encircled with eternity, and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord. My face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; ‘for this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, and death will be swallowed up in victory. O death, where now is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?’ ^{1Cor 15:54-55} The date of my lease will expire no more, nor will I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages have passed, my glory is but beginning; and when millions more have passed, it is no nearer its ending. Every day is all noon, every month is harvest, every year is a jubilee, every day is full manhood, and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity! the glory of my glory! the perfection of my perfection!

7. “Ah, drowsy, earthly heart! How *coldly* you think of this reviving day! Would you rather sit down in dirt, than walk in the palace of God? Are you now remembering your worldly business, or thinking of your lusts, earthly delights, and merry company? Is it better to be *here* than above with God? Is the

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

company better? Are the pleasures greater? Come away! Make no excuse or delay. God commands and I command you: gird up your loins; ascend the mount; look about you with faith and seriousness. Don't look back upon the way of the wilderness, unless it is to compare the kingdom with that howling desert, and to more sensibly to perceive the wide difference. Yonder is your Father's glory; yonder, O my soul, you must remove to when you depart from this body; and when the power of your Lord has raised it again, and joined you to it; yonder you must live with God forever. There is the glorious New Jerusalem, the gates of pearl, the foundation of pearl, the streets and pavements of transparent gold. That sun which lights all this world, will be useless there; even you yourself will be as bright as yonder shining sun; God will be the sun and Christ the light, and in his light, you will have light.

8. "O my soul! Do you 'stagger at the promises of God through *unbelief*?' ^{Rom 4.20} I much suspect you do. If indeed you believed, you would be more affected with it. Isn't it under the hand, and seal, and oath of God? Can God lie? Can he that is truth itself be false? What need does God have to flatter or deceive you? Why should he promise you more than he will perform? Don't you dare to charge the wise, almighty, faithful God with this. How many of the promises have been performed for you at your conversion! Would God so powerfully concur with a feigned word? O wretched heart of unbelief! Has God made you a promise of rest, and would you come short of it? Your eyes, your ears, and all your senses may approve delusions sooner than a promise of God can delude you. You may be surer of what is written in the word, than if you saw it with your eyes, or felt it with your hands. Are you sure you are alive, or that this is earth that you stand on, or that your eyes see the sun? Just as sure is all this glory to the saints — as sure as that I will be higher than yonder stars, and live forever in the holy city, and joyfully sound forth the praises of my Redeemer — if I am not shut out by this 'evil heart of unbelief,' causing me to 'depart from the living God.' ^{Heb 3.12}

9. "And is this rest so sweet and so sure? Then what does *the careless world* mean to do? Do they know what they neglect? Did they ever hear of it, or are they still asleep — or are they *dead*? Do they certainly know that the crown is before them, while they thus sit still, or follow trifles? Undoubtedly, they are beside themselves to mind so much their provision by the way, when they are hastening so fast to another world, and their eternal happiness is at stake. If there was one spark of reason left, they would never sell their rest for toil, nor their glory for worldly vanities, nor risk heaven for sinful pleasure. Poor men! O that you would just once consider what you hazard, and then you would scorn these tempting baits! Blessed be forever that love which has rescued me from this bewitching darkness!

10. "Draw yet nearer, O my soul! with your *most fervent love*. Here is matter for it to work upon, something worth your loving. O see what beauty presents itself! Isn't all the beauty in the world united here? Isn't all other beauty mere deformity? Do you now need to be persuaded to love? Here is a feast for your eyes and all the powers of your soul. Do you need entreaties to feed upon it? Can you love a little shining earth, a walking piece of clay? And can you not love that God, that Christ, that glory, which are so truly and unmeasurably lovely? You can love your friend because he loves you; and is the love of a friend like the love of *Christ*? Their weeping or bleeding for you doesn't ease you, nor stay the course of your own tears or blood. But the tears and blood that fell from your Lord, have a sovereign, healing virtue. O my soul! if love deserves and should beget love, then what incomprehensible love is here before you! Pour out the whole store of your affections here, and all is too little. O that it was more! O that it was many thousands of times more! Let him have the firstborn and the strength of your soul, He who parted with strength, and life, and love *for you*.

"O my soul! Do you love for *excellence*? Yonder is the region of light; *this* is the land of darkness. Yonder twinkling stars, that shining moon and radiant sun, are all but lanterns, hung outside your Father's house to light your way while you walk in this dark world. But how little you know the glory and blessedness that are within.

"Do you love for *suitableness*? What person is more suitable than Christ? His Godhead and humanity, his fullness and freeness, his willingness and constancy, all proclaim him to be your most suitable friend. What state is more suitable to your misery than mercy, or to your sin and pollution, than honor

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

and perfection? What place is more suitable to you than heaven? Does this world agree with your desires? Haven't you had a sufficient trial of it, or do you love only out of interest and near relation? Where do you have a better interest than in heaven, or a nearer relation than there?

“Do you love for *acquaintance and familiarity*? Though your eyes have never seen your Lord, yet you have heard his voice, received his benefits, and lived in his bosom. He taught you to know yourself and him. He opened for you that first window through which you saw into heaven. Have you forgotten when your heart was careless, and he awakened it; hard, and he softened it; stubborn, and he made it yield; at peace, and he troubled it; whole, and he broke it; broken, till he healed it again? Have you forgotten the times when he found you in tears; when he heard your secret sighs and groans, and left all to come and comfort you. When he took you in his arms, as it were, and asked you, ‘Poor soul, what ails you? Why do you weep, when I have wept so much? Be of good cheer; your wounds are saving and not deadly; I am the one who made them, who means you no harm. Though I let out your blood, I won't let out your life.’ I remember his voice. How gently he picked me up! How carefully he dressed my wounds! I think I hear him still, saying to me, ‘Poor sinner, though you have dealt unkindly with me, and pushed me away, yet I will not do so by you. Though you have treated me and all my mercies lightly, yet they and myself are all yours. What would you have that I cannot give you? And what do you want that I cannot give you? If anything that I have will give you pleasure, you will have it. Would you have pardon? I freely forgive all your debt. Would you have grace and peace? You will have both. Would you have *me*? Behold, I am yours — your Friend, your Lord, your Brother, Husband, and Head. Would you have the Father? I will bring you to Him, and you will have him, in and by me.’ These were my Lord's reviving words.

“After all, when I was doubtful of his love, I think I yet remember his overcoming arguments: ‘

Have I done so much, sinner, to testify of my love, and yet you doubt? Have I offered you myself and love for so long, and yet you question my willingness to be yours? At what dearer rate should I tell you that I love you? Won't you believe that my bitter passion proceeded from love? Have I made myself in the Gospel a lion to your enemies and a lamb to you, and yet you overlook my lamb-like nature? If I had been willing to let you perish, what need was there to have done and suffered so much? What need was there to follow you with such patience and importunity? Why do you tell me of your wants? Don't I have enough for me and you? Or tell me of your unworthiness; for if you were worthy yourself, what would you do with *My* worthiness? Did I ever invite or save the worthy and righteous? Or are there any such upon the earth? Have you nothing? Are you lost and miserable, helpless and forlorn? Do you believe I am an all-sufficient Savior, and will you have me? Lo, I am yours: *take me*; if you are willing, *I am* willing — and neither sin nor Satan will break the bond.’

These, O *these* were the blessed words which his Spirit from his Gospel spoke to me, till he made me throw myself at his feet, and cry out, ‘My Savior, and my Lord, you have broken, you have revived my heart; you have overcome, you have *won* my heart — *take it*, it is yours. If such a heart can please you, then *take it*; if it cannot, then make it as you would have it.’ Thus, O my soul, may you remember the sweet familiarity you have had with Christ. Therefore, if acquaintance causes affection, release your heart to him. He is the one who has stood by your bed of sickness, eased your pains, refreshed your weariness, and removed your fears. He has been always ready when you earnestly sought him. He has met you in public and private. He has been found by you in the congregation, in your house, in your closet, in the field, in your waking nights, and in your deepest dangers.

“If *bounty and compassion* are an attractive of love, how unmeasurably, then, am I bound to love him! All the mercies that have filled up my life, all the places that I ever lived, all the societies and persons I have been conversant with, all my employments and relations, every condition I have been in, and every change I have passed through, *all* tell me that the fountain is overflowing with goodness. Lord, what a sum of love I am indebted to you for! And how my debt continually increases! How should I love in return for so much love? Would I dare to think of requiting you, or of recompensing all your love with mine? Will my mite requite you for your goldmines; my faint wishes for your constant bounty — mine, which is nothing or not mine at all, for yours, which is infinite and your own? Would I dare contend in

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

love with you, or set my borrowed, languid spark against the sun of love? Can I love as high, as deep, and broad, or as long as Love itself? Can I love as much as the one who made me, and made me love, and gave me all that I have? Just as I cannot match you in works of power, nor make, preserve, or rule the worlds — no more can I match you in love. No, Lord, I yield; I am overcome. O blessed conquest! Go on victoriously, and still prevail and triumph in your love. The captive of love will proclaim your victory when you lead me in triumph from earth to heaven, from death to life, from the tribunal to the throne! Myself and all who see it will acknowledge that you have prevailed, and they will all say, “Behold, how he loved him!” ^{Joh 11.36} Yet, let me love in subjection to your love; as your redeemed captive, though not your peer. Will I not love at all, because I cannot reach your measure? O that I could passionately say, ‘I love you,’ even as I love my friend and myself! Though I cannot say as the apostle did, ‘You know that I love you;’ ^{Joh 21.15} I *can* say, Lord, you know I *would* love you. I am angry with my heart, that it doesn’t love you; I chide it, yet it doesn’t mend; I reason with it, and I would gladly persuade it, yet I don’t perceive it stirring; I rub and chafe it in the use of ordinances, yet I don’t feel it warm within me.

“Unworthy soul! Isn’t your eye now upon the only lovely object? Aren’t you now beholding the ravishing glory of the saints? And yet you don’t love? Are you not a rational soul, and shouldn’t reason tell you that earth is a dungeon compared to the celestial glory? Are you not a spirit, and shouldn’t you love God, ‘who is a spirit, and the Father of spirits?’ ^{Heb 12.9} Why do you love your perishing clay so much, and not love the heavenly glory more? Will you love when you get there — when the Lord takes your body from the grave, and makes you shine as the sun in glory for ever and ever — will you *then* love, or will you not? Isn’t the place a meeting of lovers? Isn’t the life a state of love? Isn’t it the great marriage-day of the Lamb? Isn’t the employment there the work of love, where the souls take their fill with Christ? O my soul, then begin it *here!* ‘Be sick with love’ *now*, ^{Sol 2.5} so that you may be well with love *there*. ‘Keep yourself’ now ‘in the love of God;’ ^{Jud 1.21} and let ‘neither life, nor death, nor anything, separate you from it;’ ^{Rom 8.39} and you will be kept in the fulness of love forever, and nothing will embitter or abate your pleasure; for the Lord has prepared a city of love, a place for communicating love to his chosen, ‘and those who love his name will dwell in it.’ ^{Psa 69.36}

11. “*Awake*, then, O my drowsy soul! To sleep under the light of grace is unreasonable, and much more so as the light of glory approaches. Come forth, my dull, congealed spirit; your Lord bids you *rejoice, and again rejoice.*’ ^{Phi 4.4} You have lain long enough in your prison of flesh where Satan has been your jailer — cares have been your irons, fears your scourges, and the bread and water of affliction have been your food. Sorrows have been your lodgings, and your sin and foes have made your bed. An unbelieving heart has been the gates and bars that kept you in. The angel of the covenant now calls you, and bids you ‘arise and follow him.’ ^{Act 12.7-8} Up, O my soul! and cheerfully obey, and your bolts and bars will all fly open — follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Should you fear to follow such a guide? Can the sun lead you to a state of darkness? Will He lead you to death, who died to save you from it? Follow him, and he will show you the paradise of God; he will give you a sight of the New Jerusalem, and a taste of the Tree of Life. Come forth, my drooping soul, and lay aside your winter dress; let it be seen by your ‘garments of joy and praise,’ ^{Isa 61.3} that the spring has come; and though you now see your comforts still green, you will shortly see them ‘white and ripe for harvest.’ ^{Joh 4.35} Then you will be called to reap, and gather, and take possession. Should I suspend and delay my joys till then? Shouldn’t the joys of the spring go before the joys of harvest? Is title nothing before possession? Is the heir in no better a state than a slave? My Lord has taught me to rejoice in hope of his glory, and how to see it through the bars of a prison. For when I am persecuted for righteousness’ sake, he commands me to ‘rejoice and be exceeding glad,’ because ‘my reward in heaven is great.’ ^{Mat 5.10, 12}

“I know he would have my joys exceed my sorrows. And as much as he delights in ‘the humble and contrite,’ ^{Isa 66.2} he delights still more in the soul that ‘delights in him.’ ^{Isa 42.1} Hasn’t my Lord spread for me a table in this wilderness, and furnished it with the promises of everlasting glory, and set before me angels’ food? Does he frequently and importunately invite me to sit down and partake, and not spare? To that end, hasn’t he furnished me with reason, and faith, and a joyful disposition; and is it possible that he would be unwilling to have me rejoice? Isn’t his command to ‘delight yourself in the Lord;’ ^{Isa 58.14}

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

and isn't his promise to 'give you the desires of your heart?' ^{Psa 37.4} Aren't you charged to 'rejoice evermore;' ^{1Th 5.16} — indeed, to 'sing aloud and shout for joy?' ^{Isa 12.6} Why then should I be discouraged? My God is willing, if only I am willing. He is delighted in my delights. He would have it be my constant frame and daily business to be near him in my believing meditations, and to live in the sweetest thoughts of his goodness. O blessed employment, fit for the sons of God! But your feast, my Lord, is nothing to me without an appetite. You have set the delicacies of heaven before me. But alas! I am blind and cannot see them! I am sick and cannot relish them! I am so benumbed that I cannot put out a hand to take them! I therefore humbly beg this grace: that just as you have opened heaven to me in your word, so you would open my eyes to see it, and my heart to delight in it — otherwise heaven will be no heaven to me. O Spirit of life! breathe upon your graces in me; take me by the hand and lift me from the earth, that I may see what glory 'you have prepared for those who love you!' ^{1Cor 2.9}

"Away, then, you soul-tormenting cares and fears, you heart-vexing sorrows! At least forbear a little while; stand by; stay here below till I go up and see my rest. The way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal abode of his glorious Deity; and there he has also brought his glorified flesh. It was his work to purchase it; it is his work to prepare it, and to prepare me for it, and to bring me to it. The eternal God of truth has given me his promise, his seal and oath, that 'believing in Christ, I will not perish, but have everlasting life.' ^{Joh 3.16} My soul will be speedily removed to there, and my body will very shortly follow. Can my tongue say that I will shortly and surely live with God, and yet my heart not leap within me? Can I say it with faith, and not with joy? Ah, faith, how sensibly I now perceive your weakness! But though unbelief darkens my light, and dulls my life, and suppresses my joys, it will not be able to conquer and destroy me. Though it envies all my comforts, I will receive some here, in spite of it; and if that didn't hinder me, what abundance I might have! The light of heaven would shine into my heart, and I might be almost as familiar there as I am on earth. Come away then, my soul; shut your ears to the ignorant language of infidelity. You are able to answer all its arguments; or if you are not, tread them under your feet. Come away: don't stand looking at that grave, or turning those bones, or reading your lesson now written in the dust; those lines will soon be wiped out. But lift up your head and look to heaven, and see your name written in golden letters 'in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.' ^{Rev 13.8}

"What if an angel were to tell you that there is a mansion in heaven prepared for you, and that it will certainly be yours forever. Wouldn't such a message make you glad? And would you make light of that infallible Word of promise which was delivered by the Spirit, and even by the Son himself? Suppose you had seen a fiery chariot come for you, and take you up to heaven, like Elijah. Wouldn't this rejoice you? But your Lord assures you that the soul of a Lazarus has a convoy of angels to carry it into Abraham's bosom. Will a drunkard be merry among his cups, or the glutton in his delicious fare, and I not rejoice, who will shortly be in heaven? Can food and drink delight me when I hunger and thirst? Can I find pleasure in walks, and gardens, and convenient dwellings? Can beautiful objects delight my eyes; or pleasant aromas delight my smell; or melody delight my ears? And will the forethought of celestial bliss not also delight me? I think I could employ myself in sweet contentment among my books, and bid the world farewell, and pity the rich and great who don't know this happiness; what then will my happiness be in heaven, where my knowledge will be perfect! If 'the queen of Sheba came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon' and see his glory; ^{Mat 12.42} how cheerfully I should pass from earth to heaven to see the glory of the eternal majesty, and to attain the height of wisdom, compared with which the most learned on earth are but fools and idiots!

"What if God had made me commander of the earth; what if I could 'remove mountains,' ^{Mat 17.20} 'heal diseases' with a word or a touch, or 'cast out devils,' ^{Mat 10.8} shouldn't I rejoice in such privileges and honors as these? And will I not much more rejoice that my name is written in heaven? ^{Luk 10.20} Here I cannot enjoy my parents or my near and beloved friends, without some delight; especially when I freely let out my affection to my friend, how sweet was that exercise of my love! O what it will be then, to live in perpetual love of God! 'How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity here!' ^{Psa 133.1} How happy, how delightful a sight it is to see a family live in love — husband and wife, parents,

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

children, and servants doing all in love to one another; or to see a town live together in love, without any envyings, brawls, or contentions, lawsuits, factions, or divisions — but every man loving his neighbor as himself, thinking they can never do too much for one another, striving to go beyond each other in love! O then, what blessed society will the family of heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, where there is no division or differing judgments, no disaffection or strangeness, no deceitful friendship — no, not one unkind expression, not an angry look or thought. But all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father; and all live in the love of him who is love itself! The soul is not more where it lives, than where it loves. How near, then, will my soul be united to God, when I so heartily, strongly, and incessantly love him! Ah, wretched, unbelieving heart that can think of a day, and work, and life such as this, with such low and feeble joys! But my future enjoyments will be livelier.

“How delightful it is for me to behold and study these inferior works of creation! What a beautiful fabric we dwell in here — the floor so dressed with herbs, and flowers, and trees, and watered with springs and rivers; the roof so widely expanded, so admirably adorned! What wonders the sun, moon, and stars, the seas and winds contain! And has God prepared such a house for corruptible flesh, for an imprisoned soul? He bestows so many millions of wonders upon his enemies! O what a dwelling that must be which he prepares for his dearly beloved children! How the glory of the New Jerusalem will exceed all the present glory of earth! Arise then, O my soul, in your contemplation, and let your thoughts of that glory far exceed in sweetness, your thoughts of the excellencies below! Do not fear to leave this body and this world when you must make so happy a change. But say, as one did when he was dying, ‘I am glad and even leap for joy, that the time has come in which that mighty Jehovah, whose majesty I have admired in my search of nature, whose goodness I have adored, whom by faith I have desired and panted after, will now show himself to me face to face.’

“How wonderful, also, are the works of Providence! How delightful to see the greatest God interest himself in the safety and advancement of a few humble, praying, but despised persons; and to review those special mercies with which my own life has been adorned and sweetened! How often have my prayers been heard, my tears regarded, my troubled soul relieved! How often has my Lord bid me ‘be of good cheer!’ ^{Mat 14.27} What a support these experiences are, these clear testimonies of my Father’s love, to my fearful, unbelieving heart! O then, what a blessed day that will be when I have all mercy, *perfection* of mercy, and fully enjoy the *Lord* of mercy; when I stand on the shore and look back on the raging seas that I have safely passed over; when I review my pains and sorrows, my fears and tears, and possess the glory which was the end of it all! If one drop of lively faith was mixed with these considerations, what a heaven-ravishing heart I would carry within me! Gladly would ‘I believe; Lord, help my unbelief.’ ^{Mar 9.24}

“How sweet, O my soul, have His ordinances been to you! What delight you have had in prayer and thanksgiving, under heavenly sermons and in the society of saints, and to see ‘the Lord adding to the church those who should be saved!’ ^{Act 2.47} How then can my heart conceive the joy which I will have, to see the perfected church in heaven, and to be admitted into the celestial temple, and with the heavenly host, praise the Lord forever? Was the word of God sweeter to Job than his necessary food, and to David than honey and the honeycomb, and was it the joy and rejoicing of Jeremiah’s heart? Then how blessed a day that will be when we fully enjoy the Lord of this word, and no longer need these written precepts and promises, nor to read any book but the face of the glorious God! If those who heard Christ speak on earth ‘were astonished at his wisdom and answers,’ ^{Luk 2.47} and ‘wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth,’ ^{Luk 4.22} how then I will be affected to behold him in his majesty!

“Can the prospect of his glory make others welcome the cross, and even refuse deliverance from it — and can’t it make you cheerful under *lesser* sufferings? Can it sweeten the flames of martyrdom, and not sweeten your life, or your sickness, or your natural death? Isn’t it the same heaven which they and I must live in? Isn’t their God, their Christ, their crown, the same as mine? And will I look at it with an eye so dim, a heart so dull, or a countenance so dejected? I myself have had some small foretastes of it; and how much more delightful they have been than any earthly things ever were! What, then, will the full enjoyment be!

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

“What a beauty there is here, in the imperfect graces of the Spirit! Alas! how small these are compared to what we will enjoy in our perfect state! What a happy life I would live here, if I could but love God as much as I would; if I could be *all* love and *always* loving! O my soul, what would you give for such a life? If I had such apprehensions of God, such knowledge of his word as I desire, then I could fully trust him in all my straits; I could be as lively as I would in every duty; I could make God my constant desire and delight. I wouldn’t envy the world their honors or pleasures. What a blessed state you will shortly be in, O my soul! when you have far more of these than you can now desire, and will exercise your perfected graces in the immediate vision of God — not in the dark, and not at a distance, as you do now!

“Is the sinning, afflicted, persecuted church of Christ so much more excellent than any particular gracious soul? What then will the church be when it is fully gathered and glorified; when it has ascended from the valley of tears, to Mount Sion; when it will sin and suffer no more! The glory of the Old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity, compared to the glory of the New. What cause we will have to shout for joy then, when we see how glorious the heavenly temple is, and remember the meanness of the church on earth!

12. “But, alas! *what a loss I am at* in the midst of my contemplation! I thought my heart had all the while attended to it, but I see that it hasn’t. What life is there in empty thoughts and words, without affections? Neither God nor I find pleasure in them. Where have you been, unworthy heart, while I was opening to you the everlasting treasures? Aren’t you ashamed to complain so much about an uncomfortable life, and to murmur at God for filling you with sorrows, when He offers you the delights of angels in vain? If you had but followed me closely now, it would have made you revive and leap for joy, and forget your pains and sorrows. Could I think my heart would be so backward to rejoice?

13. “Lord, you have reserved my perfect joys for heaven; therefore, *help me to desire* till I may possess, and let me long when I cannot rejoice as I would. O my soul, you know to your sorrow, that you are not yet at your rest. When will I arrive at that safe and quiet harbor where there are none of these storms, waves, and dangers; when I will never more have a weary, restless night or day? Then my life won’t be such a mixture of hope and fear, joy and sorrow; nor will flesh and spirit be combating within me; nor will faith and unbelief, humility and pride, maintain a continual conflict. O when will I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares, and griefs? When will I be out of this soul-contradicting, ensnaring, deceitful flesh — this corruptible body, this vain, vexatious world? Alas, that I must stand and see the church and the cause of Christ tossed about in contention, and made subservient to private interests or deluded fancies. There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem. *There* I will find a harmonious concert of perfected spirits, obeying and praising their everlasting King. O, how much better to be a doorkeeper there, than the commander of this tumultuous world. Why am I no longer weary of this weariness? Why do I so forget my resting-place? *Up then*, my soul! Get into your most raised and fervent desires! Don’t stop till this *flesh* can desire what *you* desire; don’t expect that your *senses* will apprehend your blessed object, and tell you when and what to desire.

“Doesn’t the dullness of your desires for rest, accuse you of the most detestable ingratitude and folly? Must your Lord procure for you a rest at so dear a rate, and you not value it more? Must he go before you to prepare so glorious a mansion for such a wretch, and yet you are loath to go and possess it? Will the Lord of glory desire your company, and you not desire his? Must earth become a very hell to you before you are willing to be with God? Behold the loveliest creature, or the most desirable state, and tell me, *where would you rather be if not with God?* Poverty is a burden; riches a snare; sickness unpleasing; health unsafe; the frowning world bruises your heel; the smiling world stings you to the heart. As much as the world is loved and delighted in, it hurts and endangers the lover; and if it may not be loved, then why should it be desired? If you are applauded, it proves to be the most contagious breath; if you are vilified, or unkindly used, I think this shouldn’t entice your love. If your successful labors and your godly friends seem better to you than a life with God, then it is time for God to take them from you. If your studies have been sweet, haven’t they also been bitter? And at best, what are they to the everlasting view of the God of truth? Your friends here have been your delight; but haven’t

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

they also been your vexation and grief? They are gracious; but aren't they also sinful? They are kind; but aren't they soon displeased? They are humble; but alas, how proud also! Their graces are sweet, and their gifts are helpful; but aren't their corruptions bitter, and their imperfections hurtful? And are you so loath to go from them to your God?

“O my soul, look above this world of sorrows! Have you so long felt the smarting rod of affliction, and not better understood its meaning? Isn't every stroke meant to drive you from here? Isn't its voice like that to Elijah, ‘What are you doing here?’ ^{1Kng 19.9} Did you forget your Lord's prediction? ‘In the world you will have tribulation; in me you will have peace!’ ^{Joh 16.33} Ah, my dear Lord, I feel your meaning; it is written in my flesh, and engraved on my bones. My heart is what you aim at; your rod drives it, your silken cord of love draws it; and all to bring it to yourself. Lord, can such a heart be worth your having? Make it worthy, and then it is yours; take it to yourself, and then take *me*. This clod has life to stir, but not to rise. As the feeble child to the tender mother, it looks up to you, and stretches out its hands, and would gladly have you pick it up. Though I cannot say, ‘My soul longs for you,’ ^{Psa 143.6} yet I can say, I *long* for such a longing heart. ‘The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak.’ ^{Mat 26.41} My spirit cries, ‘Let your kingdom come,’ or let me come to your kingdom; but the flesh is afraid that you will hear my prayer, and take me at my word. O blessed be your grace, which makes use of my corruptions to kill themselves; for I fear my fears, and I sorrow for my sorrows, and I long for greater longings — and thus the painful means of attaining my desires increase my weariness — and that makes me groan to be at rest.

“Indeed, Lord, my soul itself is in a strait, and I know not what to choose; but you know what to give: ‘to depart and be with you, is far better;’ but ‘to abide in the flesh’ seems needful. ^{Phi 1.23} You know I am not weary of your work, but of sorrow and sin; I am willing to stay while you will employ me, and dispatch the work you have put into my hands. But I beseech you, stay no longer when this is done; and while I must be here, let me continue amending and ascending; make me better still, and take me at my best. I dare not be so impatient as to importune you to cut off my time, and snatch me from here unready — because I know my everlasting state so much depends on the improvement of this life. Nor would I stay here when my work is done, and remain *sinning*, while my brothers are *triumphing*. Your footsteps bruise this worm, while *those* stars shine in the firmament of glory. Yet I am your child as well as they. Christ is my Head as well as theirs. Why, then, is there so great a distance between? But I acknowledge the equity of your ways. Though we are all your children, yet I am the prodigal. And therefore, I am more fit, in this remote country, to feed on husks; while they are always with you, and possess your glory. They were once themselves in my condition, and I will shortly be in theirs. They were of the lowest form before they came to the highest; they suffered before they reigned; they ‘came out of great tribulation, who are now before your throne.’ ^{Rev 7.14} And will I not be content to come to the crown as they did; and to ‘drink of their cup, before I sit with them in the kingdom?’ ^{Mat 20.23} Lord, I am content to stay your time, and to go your way, so you will exalt me also in your season, and take me into your barn when you see me ripe. In the meantime, I may *desire*, though I am not to repine; I may *believe* and *wish*, though I am not to make any sinful haste; I am *willing* to wait for you, but not to lose you. And when you see me too contented with your absence, then quicken my languid desires, and fan the dying spark of love; and don't leave me until I am able to unfeignedly cry out, ‘As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God! My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when will I come and appear before God?’ ^{Psa 42.1} ‘My conversation is in heaven, from where I look for a Savior.’ ^{Phi 3.20} ‘My affections are set on things above, where Christ sits, and my life is hidden.’ ^{Col 3.2-3} ‘I walk by faith, and not by sight; willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.’ ^{2Cor 5.7-8}

“What interest has this empty world in me; and what is there in it that may seem so lovely as to entice my desires from my God, or make me loath to soar away? I think, when I look upon it with a deliberate eye, that it is a howling wilderness, and too many of its inhabitants are untamed monsters. I can view all its beauty as deformity, and drown all its pleasures in a few penitent tears — or the wind of a sigh will scatter them away. O don't let this flesh so seduce my soul as to make it prefer this weary life before the joys that are about your throne! And even if death itself is unwelcome to nature, your grace makes your glory appear so desirable to me, that the king of terrors may be the messenger of my joy. Don't let my

XVI. Contemplation Exemplified

soul be ejected by force, and dispossessed of its habitation against its will. But draw it to yourself by the secret power of your love, as the sunshine in the spring draws forth the creatures from their winter cells. Meet it halfway, and entice it to you as the loadstone attracts the iron, and as the greater flame attracts the less! Dispel, therefore, the clouds that hide your love from me, or remove the scales that keep my eyes from beholding you. For the beams that stream from your face, and the foretastes of your great salvation, and *nothing else*, can make a soul unfeignedly say, 'Now let your servant depart in peace!' ^{Luk 2.29} But it isn't your ordinary revelations that suffice here. As the work is greater, so must your help be greater. O turn these fears into strong desires; and this loathness to die into longings after you! While I must be absent from you, let my soul groan as heartily as my body does under its want of health! If I have any more time to spend on earth, let me live in you without the world, as I have sometimes lived without you in the world! While I have a thought to think, let me not forget you; or a tongue to move, let me mention you with delight; or a breath to breathe, let it be after you and for you; or a knee to bend, let it daily bow at your footstool. And when you confine me by sickness, you 'make my bed,' ^{Psa 41.3} 'number my pains, and put all my tears into your bottle!' ^{Psa 56.8}

"Just as my flesh desired what my spirit abhorred, so now let my spirit desire that day which my flesh abhors, so that my friends may not wait for the departure of my soul with so much sorrow, as my soul will wait for its own departure with joy! Then 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his;' ^{Num 23.10} even a removal to that glory which will never end! Then let your convoy of angels bear my departing soul among the perfected spirits of the just, and let me follow my dear friends who have died in Christ before me. And while my sorrowing friends are weeping over my grave, let my spirit be reposed with you in rest; and while my body lies moldering in the dust, let my soul have 'the inheritance of the saints in light!' ^{Col 1.12} O you who number the very hairs of my head, number all the days that my body lies in the dust; and you who 'writes all my members in your book,' ^{Psa 139.16} keep an account of my scattered bones! O my Savior, hasten the time of your return; send forth your angels, and let that dreadful, *joyful* trumpet sound!

"Don't delay, lest the living give up their hope; don't delay, lest the earth grow more like hell, and your church, by division, crumble all to dust; don't delay lest your enemies get advantage of your flock, and lest pride, hypocrisy, sensuality, and unbelief prevail against that little remnant, and share among them your whole inheritance — and lest, when you come, you not find faith on the earth. Don't delay, lest the grave boast of victory, and having learned rebellion from its guest, refuse to deliver up to you your due! O hasten that great resurrection day, when your command will go forth, and none will disobey; when 'the sea and the earth will yield up their hostages,' and all who 'sleep in the grave will awake,' and 'the dead in Christ will rise first;' when the seed which you sow corruptible, will come forth incorruptible; and graves that received rottenness and dust, will return to you as glorious stars and suns! Therefore, I dare to lay down my body in the dust, entrusting it not to a grave, but to *You*; and therefore my flesh will rest in hope, till you raise it to possess everlasting rest. 'Return, O Lord, how long? O let your kingdom come!' Your desolate 'bride says, Come' for your Spirit within her says, Come; and teaches her to thus 'pray with groanings which cannot be uttered; indeed, the whole creation says, Come, waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' You yourself have said, 'Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'" ⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Luk 18.8; 1Cor 15.55; Rev 20.13; Dan 12.2; 1Th 4.16; 1Pet 1.23; Psa 90.13; Mat 6.10; Rev 22.17; Rom 8.26, 21; Rev 22.20.

CONCLUSION.

Thus, reader, I have given you my best advice for maintaining a heavenly conversation. If you cannot thus meditate methodically and fully, do it when you can; only be sure to do it seriously and frequently. Be acquainted with this heavenly work and in some degree, you will be acquainted with God; your joys will be spiritual, prevalent, and lasting, according to the nature of their blessed object; you will have comfort in life and death. When you have neither wealth, nor health, nor the pleasures of this world, you will yet have comfort. Without the presence or help of any friend, without a minister, without a book, when all means are denied you, or taken from you, you may yet have vigorous, real comfort. Your graces will be mighty, active, and victorious; and the daily joy which is thus drawn from heaven will be your strength. You will be as one who stands on the top of an exceeding high mountain: he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him — fields and woods, cities and towns seem but little spots to him. Thus you will look despicably on all things here below. The greatest princes will seem but grasshoppers; the busy, contentious, covetous world, will seem but a heap of ants. Men's threatenings will be no terror to you, nor the honors of this world have any strong enticement; temptations will be more harmless, having lost their strength; and afflictions will seem less grievous, having lost their sting; and every mercy will be better known and relished.

It is now, under God, in your own choice, whether you will live this blessed life or not; and whether all these pains I have taken for you will prosper or be lost. If it is lost through your neglect, you yourself will prove to be the greatest loser. O man, what have you to mind but God and heaven? Aren't you almost out of this world already? Don't you look every day, to see when one disease or another will release your soul? Doesn't the grave wait to be your house, and worms wait to feed on your face and heart? What if your pulse must beat only a few strokes more? What if you have but a little longer to breathe, before you breathe your last; a few more nights to sleep, before you sleep in the dust? Alas! What will all this be when it is gone? And isn't it almost gone already? Very shortly you will see your glass run out, and say to yourself, "My life is done! My time is gone! It is past recalling! There is nothing now but heaven or hell before me!" Where, then, should your heart be now, if not in heaven? If you knew what a dreadful thing it is to have a doubt about heaven when a man is dying, it would raise you up. And what else can that man do but doubt, who never seriously thought of heaven before?

There are some who say, "It isn't worth so much time and trouble to think of the greatness of the joys above. If we can make sure they are ours, we know they are great." But just as these men don't obey the command of God, which requires them to have their "conversation in heaven," ^{Phi 3.20} and to "set their affections on things above;" ^{Col 3.2} so they wilfully make their own lives miserable by refusing the delights which God has set before them. If this were all, it would be a small matter. But see what abundance of other mischiefs follow the neglect of these heavenly delights. This neglect will damp, if not destroy, their love to God — it will make it unpleasant for them to think or speak of God, or to engage in his service — it tends to pervert their judgment concerning the ways and ordinances of God — it makes them sensual and voluptuous — it leaves them under the power of every affliction and temptation, and it is a preparative to total apostacy — it will also make them fearful and unwilling to die. For who would go to a God or a place that he takes no delight in? Who would leave his pleasure here, if he didn't have better pleasure to go to?

If I had only proposed a course of melancholy, and fear, and sorrow, you might reasonably have objected. But you must either have *heavenly* delights, or else none that are lasting. God is willing that you should walk with him daily, and draw consolations from the everlasting fountain. If you are unwilling, then bear the loss; and when you are dying, seek comfort where you can get it — see whether fleshly delights will remain with you. Then your conscience will remember, in spite of you, that you were once persuaded to a way for more excellent pleasures — pleasures that would have followed you through death, and have lasted to eternity.

As for you whose hearts God has weaned from all things here below, I hope you will value this heavenly life, and take one walk every day in the New Jerusalem. God is your love and your desire; you would

Conclusion

gladly be more acquainted with your Savior; and I know it is your grief that your hearts are not nearer to him, and that they don't more feelingly love him and delight in him. O try this life of meditation on your heavenly rest! Here is the mount on which the fluctuating ark of your souls may rest. Let the world see by your heavenly lives, that religion is something more than opinions and disputes, or a task of outward duties. If ever a Christian is like himself, and conformable to his principles and profession, it is when he is most serious and lively in his duty. As Moses went up into Mount Nebo before he died, to take a survey of the land of Canaan, so the Christian ascends the mount of contemplation, and by faith surveys his rest. He looks upon the glorious mansions and says, "glorious things are" deservedly "spoken of you, city of God!" ^{Psa 87.3} He hears, as it were, the melody of the heavenly choir, and says, "Happy are the people in such a state; indeed, happy are the people whose God is the Lord!" ^{Psa 144.15} He looks upon the glorified inhabitants, and says, "Happy are you, O Israel. Who is like you, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your excellency!" ^{Deu 33.29} When he looks upon the Lord himself, who is their glory, he is ready with the rest to "fall down and worship Him that lives for ever and ever, and say, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come! You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power!" ^{Rev 4.8-11} When he looks on the glorified Savior, he is ready to say *Amen* to that "new song, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever. For you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us, to our God, kings and priests!" ^{Rev 5.9-10} When he looks back on the wilderness of this world, he blesses the believing, patient, despised saints; he pities the ignorant, obstinate, miserable world; and for himself he says, as Peter did, "It is good to be here;" ^{Mat 17.4} or as Asaph said, "It is good for me to draw near to God; for lo, those who are far from you will perish." ^{Psa 73.27-28} When Daniel, in his captivity, went to God in his devotions, he daily opened his window towards Jerusalem — though far out of sight. So may the believing soul in this captivity of the flesh, look towards "Jerusalem which is above." ^{Gal 4.26} And as Paul was to the Colossians, so may the believer be with the glorified spirits — "though absent in the flesh, yet with them in the spirit, joying and beholding their heavenly order." ^{Col 2.5} And just as the lark sweetly sings while she soars on high, but is suddenly silenced when she falls to the earth, so is the frame of the soul most delightful and divine while kept in its views of God by heavenly contemplation. Alas, we make too short a stay there, fall down again, and lay aside our music!

But "O you, the merciful Father of spirits, the attraction of love and ocean of delights, draw these drossy hearts up to yourself, and keep them there till they are spiritualized and refined; and second your servant's weak endeavors, and persuade those who read these lines, to the practice of this delightful, heavenly work! O don't suffer the soul of your most unworthy servant to be a stranger to those joys which he describes to others; but keep me, while I remain on earth, in daily breathings after you, and in a believing, affectionate walk with you! And when you come, let me be found so doing — not serving my flesh, nor asleep with my lamp unfurnished; but waiting and longing for my Lord's return! Let those who read these heavenly directions, not merely read the fruit of my studies, but the breathing of my active hope and love — so that if my heart were open to their view, they might read the same there, most deeply engraven with a beam from the face of the Son of God; and not find vanity, or lust, or pride within, when the words of life appear without — so that these lines may not witness against me; but proceeding from the heart of the writer, they may be effectual, through your grace, upon the heart of the reader, and so be the savor of life to both! Amen."

"Glory be to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will toward men."

THE END