

THE
EVERLASTING
REST OF THE
SAINTS IN
HEAVEN

WILLIAM BATES

MONERGISM BOOKS

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The Everlasting Rest of the Saints in Heaven

by William Bates

Heb. 4:9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God

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THE INTRODUCTION

The coherence of the words. The doctrine and method of handling it propounded."

THE words are an inference from the foregoing part of the chapter, wherein the apostle doth by illustration and proof make a discovery to us of the future state of rest for the people of God. He makes use of a double illustration for this.

1st. God's sacred rest from the works of creation, from the 4th verse. "And God did rest the seventh day from all his works;" that is, after God had perfected the invisible and visible world, on the review of all his works, finding them very good, he took pleasure, he was satisfied

in all those discoveries of his own perfections in the works of his hands; and this is said to be his rest. God always enjoyed his own glory and blessedness even from eternity: but this rest here spoken of, hath respect to the precedent work of creation, and that joyful reflection that God made upon his own works; because they were according to the model of his infinite wisdom, he was infinitely pleased in them. Now this divine rest is produced here as an illustration of that rest that the saints shall enjoy in heaven, after all their works done for the glory of God here on earth.

2nd. The second illustration is from the rest that was promised to the Israelites in the land of Canaan; and the apostle speaks of this in the first verse, "let us therefore fear, lest a promise being made of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." And in the foregoing chapter he had been treating of this rest. They were at first harassed in Egypt with cruel oppression, and they were to pass through a waste and wild wilderness, wherein they were to have many hard and difficult journeys. To those that did believe, and obey according to that belief, Canaan was promised as a land of rest. Now this temporal Canaan was but a type of the heavenly Canaan, the land above, that flows indeed with milk and honey; that is, where holiness, and joy, and pleasure, are for ever in perfection. Now, saith the apostle, the earthly Canaan was to be a representative of that country above, which is prepared for the people of God. And indeed this was the wisdom of the Holy Spirit of God, to raise the thoughts and desires of men by temporal things to those which are eternal. This is the double illustration. The proof which the apostle urgeth here, that there is still a rest remaining for the people of God, is from hence, that after the Israelites were possessed of Canaan, yet the royal prophet David speaks of another rest, that unbelievers should be excluded from, and that believers should obtain. "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to-day after so long a time as it is said, to-day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not after have spoken of another day; there remaineth a rest therefore to the people of God." If you will be obedient to his call, do not harden your hearts,

through infidelity; if you will believe and be holy, you shall come to this rest, that indeed deserves that name, not like the rest in the land of Canaan. If indeed he had given them rest, David would not have spoken of another rest. If we had been possessed of it in the land of Canaan, David would not have said, if you remain in disobedience and infidelity you shall not enter into it, but if you be obedient you shall possess it. But seeing David hath said so, I conclude, saith the apostle, "there remains therefore a rest to the people of God." The words that I have read to you do contain that which is the most powerful and the most comfortable motive to believe and obey the gospel, and to persevere in it, that can be offered to you, especially considering the state we are in of strangers, and of a continual warfare; there is nothing can be more desirable than to hear this, and that can give more vigour to our souls in the ways of God. There is an expression of Solomon applicable to this purpose, "as cold waters to the thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." This is good news from heaven, the country above, therefore infinitely refreshing to us in all the heat, trouble and toil that we are engaged in, in this suffering world; "there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."

The doctrine that I shall insist upon from the words, is this, there is a divine and blessed rest that is reserved as a reward to the people of God. I call it divine, because it is an imitation of God's rest, and it remains, for it is reserved as a reward. In the opening of this, I will show you,

I. Who are they that are characterized by this title, the people of God, and who are qualified for this reward and rest, and have a title to it, and an interest in it.

II. The place of this rest where it shall be.

III. The excellencies of this rest. And then,

IV. Come to the application.

I. Description of the People of God.

Who are the people of God, for whom heaven is reserved. They are such as he hath a propriety in: not upon common accounts only, but special and peculiar ones, viz. election, special redemption, and renovation. And such as unfeignedly consent to take him for their King, and yield a voluntary, persevering subjection to him.

I. FIRST, Consider who they are that are characterized here as heirs of this divine and blessed rest; and they are called the people of God. I shall not run forth into a long discourse of all those things that the scripture speaks concerning the heirs of heaven, and their qualifications: I shall restrain what I shall say to this title, The people of God, and this title includes,

i. God's propriety in them, they are his people.

ii. It concludes on their part, 1st. An unfeigned consent to take him for their King. And, 2nd. A voluntary persevering subjection to him.

i. God's people are those he hath a propriety in; and this I will open particularly to you.

1. God hath a general right to all the works of his hands, especially in the reasonable world. You shall find the psalmist saith, in Psalm 100:3. "Know ye, that the Lord he is God; it is he that made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." He hath an undoubted right in all creatures, both men and angels, as he is their Creator. But notwithstanding this clear title of God, the greatest part of the world do not obey him: he hath indeed the right of a king, but they do not pay him the reverence due to him as a king; they do not subject themselves to him. And in this respect you must make a difference between being a king, and reigning over a people: a prince may have authority over a people, and they may prove

rebellious, and he not reign over them. Now the greatest part of the world live in this way of rebellious opposition against God. It is said, Psal. 2:2, 3. "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." It is not creation that gives that propriety in a people, that they shall hereby have a title to God's rest: the fallen angels were his sons by creation: the angels are called the sons of God; but they have proved rebellious in his own court, and therefore expelled from thence.

2. The propriety of God in his people, is upon more peculiar and special accounts.

(1.) To begin with the rise of it; his merciful choosing of them from eternity to be vessels of grace and glory. God's original title ariseth from his electing-love; "I have chosen them to be a people to myself." Isa. 43:20. And our Saviour speaking concerning his apostles, John 6:17. "thine they were, and thou gavest them me." How were the apostles God the Father's in a special manner? The meaning of that expression is, they were thine by thy merciful choice, by thy peculiar electing-love; thine they were and thou gavest them me; to be the matter of my purchase; to be redeemed and saved by me. You must know, as it is with earthly kings and their people, they have their several limits, whereby one kingdom is distinguished from another; as rivers, mountains, and the like; so the kingdom and people of God are limited by his election, from the kingdoms of the world, and of satan. All those upon whom the beams of electing-love shine, those that God hath chosen from pure mercy, they are his people strictly and properly, and distinguished from all those that are entitled his people by an external profession.

(2.) This title of God to his people, as it took its rise from election, so it is confirmed by his special and peculiar redeeming of them: he paid a ransom for them out of his own treasury; that is the most precious blood of the Son of God given for them by the order and

appointment of his Father: and the Lord Jesus was God's servant in the work of our redemption; and his redemption had respect to the will of his Father, as the first rise and motive of it; and those whom his Father gave him, he doth effectually redeem: he not only laid down a price for them, but all the benefits he purchased by his blood,, he applieth to them. You know how the apostle challengeth the Corinthians upon this title. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. "You are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits, which are God's." Mankind was fallen from the glory of God, and was brought to a state of servile bondage to sin, and was under the curse of the law. Now though this could not defeat God of his right, this sin of man could not alienate man from God; God's title was still entire, notwithstanding; yet nevertheless man was brought into such a state, that he was incapable to serve God. Then he was pleased to appoint the life of his Son to be a sacrifice to redeem mankind from the curse of the law, and to reconcile himself to them, and free them from the bondage of sin. And this is a title that cost him more dear than the creating of the whole world; for that was effected by his word; "he spake, and it was done," saith the psalmist; but it was not so in the redemption of man, that had sold himself to sin, and was under the heavy sentence of the law: he was put to the expence of that which was the richest treasure, the precious blood of the Son of God. And thus God hath a special people upon the account of election and special redemption.

(3.) The third title God hath to his people, is from renovation, the restoring of them to his own image, and the renewing of their natures, and giving to them heavenly endowments, preparing them for his service and glory. So you shall find the apostle tells them, Eph. 2:10. "for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." So that as a man hath a right to the house which he builds, and he is truly the owner of it that finds the materials, and frames and raiseth the building; so God is the owner of his people; they are his living and spiritual temple, raised and framed for his praise, they are his workmanship. As in nature God is obeyed by every rank of

creatures in those actions which are congruous, and suitable to those principles of operation which he hath put into them. As when the sun runs its course, and the stars keep their regular motion, and the flux and reflux of the sea obey God, and all the creatures observe that order that he hath appointed, and act according to their several principles of operation. Thus it is with the sensitive world; and so it is likewise with the people of God, that have a new nature communicated to them, they are furnished with heavenly qualities to serve God, and to glorify and enjoy him.

Thus I have gone over three things that evidence God's propriety in his people; and could you bring it down to yourselves, it would be of use to you. Election is an object too high for us to see immediately; we cannot look into the rolls of eternity; but election makes itself evident, and declares itself in our sanctification: for sanctification is, as it were, a temporal election; for God chooseth a person when he makes him holy, and separates him from the rest of the world: Psal. 100:3. "We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." You must understand it in a political sense: God is our governor, and we must obey him; you know flocks of sheep have marks upon them, that separate and distinguish them from other sheep; so the saints have God's mark upon them. Holiness to the Lord is a visible stamp, whereby they are distinguished from the world; whereby it is clear and evident, that he prepares them for his rest above.

ii. On our part, being of the number of the people of God, includes these things: our unfeigned consent to be his people. When the soul is absolutely and entirely brought to close with the right of God, and to confirm his right in us, and to acknowledge it, and to accept of it cordially and sincerely; then we come to be in the number of God's people. You find an expression which is directly to this purpose: Psal. 110:3. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Willing to what? Willing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and Christ, and to yield up themselves to it. In the day of thy power? That is, when the grace of God, which hath omnipotency going along with it, shall work upon the heart, and make it willing to own and

acknowledge God in this. There are none but will acknowledge God in profession and words that they are his: but the greatest part of the world keep the crown upon the devil's head; they are his servants, and yield him the throne of their hearts, and he reigns in them: but those that are the people of God, they do with their hearts acknowledge his right and title to them, and do most desirously close with him. In short; as God takes them to be his people, so do they joyfully and pleasantly yield up themselves to be his servants, and take him to be their sovereign: if it be offered to their choice, they infinitely prefer him and his government above all others. This, as to our believing sense, is the foundation of our relation to God. His election and choice is a thing without us, and above us; and it discovers itself by the effects; until we be made a willing people, we can never discover that he is our King and Lord, and will reward us with eternal life. That you may not deceive yourselves with a vain pretence of being God's people; they that are the people of God, will own him for their King, and be subject to his laws, and subject to them all, without exception. If there be any duty, God commands you as a king, and from that title, and if there be any niceness or aversion in your breasts against it, and you would fain have your obligation to that duty dissolved, you are none of God's people; for the reserving of one sin, and the exception of one duty, will make you in a state of rebellion and enmity against God. Where ever this is, it will make a person incapable of this rest: though the gospel makes an allowance for failings, and infirmities, and relapses; yet there is no chancery in the gospel for any person that retains any sin, and that hath a prevailing exception in his heart against any command: if you think there is, you build your hopes upon a fancy. The gospel requires sincerity; and the very essence of sincerity lies in this, that I endeavour entirely to comply with all God's will. I may be surprised into a sin against God; I may by a sudden temptation break a command.; but if there be not a sincere endeavour to comply with all the will of God, such a person is God's enemy, and never to be received in his kingdom. The subjection must be entire and sincere; "Then shall I not be ashamed" (saith the psalmist, Psal. 119:6.) "when

I have respect to all thy commandments:" that is, his hope shall not be disappointed at last, so as to expose him to everlasting shame.

There must be a persevering and a constant subjection. Rom. 2:7. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing," whatsoever it cost you, whatsoever difficulty or hazard you are exposed to, whatsoever you lose. If you do not persevere in well-doing, you can plead nothing from gospel-promises, to this rest. Rev. 2:10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Were it possible for a man to go on in a course of holiness to the last day of his life, and he should then break off his course, if he should meet with a temptation so grateful or terrible as to make him leave off his obedience to God, he could have no comfortable hope of heaven; "For he only that endureth to the end shall be saved," And here it is observable, the scripture tells us, though a man hath lived in a course of disobedience and opposition to God many years, if he turn to God at last, and persevere in that return he shall go to heaven: but if he hath lived an hundred years in obedience and at last fall off he shall perish for ever. And we find a resemblance of this in the justice of men. Suppose a person hath done never so worthily for a king and kingdom, if afterwards he turn rebel, he may justly be cut off for his rebellion. So if a person fall off from God; all his former righteousness shall be forgotten; for this rest remaineth only for those that are the persevering people of God.

II. Heaven is the Place of this Rest.

Heaven the place of this rest. It is stable, and vastly large; very glorious, and pleasant.

II. I Come now to speak of the place of this rest. It is enjoyed in that kingdom that is unshaken above. You shall find an expression of the apostle very fit to my purpose: Heb. 12:28. "Wherefore we receiving a

kingdom that cannot be shaken or moved." It is a proper place for this rest I am speaking of. The kingdoms of this, world are not move property compared to any thing, than the sea, which is always voluble and inconstant, and sometimes so violent, that he which expects rest there, must contradict both reason and sense. This world is a seat of change and mutability: but the kingdom above almost aptly resembled by a sea of glass, Rev. 15:2. "I saw as if it were a sea of glass." There is no unquiet agitation in a sea of glass, no disturbance there. The kingdom of heaven is God's sanctuary, where the God of peace reigns. It is said in the book of Job, Job 25:2. "He makes peace in his high places." Indeed once there was a disturbance in heaven; when the angels fell; but that disturbance did not continue, they were presently expelled from their first habitation; that is the region of peace.

It is an expression of Seneca, as a piece of poetical bravery, *Animus sapientis est sicut locus supra lunam, semper illic serenum est*: the heart of a wise man is like the place above the moon, all is serene and calm there.

The lower region is charged with clouds and thunder, which encounter one another, and make disturbance: but the true rest is heaven, the celestial paradise above, the New Jerusalem, God hath fitted and prepared that place for the rest of his people. Although it is but little that we can speak of the glory of that place, I can raise your thoughts of it a little, by one consideration which I find in the prophet Isaiah, chap. 6. When the seraphims were praising God, one cried to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole world is full of his glory." That which I apply it for, is this, this lower world, that is this earth, is full of the glory of God; the earth, which God hath made the receptacle of birds and beasts. If the earth that is the wilderness of God's people, and which his enemies enjoy, is full of the glory of God, pray raise your thoughts by this consideration:

What is heaven then, and the glory of God's sanctuary above? How do all his perfections shine there.

If the "earth be full of the glory of the Lord," do not doubt but the glory of that place, doth contribute to the blessedness of this rest. Look upon the aspectible heavens, all those great luminaries, sun, moon, and stars, they are but the frontispiece of heaven: now this is the rest of the people of God. We cannot now conceive what is the glory of that rest. The scripture saith something to us of the place of our future-happiness; it would be a proud curiosity to make such inquiries into it as we have no foundation for in the word of God: but there are several things the Holy Spirit in the scripture reveals to us concerning it: all which will serve to enlarge our apprehensions concerning that rest and blessedness we shall enjoy in heaven. There are four which I shall briefly touch upon, and then proceed.

1. The stability of that place, the security of it. It is called, Heb. 11:10. "A city that hath foundations." There the apostle speaks concerning the patriarchs that were in an unsettled condition, travelling into a strange country. It is said concerning Abraham, the father of them, Heb. 11:10. "He looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Tabernacles were moving tents, that had no foundations, that might easily be carried from one place to another: but heaven is a city which hath foundations. This lower world, and the upper world that is visible to us, shall either be refined or consumed by fire, notwithstanding all that exquisite order and beauty that we see in them. The apostle tells us they are reserved for fire; now whether that fire shall be consuming, or whether it shall be merely a reforming purifying fire, we are not certain: though there are some probable reasons that may induce us to a belief of it that it shall only be a reforming and refining one. For the apostle tells us, Rom. 8:22. "We know the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now:" and in the foregoing verse it is said, "Because the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of

the children of God." The apostle speaks concerning this world, which you know hath been defiled and stained by the sin of man. And St. Peter saith, 2 Pet. 3:13. "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This visible form of the heavens, which is subjected to our eye, shall be destroyed: for thus the psalmist speaks, Psal. 102:25, 26. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." In the elementary world all things are in a perpetual change: those things that are so much admired and loved, all those vain idols that men set their hearts upon, they are all changing and perishing every day: but now for the heavens and the earth themselves, observe what the prophet saith, "Thou shalt change them." We see no cause that would be sufficient to change this heaven and this earth; the divine power only can do it: but he that hath made them, will and can easily change them. But for the heaven of glory, where the saints shall be, that is a city that hath foundations, there shall be no change there. In the history of the creation; it is observable, Moses speaks not one word concerning the making of the supreme heavens, though they may be included in the visible heavens. He only speaks expressly of this visible world, which shall be changed. Observe what our Saviour tells us, John 14:2. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Our habitations in this lower world are like an inn, or house of progress, that one lies at for a little time. But heaven is called a mansion, the place of the saint's residence; there shall be no change, no shadow of change there, but it shall be kept always by the power of God, as a prepared habitation for the rest of God's people. Now by the way, this shows how vain it is for us to expect rest here, in a house that is but propped up for a while. Therefore we cannot expect rest here. It is spoken of as one of the prodigies of nature, concerning the kingfisher, that she builds her nest in the sea, one of the most moveable elements; but that little bird is instructed by nature to build her nest there when there is a perfect calm, for the security of its young. But there is no calm in this world, all things are in a perpetual flux, in a rapid motion. The heavens that

are over us shall be confounded and destroyed, and the stars shall fall like leaves in autumn, and the fire shall pass upon them all: but the heavenly kingdom is unshaken, a place that is fit for rest.

2. To show you further how this place is fitted for rest, as the scripture speaks concerning the stability of it, so it discovers to us its vastness and immensity. It is a place capacious enough to be the seat of an innumerable company of angels, and of all the saints of God, when they shall be united together in one glorious assembly at the last day. John 14:2. "In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Many mansions; there is room in abundance. There is such an extension, as to hold all the blessed spirits together, so as every one shall have his particular mansion, every one shall have a place of ease and rest. When Solomon had built a magnificent temple to God, saith he, 1 Kings 8:27. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built? Will God indeed dwell on earth?" That is, will he afford his glorious presence with his people in his temple? Then it follows, "Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." It is spoken with respect to the amplitude of that kingdom. There are three heavens that the scripture speaks of; the ærial heaven, that which encompasseth all the earth and sea. So you read of the fowls of heaven, the birds that fly in the air. 2ndly, The ethereal heaven, where are the sun, moon, and stars, And 3dly, There is the heaven of heavens which is called the third heavens in scripture. Now do but observe this earth, that contains innumerable inhabitants and creatures upon it, this vast earth, compared to the starry heavens, is but as one single point; it is as nothing: and the heaven of heavens encompasseth all the starry heavens, and hath a vastness that is inconceivable to us. How great it is, we cannot tell; but we are sure of this, that it is a place built for the glory of God, and answerable to the greatness of that King. Now this still falls in with the notion of the rest: every saint shall be a king there, and have a kingdom large enough to fill all his desires. It is a fancy of some of the schoolmen, that one of the torments of hell shall

be the narrowness of the place, where the damned shall be crowded together. I cannot tell whether there is any foundation for such a notion in scripture, where we read indeed of hell represented by the greatest torments to sense, as fire and brimstone, and the worm that never dies: but it says nothing of its being so strait a place. But as for heaven, that the scripture represents as a very large one. Our Saviour says, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you:" if it were not a place large enough for you, I would have been so faithful to you, as to make a discovery of it. So that the boundlessness of that kingdom tends to make it a fit habitation for our rest.

3. The scripture discovereth to us the glory of it: and that fore-mentioned place of Solomon is applicable to this purpose: it is called the heaven of heavens; it is so called by way of excellency and transcendency; and Christ calls it my Father's house: Christ's Father is die Father of glory; you know he is particularly called so in scripture; the Father of glory. So heaven is called God's throne: Isa. 66:1. "Thus saith the Lord, heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool." His throne, that signifies it is that place wherein he doth manifest himself in his glorious presence. As when a king is seated upon his throne, it is with all die ensigns of majesty and greatness. God's throne is that place where he exhibits himself in the most glorious manner. So it is called God's temple: Hab. 2:20. "But the Lord is in his holy temple." Heaven is a throne and a temple, a place prepared with all divine art for the manifestation of God's glory. You read concerning New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:17, 18. "The building of the wall of it was of jasper, the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundation of the walls of the city was garnished with all manner of precious stones." The walls of the city are thus represented to us by precious stones, because they are most fair and lively representations of the excellency of that place: but alas! all the rare marvels of nature are nothing, compared to the glory above. All the lustre of diamonds, the fire of carbuncles, and the beauty of pearls, are nothing to the glory of heaven. We are said to be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Light is

the highest comparison that the scripture can make use of, both to inform us and astonish us with the glory of heaven. When our Saviour appeared at his transfiguration, it is said, Mat. 17:2. "His face did shine as the sun, and his garments were white, as the light." This is the highest comparison in nature, the inheritance of the saints in light. So on the contrary hell is set forth by a place of darkness, invincible darkness, the blackness of darkness for ever, for there is a perpetual night. So heaven is said to be a place of light. Do but consider what heaven is, when the scripture saith, "The Lord is the light of it, and God is the glory of it." There is no need there of the light of the sun, for Christ the Sun of Righteousness sheds abroad an effusion of transcendent glory, that at the first entrance into heaven the saint is struck with admiration at the glory of the place: and it is said in one scripture, "Thy God shall be thy glory." Now is not this fitted to be a place of rest, a place of light and glory?

4. Heaven this everlasting rest is represented to us in the scripture under the notion of a place of pleasure, and so it is called a paradise. So you shall find our Saviour speaking to the thief on the cross that prayed to him, Luke 23:43. "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom: Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The apostle Paul tells us, 2 Cor. 12:4. "That he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, &c." Now this expression is allegorical, and allusive to that first delicious garden that God prepared to be a seat for innocent man. The garden of Eden was a place that had in it all things that were for the support, and comfort, and pleasure of this life; and paradise is a word that signifies a garden of pleasure. Now heaven is represented to us by paradise, a place that was made for delight and joy; and it hath this glorious privilege above this earthly paradise, that the earthly paradise was not exempted from the poison of the serpent, that infected man in his head and original, the woful effect of which we feel to this day: but the paradise above is inaccessible to all evil, a place framed for delight, no thorns or briars there, nothing that can afflict or cause sorrow; no, it is the paradise of God, a paradise in the midst whereof the Son of God is the tree of life, upon

which the saints feed and live for ever. And this is another thing the scripture speaks of concerning the glory of that place where we shall have our rest.

III. The Excellency of this Rest.

Of the excellency of this rest. This is a point which carnal men cannot relish: it is a holy rest, both as it imports a ceasing from the dominion and being of sin and temptation: and performance of all those holy duties which are proper to this state: for which the soul is exalted to the highest pitch of natural perfection, and has supernatural endowments, whence result the most exalted operations,

III. I Shall, in the next place, consider the excellencies of this rest: and here I shall premise this, that I am about to treat of a subject that I fear most that are here cannot taste or relish. As for a discourse of heaven, a carnal man is no more affected with it, than if you should bring a swine into a curious palace, adorned with all things of art and industry; to see pictures drawn with exquisite skill in paint, or statues carved in the most excellent and lively manner; could a swine take any delight in these things? So without a pure heart, and holy and heavenly affections, we cannot taste any thing of heaven, or of this rest prepared for the people of God. If you speak of heaven to a carnal man, it is just as if a master of philosophy, or the mathematics, should come and read to an illiterate ignorant man the sublime notions, and profound mysteries of these noble sciences: no more can a carnal man relish the things of heaven. If an angel should come and speak to him, he would say, give me this world, and the things here below, and keep heaven above. I shall now proceed to speak of the excellencies of this rest.

i. First, This rest that remains to the people of God is a holy rest; it is called a sabbath rest.

Now in the opening of this, there are two things considerable.

1. It is a holy rest, in ceasing from sin, as the scripture speaks.
2. It is a holy rest, as it consists in the exercise of all those holy and heavenly parts of worship which is proper to heaven; and such is the rest of a sabbath.

1. For the first of these; as it imports a ceasing from sin. There is a threefold freedom and rest from sin. (1.) There is a freedom from the dominion of sin, and this is that privilege which the saints have in their measure in this life.

We read our Saviour tells the Jews, John 8:34, 35. "whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin; and the servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." That is the truest and noblest freedom, to be freed from the servitude of sin, that bondage, that enslaves our more excellent part, our immortal part, the soul; that is most royal and excellent liberty; and this is obtained by the Son of God; that is, if you look upon the state of sin, wherein we are involved by nature, look upon it as a part of the curse fallen upon mankind, upon account of his apostacy from God; and so our Saviour hath purchased this privilege for a believer, that he should be rescued from this bondage of sin, for sin hath these two great evils that go along with it; it is not only a provocation to God, exposing a man to the wrath of God, and making him obnoxious to the divine displeasure; but sin does also defile and debase the human nature, and so hath in it the greatest curse that the reasonable creature is capable of: it makes a man unlike to God, and viler than the earth he treads upon; and like the brute beasts, it degrades him to the lowest servility. There is nothing in the world like sin, it provokes God to give a man over to his own heart's lusts, and to forsake him for ever,

and to pronounce a curse upon him, "he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." Rev. 22:11. And those that fall under this curse, are under the greatest servility. The wicked are all his slaves. Take that man that is of the civilest conversation in the world, till he be sanctified and renewed by Christ, he is a slave, and under the command of some lust, though it be not visible to you, and it hath a throne in his heart, and reigns there. "But now," saith the apostle, Rom. 6:22. "being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Observe, here he speaks concerning the present sanctified state of the people of God, that are freed from sin, from its power and reign: whoever is not thus free, he hath no interest in Christ, nor ever felt the blessed effects of his death. This is one step and degree to that rest the apostle speaks of in the text.

(2.) There is a freedom from the relics or the being of sin, a freedom that imports an absolute and complete purifying and cleansing from all kinds and degrees of sin whatsoever; and this is that which is meant here. The apostle speaks of this to the Ephesians, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. 5:2, 6, 27. This design of Christ's death is carrying on while the saints are in this world; it is carrying on by the providences of God, whether prosperous or afflictive, and also by the ordinances of God, and the Spirit of God, who makes both ordinances and providences effectual upon the soul. But this entire freedom from sin is only attained when we come to heaven. And you may observe here the great wisdom of God, that as sin brought in death, so now with respect to the people of God, death is that which abolisheth sin, that puts an end to all sin; he hath made that which is in itself a penalty of sin, to be instrumental for the entire clearing and purifying the soul from sin. For when this mortal flesh is laid down in the grave, the soul shall be cleansed from all remaining pollutions, there shall not be so much as a spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. In the 12th of Hebrews, where

we have the state of the gospel church represented both as militant and triumphant: "you are come," says the apostle, "to Mount Sion, 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, whose names 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, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel." The spirits of just men made perfect, doth signify an absolute and entire freedom from all sin, which is the greatest imperfection and debasing of the soul.

(3.) There is another freedom from sin, which is in heaven; and that is a freedom from all molesting temptations, from all things that might disturb their peace, that might endanger their fall. You shall find the two Adams, both the first and second, although they were perfectly innocent, yet they were both liable to temptations; and the first Adam fell by a temptation, and lost more grace in one moment, than we can ever recover in this world in all ages. You all know how cheaply and easily he parted with his happiness, by the subtle temptation of satan. The second Adam was tempted too by the wicked one; but saith Christ, "the prince of this world cometh, and findeth nothing in me." There was no corruption in Christ to work upon. The temptations of satan surrounded him in the wilderness, but could not surprise him, they could not fasten any thing upon him; but yet our Lord Jesus was liable to temptation. But in heaven, O blessed rest, where the arrows of the tempter can never reach. There is not only a freedom from sin, and all possibility of that sinning, but there is a freedom from any thing that might disturb that blessed rest, as it often falls out in the world; but by the grace of God, when the saints are tempted, they reject the temptation, and overcome the tempter. We read of that holy and chaste creature Joseph, when a grateful temptation offered itself, he refused it with abhorrence, "how can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" So the heavenly grace God communicates to his people, makes them victorious over both pleasant and terrible temptations; "we are more than conquerors" (saith the apostle) "through Christ that hath

loved us." And there is a most divine joy which ariseth in the soul when we have this testimony of our sincerity, that we resist temptations. But now in heaven there shall be nothing of this. Here the people of God keep their innocence, and preserve their purity, yet they are disturbed by temptations. "I besought the Lord thrice," saith the apostle when he was buffeted by satan, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of satan buffeted me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me: and he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee." 1 Cor. 12:7. But in heaven there shall be no buffeting of satan, so molesting us by temptation. O blessed rest! when the soul shall be freed from sin, sin which is the greatest evil in its own nature, the highest provocation to the holy God, and the most burthensome thing in the world to a holy soul which is a continual body of death. O blessed rest! when the soul shall be freed from sin, and all the degrees of it! when the soul shall be raised above all temptations; when it shall be in the light of God's countenance for ever, where nothing shall disturb our most joyful exercise in the serving and praising of God. Do but consider what a happy state this is; and indeed till you are so far freed from sin as to be out of love with it, and to hate it, with an irreconcilable hatred, you cannot be partakers of this privilege, and heaven itself would be no heaven to you. If you do not look upon sin as the greatest evil, and upon holiness as the most glorious good, and most desirable excellency, you cannot be capable of this blessed rest.

2. It is a holy rest, as it includes in it not a bare cessation from sin, but also an exercise of all those holy and heavenly duties which are proper to this state of rest. The word that is used here, in the original, signifies the rest of a sabbath: now the rest of a sabbath, had two things considerable in it.

(1.) The rest of a sabbath was commemorative of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage; and in this respect that command is no more, as to us: the Jewish rest was a duty enjoined with respect to their state of servitude, wherein they had been harassed so long in

Egypt, and the rest of that day was in itself a duty upon that account: indeed the rest that we have now upon the Lord's day, may be typical of our rest in heaven, but it hath no retrospect on the servility which the Jews suffered.

(2.) The rest of the sabbath was relative, in order to the performance of all solemn services which God required on that day. For if you consider rest in itself, that is, bodily rest, it is a thing not pleasing and grateful to God in itself; but it hath respect to some more noble end; that is without interruption they might attend upon the service of God in the tabernacle, or temple, or other places of worship, where God was called upon. And so this heavenly rest includes in it the performance of all those acts of duty, and homage, and thankfulness which are the immortal work and business of the saints above.

Now for the opening of this to you, the following things are to be noticed.

In order to this perfect service of God in heaven, the spirits of the saints are exalted in their natural faculties to the highest degree of natural perfection, that so they may be prepared for this service. Their understandings are most clear, and composed: there is the exaltation of the soul in all its power and faculties, to the highest degree of natural perfection. This is included in the expression of the apostle, where he speaks of the heavenly state, Heb. 12:23. "ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect."

All these powers and faculties have supernatural endowments, which are the highest perfection (I spoke of their natural perfections before) all heavenly graces are infused into the soul, and that in the highest degree; so that as your jewels of great price are set in the finest gold, so then the graces of God's spirit are most fully given to the human soul, when it is raised to its highest perfection. Thus in the understanding, there is a perfect knowledge of God. Light is that which is spoken of as the character of heaven; it is called, "the inheritance of the saints in light;" and so saith the psalmist, "in thy

light we shall see light." In the will and affections there is a most entire and ardent love of God, which is its highest perfection. In the whole soul there is that joy and that peace that may make all the faculties united to glorify God.

(3.) From the soul raised to the highest degree of its natural perfection; and from those supernatural perfections that are bestowed upon it, there result the noblest, and purest, and most exalted operations of the soul; and herein they consist: in the contemplation of God, and his glorious excellencies, and wonderful works, and in the continual love and praises of God, the admiring of him, and the esteeming of his excellencies and works, and in the continual enjoying of him. Thus the heavenly state is often set forth by the seeing of God; Matt. 5:8. "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:" Heb. 12. "and without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And it is set forth by the praising of God; Isa. 6:3. "and the seraphims cried one to another, and said, holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." And so you shall find, Rev. 5:13. "every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever, and ever." This is the work of heaven: and indeed we cannot entertain any proper conception of heaven otherwise: for observe, the glorifying the creature is not for itself, but in order to the glory of God. God doth not take the soul and transport it to heaven, that the soul should be merely happy in the enjoyment of God, but that God might be glorified in glorifying the creature. So that you cannot otherwise conceive of this rest, this divine and heavenly rest. Now here God acts like a wise and holy God, all his actions terminate in his own glory. This one consideration of heaven, that it is a holy rest, is that which makes it unamiable, and undesirable to carnal men. It is true, such may desire it as a refuge from hell: but they desire it not as a state wherein they are to be always conversant in the love of God, and in the praises of God, and the everlasting enjoyment of him. Carnal men cannot taste it, they have not a proper palate for it:

it can only draw forth the heart of the saints: and yet, let me tell you, this is the substantial blessedness of heaven.

There is a question among philosophers, whether happiness consists in our action, or merely in our enjoyment? And we must determine it doth consist in both. It is not our mere passive reception of the glory of God that is our happiness, without our active returns to him, our glorifying him, the Author and Fountain of all.

IV. The Second Excellency of this Rest. It is a Joyful Rest.

It is a joyful rest. This set forth by the joy of holy men in this life, in pardon, grace, and hope of heaven. The grounds of this joyful rest; viz. freedom from all toil in the service of God, from afflictions of all sorts. Compared to the joy of harvest; and of a victory. Which must be great, because of the dangerous enemies that are overcome, and the prize that hereby is secured; and it is an entire, absolute, final victory.

ii. THE second excellency of our rest in heaven, it this, it is not only a holy rest, but it is a joyful rest. And for the opening of this, there are many things which I shall propound to you.

1. Consider the kingdom of heaven hath several degrees. There is a lower degree of it that is possessed here. You shall find in one scripture our Saviour tells his hearers, that "the kingdom of God is within them." And if you compare that scripture with what the apostle saith, Rom. 14:17. "the kingdom of God is not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." You will find that in this life we have the first degrees of the heavenly kingdom. We have the first degrees of it as to the righteousness and holiness of it, and as to the peace and joy of it while we are here. And

therefore we read of the firstfruits of the Spirit, and of the earnest of the Spirit: that is, the operations of the Holy Ghost, whether the graces or comforts of the saints here, are the first-fruits and earnest of the heavenly state. Now this I lay as a foundation, that so I may raise your thoughts to consider what the joy of the heavenly life is. Consider, in this life there are three things that are matter of spiritual joy to the saints, which afford so rich, so replenishing and satisfying a joy to them, that all the pleasures of the world are dilute and tasteless to them, and they bear with magnanimity all the troubles of this world. Let us a little consider them, that so we may thereby exalt and raise our thoughts to conceive of the glory of heaven. There are three things that are matter of our joy here.

(1.) Reconciliation with God in Christ, the pardon of sin. This the apostle particularly instanceth in; Rom. 5:1. "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The peace and joy that arises from hence, the apostle tells, Phil. 4:7. "passeth all understanding," not only with respect to the causes of it, it being purchased by the obedience and sufferings of the Son of God; but the sense of it while we are here, exceeds all possible expression; our understandings cannot find out words large enough to declare the joyful sense we have of it. For the soul that hath felt what an intolerable burthen sin is, to have the pardoning mercy of God upon solid grounds declared to it, it brings down heaven into the soul, it is a very paradise here. O my brethren, he that enjoys the pardoning mercy of God by the light of faith, hath a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(2.) Another thing that is matter of our spiritual joy is, when the work of grace is carried on prosperously in the soul. When religion in its radiancy and vigour governs in our hearts. There is nothing more joyful to a holy person than this; and accordingly as sin is subdued, and temptations effectually resisted, and grace doth obtain more degrees of power within us, proportionably according to the righteousness and holiness of this kingdom, is always the joy and peace of it, unless it be in particular temptations. I speak of the usual

course with God's people; this makes the soul willing to suffer the loss of outward things, if its inward graces thrive and flourish.

(3.) As the favour of God, and the image of God, are the causes of this joy, so the hope of eternal glory. This the scripture often mentioneth: Rom. 5:2. "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." And it is said in another place, "rejoicing in hope;" and Rom. 15:10. "rejoice ye Gentiles with his people. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." We have not only joy of present reconciliation, but of believing that we shall come to the consummating joy above. I lay this down for raising your thoughts by this consideration: if that joy that is in the breast of a saint is so great, that the strength, and virtue, and efficacy of it will make him despise all that the carnal world so much esteemeth, and endure all that the carnal world so much fears; then ascend in your thoughts, and consider what is the joy of heaven; if the earnest and firstfruits of it will make a christian rejoice, and "glory in tribulation!" Rom. 5:3. I remember it is the observation of Tertullian in the primitive times, that when the christian church was under the most terrible persecution, the very heathen were induced to consider what the religion was, that fortified men to endure the greatest miseries with that serenity of soul, with that joy, with that triumph. He observes that several heathens were induced to consider the excellency of religion, and to say, certainly this religion is divine, it is the offspring of heaven, that can make poor creatures endure such troubles with joy. Now (my brethren) there is as much difference between what the saints attain and enjoy in this world, and the joys of heaven, as there is between sipping at a cistern, and entering into the ocean of joy. Here the joy of heaven enters into the saints, but hereafter they shall enter into that joy. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Matt. 25:31. Heaven is the element of joy, the immense ocean of joy, where the souls of the people of God are always filled to the utmost capacities. O consider how joyful that state must be, which so infinitely transcends and exceeds the joy that the saints have here! And yet the apostle Paul, who was a man of sorrows, 1 Cor. 6:5. "in stripes, in

imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;" saith he, "we are as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." He speaks of his troubles with a diminution, as sorrowful; as if they only touched his skin, and did not pierce his flesh; but he had his heart full of joy. But now this fulness of joy, the perfection of it is above. Consider this joy of heaven, this heavenly rest;

2. There is in it a freedom from all toil which we endure in the service of God. While we are here below, our bodies are the instruments of our souls; and though "the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak:" therefore it is requisite there should be an intermission of the most serious, intent, and most immediate service of God, because our, sensitive faculties would otherwise be wasted, and sink under the burthen. He that plays upon a lute is fain to relax the strings, lest by a constant stretching of them the strings should break. But we shall cease in heaven from all that labour that is wearisome to our sensitive parts: for although the bodies of the saints shall for ever be joined with their souls in the service of God, yet their bodies there shall be spiritual bodies; "it is sown a natural body, but raised a spiritual body." 1. Cor. 15:44. Spiritual, not with respect to the substance of the body, for it is impossible that flesh should be converted into spirit; but it is a spiritual body, as it is fitted for those spiritual exercises in heaven, and as it hath spiritual endowments that qualify it for that state. So that in heaven there shall be no weariness and no occasion of relaxing us from the service of God, for the refreshing and recruiting our strength. But on earth no saint can continue with constancy and invariableness in the discharge of his duty, but he will waste his strength and spirits, and want refreshment. Indeed our Saviour did do the will of his heavenly Father without intermission; but every saint while he is living in the flesh, needs some relaxation, in order to a more vigorous service of God: but in heaven, in that eternal rest, we shall be freed from all that is toilsome and wearying in the serving and glorifying God.

3. There shall be a rest from all those afflicting evils which we are liable to upon a double account. Either, 1st. Those afflictions that are

attendant upon our mortal state: those afflictions which though they are not the immediate punishments of sin, yet are the consequences of sin. It is said, that "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward:" you know sparks do naturally ascend; so man in this mortal state is naturally liable to trouble, and many times the most excellent servants of God are under painful and languishing diseases, so that they can neither live nor die; how many times are they exposed to those calamities which swiftly range through the world, which strike first upon one, and then upon another? Though yet they are overruled by a superior providence. In heaven they shall be freed from all that is afflicting, that will any way discompose or distress their rest. 2dly, Besides these common calamities, there are special afflictions that the people of God are obnoxious to; while there is any in this world that hate the image of God, and oppose the glory of God, his people are liable in a special and peculiar manner to their rage and fury: for there was no age as yet, but there have been enemies to the saints as saints: as the apostle saith, "he that loveth him that begat, will love him also that is begotten of him." So on the contrary, one who hates him that begat, will hate him also that is begotten of him. We read, John 12 they had a design to murder Lazarus, because Christ raised him from the dead; because his divine power and authority was visible in his resurrection: so many hate the saints because God hath quickened them to a divine life, that were dead in sins and trespasses. Do you not see in France at this very time the spirit of persecution and rage raised against the professors of the truth, which except God in mercy extinguish, will end in their ruin? And it is your duty to lay it to heart, and sympathize with them. But in heaven the saints shall be freed from all this: they are not only freed from all calamities, but from all persecutions they are exposed to for the name of Christ. In the next place.

4. They are freed from all sorrowful affections: you shall find the scripture hath expressions more than once about this. It is said, Rev. 21:4. That "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no suffering, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." In heaven

there is no shadow of sin, no shadow of sorrow, no shadow of death: it is the kingdom of life and joy; all tears are dried up there. Now there are three kinds of tears that flow from our eyes while we are in this world, which shall all be dried up in heaven.

(1.) Our tears of contrition for our offending God, and for fear of the divine displeasure. O there is no grief more cordial than this! A holy soul that loveth God, is never more deeply serious than when he exercises this affection; because God is displeased and dishonoured, this is that which pricks their hearts; as we read, Acts 2:27. "The Jews were pricked to their hearts," when they heard that they had crucified the Lord of life. Indeed a hardened stupid wretch, in whom rebellion reigns, he looks upon his sins as a light burden: but a gracious soul is troubled for a vain thought, for an idle word, or an irregular action: the reason is, because a saint hath proper conceptions of the holiness of God, the highest valuations of his favour; therefore whatsoever is a contradiction to his holy will, whatsoever eclipseth the light of his countenance, he doth most deeply and sensibly lay to heart. In heaven it is matter of their joy, that God hath given them complete victory over all their past sins. Repentance should accompany the soul to the gates of heaven, but it shall never enter there. As we read in the book of Esther, concerning the court of the Persian emperor, it is said that none should come in mourning into his court; so none are to come to heaven in mourning: when once they are admitted into that state, immediately sorrow and sighing fly away. And is not this a joyful rest, when we shall be freed from all sorrow, the most sharp, and wounding, and deepest sorrow. In heaven there is no remembrance of God's displeasure against sin, and therefore no relics of sorrow for it: but the reconciled face and favour of God, is that which fills them with joy. When the prodigal was returned to his father, Luke 15. (that is an instance of a converted person in this life) and confessed his sin penitently and mournfully, the father calls for the robe and ring, kept a festival, and received him into his embraces. O conceive what infinite joy there is in being received into the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

(2.) As in heaven we shall be freed from all tears of contrition, so from all tears of compassion for the sins and miseries of others. They shall be all wiped away in heaven. Good men have the tenderest affections, and are most apt to sympathize with others in their temporal or spiritual troubles. If a saint could live here without sin, or any external trouble as to his own person, yet while he lives among the miserable, and is encompassed with so many spectacles of woe, so many sad sights, he can never be free from sorrow. Our Lord Jesus, when he drew near to Jerusalem, and foresaw the dreadful desolations that were hastening to it, he wept over it. Every saint hath the same mind and affections that Christ hath, and hath melting and tender affections, and a compassionate and sympathizing spirit, with reference to the evils and sufferings of others. Now in heaven all these tears of compassion shall be wiped away. What sense or knowledge the spirits in heaven have of human affairs in this world, is uncertain to us: "It is said Abraham is ignorant of us:" he knows not our afflicted state here, that is, particularly; but the saints above generally know that the saints here are in troubles and conflicts, that the church here is militant. But they that are seated before the throne of God, are incapable of sorrow, and hurtful impressions of it, from all the evils that befall others, as Christ himself is. For they live his life, and they are continually satisfied with his presence: so that it is impossible they should be touched with any sorrowful sense of the evils that befall others. Now is not this a joyful rest, when we shall not only be freed from the sorrow of our own sins, but also from all that sorrow that the spectacles of human misery might draw from us?

(3.) There are those human tears and sorrows that arise from our own personal troubles, that are not for sin, but for the punishment of sin, the troubles that are afflictive to sense. While a man hath a soul here joined to living flesh, the soul will sympathize with all the troubles and afflictions of the body: but in heaven God hath prepared a sanctuary of rest from whatsoever may disturb or afflict us. It is said concerning the church on earth, there shall be no pricking briar, no wounding thorn: but this is eminently true of the church in heaven. So that if you consider the heavenly rest, with respect to the

freedom that shall be from all toilsome labour, and all those sorrows that arise from afflictive evils, it may give you some apprehension what the joy of heaven is.

Now this freedom from evil is that which most sensibly discovereth to us the heavenly joy, while we are in this state, and upon this account, because human nature in this life is surrounded with evils, and is more sensibly affected with evil, than it is with that which is good. The life of man, which is a passage through this world, is fitly compared to a voyage through a tempestuous sea; and you may as well reckon the number of waves that impetuously break one upon another, as you can reckon up all the afflictive evils of this life. There is not the life of any single person, but there are so many scenes (if I may so speak) and so many habits and changes in this life, from mourning to joy, and from pleasure to grief and sorrow, that it cannot but be a sensible demonstration how desirable it is to be freed from these things. The truth is, we have here real griefs, but our joys are empty. Nay, there is nothing that is a temporal comfort, but it hath a hidden sting in it, and may be an occasion of grief and discomfort. So that our present life in this is like a labyrinth of thorns, we walk from one place to another, but still we meet with thorns: but in the heavenly state above, we are free from all these: sorrow and sighing are fled away: the first step we take into the heavenly kingdom, we bid an eternal farewell to grief and sorrow. Doth not this render this heavenly life very desirable, when we shall have nothing at all of impressions of things that are evil; when all the affections shall be in a joyful exercise for ever? This I would have you frequently to consider of, as one affecting notion of heaven. The scripture insists upon it to make it desirable to you. Now before I proceed to speak concerning those things which will be our substantial joys in heaven (for now I am speaking of freedom from misery and trouble) there are two considerations whereby the scriptures represent the joyfulness of this rest, with respect to our labours, sorrows, and conflicts in this life.

Heaven is such a rest from all our sorrows and sufferings, and from all our laborious actions in this life, as we take in the harvest, after all the toil and trouble we have been at in tilling the earth, and preparing it for the harvest. It is compared in scripture to that joy that we receive from taking of the fruit of our labours. The psalmist, when he speaks concerning the afflictions of God's people, hath this very allusion, Psal. 126:5. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Where you see the afflicted state of godliness in this life is compared to sowing in tears; and the rest and recompence after it, is expressed by bringing their sheaves with joy. Now observe, there is no carnal joy that ariseth from our labours, that is more sensible than this, when we partake of the harvest or of the vintage. It is said there, where the psalmist speaks of carnal joy in its elevation: Psal. 4:7. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." When our labours that are used towards the earth in ploughing and sowing, harrowing, manuring and watering it, in order to fruitfulness, succeed in a plentiful harvest, this is a time of joy. Now our rest in heaven is a partaking of the harvest and vintage of our labours; and in this respect it is a great joy. If you will believe a voice from heaven it is so: Rev. 14:13. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Their works do follow them; that is, they do enjoy a fruitful harvest of all their works here. They rest from their labours, and have a blessed result from them in heaven. The holy soul enjoys the benefit of all its prayers, of all its tears, of all its sincere services to God, of all its love and charity to men, and of all its earnest endeavours for heaven. The memory then hath a clear and perfect view of all the services that were done God on earth. Now the testimony of conscience in this life is so joyful, that the apostle saith, 2 Cor. 1:12. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." When the soul comes to heaven, this testimony of conscience shall be revived and renewed in

perfection; so that conscience that was here our comfort, shall be there our eternal crown, and we shall enjoy the fruit of all our own unfeigned endeavours to please and glorify God. Every talent that we have improved for him, shall be infinitely returned to us. And on this account the heavenly rest hath respect to the actions and sufferings of the saints in this life, as the fruit of their labours; so it is a joyful rest.

5. This rest is a joyful rest, as it is represented to us as a rest that is the fruit of victory over all our enemies that we contended with in our way to heaven. When we come to that blessed state, we are then victorious over them, and so that rest is infinitely joyful. Now the scripture makes use of this resemblance. We find Rom. 8:37. it is said concerning the saints in this life, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Mat. 12:26. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Judgment, by that is meant grace in the soul; it is called judgment, because the work of grace is carried on in a rational convincing manner. The judgment leads the will, and the will commands all the inferior faculties: and "Judgment shall be brought forth unto victory:" grace shall at last be powerful and victorious over all its enemies. Now there is no joy in the world that is equal to the joy of victory and triumph. And that you may see a little what the joy of heaven will be in this respect, do but consider these things, which make that victory infinitely more sweet and joyful to the soul.

(1.) The danger we are in from the enemies with whom we do contest in our way to heaven. The scripture represents them as formidable because of their enmity, subtilty, strength and great numbers; which shows how infinite our danger is. They are called by the title of their chief and regent, the dragon and the roaring lion who hath innumerable squadrons under him, legions of rebellious spirits that are always warring against us. They are for their craft set forth under the title of the old serpent: for their strength they are called principalities and powers; and spiritual wickednesses in opposition

to flesh, which is an expression of our frailty and weakness: and they are in combination with innumerable lusts in our own hearts, and with this world, and they use the allurements and discouragements of it to overcome us, and make us lose our heavenly prize. Now do but consider what we are to oppose so terrible, and such numberless enemies. The scripture speaking concerning the state of man, in opposition to satan, calleth us babes—"Out of the mouths of babes, and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Psal. 8:2. This does first respect our blessed Saviour, who sprung from so mean an original, as being a babe and a suckling; and under that name all his members, the whole church of God in all ages are comprehended; they are but in a state of human weakness and infirmity, so that we are in unspeakable danger of being overcome by these enemies. Where the enemy is potent and cruel, and the strength that overcomes it so small, how doth it enhance the sweetness of victory! I will give you one instance of it. The children of Israel were pursued by Pharaoh and all his chariots of Egypt; there was no passage visible for them; there was the red sea before them, and a cruel enemy behind them. Now when God made a passage for them through the red sea, and when he destroyed all their enemies in their passage, do but read what was the joyful effect of that victory: "Then sung Moses and the children of Israel, this song unto the Lord, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation, &c. who is like thee O Lord among the gods, who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. 15:1–11. The memory of the eminent danger that threatened them, made them break forth into the high praises of God, and filled them with the most cordial and sensible joy, to see that they should be saved from the enemy that was ready to devour them in such a manner. So in 114 Psal.—"When Israel went out of Egypt the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, the sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan that thou wast driven back?" These figurative expressions triumphantly set forth the praises of God for delivering

them from their present danger, when they had the sea before them, and the Egyptian army behind them. When we come to heaven, and shall consider how dangerous an enemy we had to encounter with, how tedious conflicts he had with us, and how it might be said of us as David said of himself, "There was but a step between me and death." And God saved us from an enemy without us, and spiritual enemies within us; then we shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. So we read of the church when it had rest from antichristian enemies; "And they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty" &c. Rev. 15:3. When we shall overcome this spiritual Pharaoh, the devil and all his hosts, O this will fill us with strange surprising joy, and will make us magnify the saving mercy of God, and admire his wonderful power, which saveth us from such enemies. That is one of the considerations that shows how the rest of heaven will be the joy of victory, in overcoming dangerous and cruel enemies.

(2.) The second thing is, this joyful rest is also enhanced, if you consider what that prize is which you have secured and preserved from these enemies by this victory. Suppose there was a contention about things of no great value, yet victory is pleasant about trifles; but much more a cause of joy when it is about things of greatest moment. When angry and proud kings contend about a province or a kingdom, it is no great matter, for the whole world is but a miserable scene of vanity; and if one man had it all, he would be always unsatisfied. But now consider you are to encounter with spiritual enemies for your all. The scripture tells us they war against the soul. 1 Pet. 2:11. The soul is our most excellent and eternal part; they war against your souls and would rob you of your innocence, of your purity and peace; the prize here is invaluable: these enemies would rob you of the love of God, which is better than life, for this is that which they contend for. The apostle speaks concerning our spiritual enemies. Rom. 8:35. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And that is the prize they would fain rob us of, the love of Christ, which is the fountain of all felicity; and the love of God, which is better than life. These enemies would rob us of his favour, and

expose us to his displeasure. Therefore the prize is so great, our victory over our enemies must be very sweet. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is a crown of life, a crown of righteousness, an immortal inheritance, that fadeth not away, the kingdom of heaven. The apostle calls it the "prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Now where there is such a perfection of blessedness, and where it is the soul that is contended, for, how sweet will the victory be, when all our enemies shall be over thrown, and we scouted from their assaults.

(3.) Another thing that makes this victory joyful, is this, it shall be entire, absolute, and final, over all these enemies. As Moses said to the Israelites, "Stand still and see the salvation of God, which he will show unto you to-day; for the Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall see them again no more for ever," Then after their deliverance, they brake out into a triumphant song. While we are in this world, we are always in a state of warfare. Now consider what pleasure there is in victory; a holy soul finds more joy in conquering one passion, than in gratifying all his passions. There is more pleasure in mortifying one carnal affection, than in satisfying all our carnal affections. This victory will end in everlasting songs of triumph. In this world the enemy will return upon us after we have conquered him: if you resist him one hour and foil him, he will assault you the next. It is said, the tempter departed from Christ for a season. Luke 4:13. But he was so bold and insolent as to return again upon him. So it is with every believer in this world: our victory is but single, and the enemy is not quite broken; therefore we should be always upon our guard and have our graces in a vigorous exercise, and our armour in readiness. But in heaven the enemies are totally routed and subdued, and our conflicts and dangers are at an end, for we shall be molested no more. O how joyful shall this be to us! We are not able to conceive what greater joy we can receive, than in getting a final and entire victory over all our spiritual enemies. There is one scripture very applicable to this purpose, Rev. 3:21. "To him that overcometh will I grant, to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne". It is

by persevering in the way of holiness, notwithstanding all the disturbance and opposition that we meet with, that we overcome. What now doth sitting on the throne signify? It signifies two things, rest and triumph. To sit down on the throne after victory it signifies rest and freedom from all the assaults of our enemies and that triumphant joy, that glory the soul shall then be in: for heaven is a state of glorious joy, that ariseth from the ruin of our spiritual enemies. God hath made a poor weak believer to be victorious over all the opposition that earth and hell could mate against him. Therefore saith the apostle, "We are more than conquerors." All the conflicts and oppositions that we meet with shall contribute to our rest and triumph. O consider these things and seriously believe and meditate on them, that so the soul may be enlarged and strengthened with constancy and vigour to go through our spiritual warfare, till we come to that joyful rest in heaven. There is nothing will make us more zealous for God and cheerful in resisting temptations, than the consideration of this everlasting rest. There is a triumphant felicity shall be bestowed upon all those, that persevere in holiness to the end of their lives. Thus I have done with the consideration of this joyful rest, with respect to the cessation and freedom it gives us from all our labours, and from all the afflictive evils, and a full and complete victory over all our spiritual enemies.

V. It is a Joyful Rest (continued).

There is a conjunction of all the saints in this rest. Whose society is highly pleasant, because they are free from all blemishes, and united in the most joyful work; and exceedingly love each other.

I Shall now proceed to the positive part of substantial happiness. And the first I shall instance in, is the lowest part of heaven, yet it is that which will make it very sweet to our apprehensions, viz. The conjunction of all the saints of God in that blessed rest, and their

communion in that heavenly glory. The communion of saints is one part of their happiness in this life; and it is a part of our happiness in the next: you shall find therefore the apostle, when he speaks of the gospel-state, which comprehends both the militant and triumphant church, Heb. 12:22. says, "But you are come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." We have not a more proper conception of happiness, than for persons to converse with those whom they love. Do but consider in this present life, how sweet and pleasant is the conversation of a wise and holy person, and one in whom there is sweetness of affability: how charming is the conversation of such a person; how strangely doth it ravish our hearts! So that when a man meets with such a one, he is like an angel sent from paradise to him. Now do but imagine with yourselves what joy must be, when you shall meet with the universal assembly of all the glorified spirits: when the blessed angels of God, of all orders, shall be every one your friend: when you shall see all the members of the Old and New Jerusalem, the church under the Old Testament and under the New, and shall have the most sweet and intimate converse with them. There are two things considerable, to show you how much your joyful converse in heaven will be above what you can have with the saints here, in the present state: the holiest person on earth hath his blemishes and imperfections, so that we cannot have such a clear converse with him, but it may be, sometime or other, something will be a little irksome, and this may take off from their amiableness. And we can choose none to be a friend among men, but we must make an allowance for human frailties and infirmities. But now in heaven, the image of God hath received his last land; all the celestial colours are added to it, to give it beauty, life, and vivacity: their grace is changed into glory, and every saint is a complete copy of the original perfection of God himself: so the saints in heaven are all exceedingly lovely, and God loveth them. Therefore there is reason we should believe that the spirits of just men made perfect, will add to the loveliness and universal joy of that place; for heaven is a world of love, the law of love reigns there: faith and hope shall

cease, but love shall reign in heaven: there the saints love God perfectly, and love one another with an invariable affection. There they have one heart, and one mind; and therefore how are they pleased with the happiness of one another, in the happiness every one enjoys? And they are all sharers in the happiness of every one. How doth this make that communion and converse to be more sweet!

And consider, they are all united in that most joyful work of worshipping, of glorifying, and praising God; and they are always inflaming one another's affections to God. We read that the seraphims cried one to another, and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isa. 6:3. They cried one to another, as if they would inflame each other's breast; and that which is our work here is our happiness there: they are always joyfully united in the praises of the Lord, who is the King of saints: they are always singing glory to God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Now where there is such loveliness in every one, where there is such an entire affection, and where they are all united in so blessed a work; O what a state of joy is there! This is the state of heaven.

Do but consider what the scripture speaks of this state, and it is impossible that any one that believes and hopes for this blessedness, but he should immediately despise the earth, and all those temptations that would hinder him from obtaining. It is incredible that any one should hope for this, and not immediately renounce these vain and sensual perishing pleasures. O let us be purifying ourselves, and refining ourselves, that we may be made meet for heaven: this should be the end of your hearing, and it is the end of my preaching to you.

In short, heaven is that kingdom and that state where love is the law, and where it rules. So you shall find the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. 13:8. "Charity never fails; whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be

knowledge it shall vanish away, &c." Faith and hope shall give way to vision and enjoyment, which is in its perfection above. We read of the love of Jonathan to David, a rare and almost unparalleled instance, considering the great distance between them; the one being a prince and an heir to a crown, and the other but of mean extraction. 1 Sam. 18:1. In heaven the law of love, is obeyed in its perfection: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; it is not obeyed so here; but in heaven there is a complete obedience; they have a love so complete and absolute to one another, that they unspeakably love the happiness of one another. If you should say to me now, but the scripture tells us, there are degrees of glory in heaven, and doth not that cause some suspicion and jealousy between them? Is there nothing of discord there? Where some excel others in glory as the stars of the greatest magnitude excel those that are lesser in glory. I answer all the saints in heaven are complete according to their capacities: indeed some are more enlightened and more enlarged in their enjoyment of God; but they are all complete, they are all kings, and they all reign with God, they are all heirs of God; what can be said more of them? Consider further with yourselves; the wills of all the blessed are in perfect conformity and submission to God's will. Now it is the will of God, and an effect of his wisdom, that there should be different degrees of glory; and that order which God hath established is most equal and amiable in their eye. He that hath the lowest degree of glory, he is as well satisfied as he that hath the highest; because it is according to the will of God: in that variety, and in those several degrees of glory, the order and wisdom of God appears. I will express this to you by a similitude, that you may all understand it. As in an instrument of music there are several strings of different sizes and sounds, some strings have a higher: and sharper sound, others a lower and graver note; from which variety all the harmony doth result. Now if the strings of this instrument were capable of making their choice, every one would be in that place where it is set, because all the music and harmony ariseth from this distinction and variety; so every saint in heaven hath that degree of glory that infinite wisdom hath appointed and therefore he would choose it because it is according to the divine will and wisdom, and

because in all that variety there is harmony, and beauty, and sweetness. So that this is not prejudicial to that holy and perfect love that reigns in heaven, for all is love, and all is joy and peace there. Now this is one part of the joy of heaven; the "apostle" speaks of it, Heb. 12:22. "But ye are come to Mount Sion, the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, &c."

VI. The Subject of Joy Continued.

The chief happiness of this rest lies in the enjoyment of God. The joy of heaven is exceeding great, because it is correspondent to the majesty and greatness of God; and proportionable to the love he bears to his people, and to the infinite price of the blood of Christ. Christ is enjoyed in heaven, and God on whom the saints' love is entirely fixed, and there God most fully communicates himself to them, and immediately.

I shall now proceed to speak of the most substantial part of the joys of heaven, and that is our enjoyment of God himself: all other things divines express by the accessions and additional joys of heaven; but the substantial and essential joy therefore is in God himself.

Before I speak of this, there are three considerations which I shall lay down to raise your thoughts; that though it is impossible that we should fully understand that joy before we come thither, yet these may help us by degrees to ascend to a higher apprehension of it.

1. The glory, blessedness, and rest of heaven, is that which shall be answerable and correspondent to the majesty, greatness, and magnificence of God, who is the preparer and giver of it: gifts are usually proportioned to the state and degree of those that give them. You read in the book of Esther concerning the Persian monarch; he designed an entertainment for all his princes and servants, and the powers of Persia and Media, and the nobles, and the princes of the provinces being before him when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred days; Esth. 1:4, 5. "And when these days were ended, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small for seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace." You read there how pompous and great this entertainment was for all his subjects: there

were vessels of gold of different forms and figures; for it is said, "they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being divers one from another) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of a king." Thus you see what splendour and magnificence there was in this entertainment. Now consider with yourselves when the king of heaven will prepare a glory and a blessedness, whereby he will show the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty: O who is able to understand it while we are here below! The angels above cannot comprehend it. It is observable, that this is attributed to God's immediate making and preparing, Matt. 25:34. "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." It was prepared by God before the foundation of the world was laid. Now those things which are immediately made by God have the clearest signatures and marks of his excellent, perfection; there is the most glorious refulgence of his attributes shining in these things. It is observable, that those things which God hath made by his command are not so excellent as those things which he hath made by his hand: he spake the word, and gave his command concerning other creatures, and they were made, Gen. 1:20. "And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly; the moving creatures that have life, and fowls that may fly above the earth, in the open firmament of heaven. And God said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after his kind, and it was so. And God said, let us make man in our own image and likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth." Whereas God spake the word, and others creatures were made by his command: he made man by his own hand, as the most excellent piece of this lower world. So heaven and the glory of it is made toy God's own hand, it was made by God himself, as the expression of his power, greatness, majesty, and goodness.

2. The next general consideration is this; the glory of God is that which will bear a proportion to that love of God which he hath to his

people. It shall be a noble expression of that love, and suitable to it. Now to make you a little to understand the force of this: God hath a general love to his creatures, and a special love to his children, to those who are his friends and favourites.

(1.) There is a general love that God bears to mankind in this lower world, as they have the title of his creatures: that love hath declared itself in making this world so pleasant an habitation for man as he is in his natural state. Now pray consider with yourselves; God hath made a thousand things in this world, which are not absolutely necessary for the support of our lives, but for the refreshment, and comfort, and pleasure of them; and this is from his general love to mankind. How many stars are there that adorn the firmament in the night? which are a most pleasant, spectacle, but are not so absolutely necessary for lights. And how many things are there which ate for pleasure and delight, which are not necessary for the support of life.

(2.) God hath a peculiar love to his children, and that love he hath designed to glorify in heaven: therefore you shall find, Eph. 1:6. the great work of redemption, both as to the accomplishment of it, and the actual bestowing the fruits thereof upon us; the great end of it is said to be to the praise of the glory of the grace of God; the glory of his love; that love which warmed his breast from eternity with thoughts of compassion towards man; this love he will glorify in heaven; and he hath prepared such glory and joy for them, that they shall know he will love them like a God in an infinite and inconceivable manner. Do but a little ascend in your thoughts thus; 'Hath God made a beautiful world, so full of comforts and refreshment; hath he made this, and given it to rebellious contumacious sinners, those that live in open defiance of his laws and government? What then hath he prepared for those that love and serve him, in the kingdom above?'

3. Consider what that glory and blessedness must be which bears a proportion to the infinite price of the blood of the Son of God, which was shed not only to be a ransom to free you from hell, but as a price

to obtain heaven for you: the saints obtain heaven not only by pardon and by gift, but with respect to the Lord Jesus they obtain it by purchase; he purchased it for them; "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23. Our Saviour left heaven, and endured a life of sorrow here in the world, and submitted to suffering and dying, that we might obtain heaven.

Now would he who is a just esteemer of things, give such an inestimable price for that which is not answerable to it? O certainly this is the highest step that we can ascend to here; heaven is such a glory, as is worthy of all that which Christ the eternal Son of God, and Lord of life did and suffered therefore when we have spoken and thought according to the utmost extent of our minds, how short do we fall of that excellent and inconceivable glory! These are the directions I give you to raise your thoughts to consider how great this glory must be. Now I come to that which the scripture tells us is the heaven of heavens, and that is the enjoyment of God and Christ.

First, I will speak a little concerning the enjoyment of Christ's presence: now there may be a double consideration of it.

(1.) As Christ is the eternal Son of God, and possesseth the divine nature, with all the divine excellencies, and so he and the Father are one: and in what I shall speak concerning the enjoyment of God, the enjoyment of Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is included; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being the Same in substantial and essential glory: so the enjoyment of one is the enjoyment of every one of them: and indeed it is the sacred Trinity that is the fountain at our happiness, and of that glory that we enjoy in heaven. But 2dly, There is the consideration of the second person in the sacred and blessed Trinity, as united to the human nature; so as the glory of the Son of God shines through the human nature, and is communicated to all the blessed spirits above: and in this particular consideration I shall first speak of it. Now this is that which is both the desire of Christ, and is the most ardent desire of every holy soul, to be with Christ, and enjoy his presence. You shall see it is the prayer of Christ;

"Father I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." John 17:24. They are words so full love and joy, that Christ, should pray to his father, that they should be with him, and see his glory, that may both please and astonish us; that it should not content Christ to be glorified alone, nor glorified with his angels, but that his poor servants, who here are humbled and loaded with afflictions, who have been in a mortal dying state, that they should be raised to his kingdom, and see his glory; it is an argument of the purest and dearest love that is conceivable. And as our Saviour here declares the most pure and ardent love to his people, so all those who are members of Christ have an ardent desire to be with him, and behold his glory; so you shall find the apostle Paul. "For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to be with Christ, which is far better." Phil. 1:23. The apostle represents himself to be in suspense, being now drawn by two loadstones; the presence of Christ above, that drew him to heaven; and the good of the church below, that drew him and pressed him to stay on earth: I would fain be with Christ, yet I am willing to stay here for the furtherance of your salvation. Certainly every holy soul, though not in the same degree as Paul, has a desire to be with Christ, as Paul had; and that desire is a supreme overruling affection in his soul to be with Christ, to see his glory; and accordingly the joy of the soul is enlarged when it comes personally to be with Christ; for this is a rule, according to the degree of our love, is the strength of our desire; and according to the strength of our desire is the joy of fruition: this is a rule that runs through the affections; desire results from love, and takes its fire and heat from it; and joy is raised and intended according to the degree of our desire, when we come to possess the desired object. O my brethren, what joy overflows all the saints above! who are continually beholding the glory of Christ, and see the Deity shining forth in his human nature, see him advanced above all principalities and powers: and that which gives that sweetness of joy to them, is this; they shall see him thus glorified that died for them, and purchased salvation for them. This certainly is that which will render the beholding of Christ's glory infinitely pleasing to us; it was he that did accomplish

it by his own sufferings; he did and suffered what justice required; he secured the honour of divine justice, that he might exalt the riches of divine mercy in our salvation.

Therefore I say, consider what infinite pleasure comes to an holy grateful soul, to see his Saviour thus raised, honoured, revered, and magnified, by all the powers in heaven: to think it is the Lord of life that gave his life for me that I see thus advanced! And besides this, the sight of the glory of Christ hath a transforming power upon all the saints, they are made like him; so that in seeing this glory, they are glorified with him: for you must know that our Saviour not only was the meritorious cause of our glory, but also he is the pattern and the efficient cause of it: so that by seeing him in glory we shall be made like him, we shall be transformed into his glorious image. It is an observable expression which our Saviour hath, when he speaks to those servants that had improved their talents for the honour of their master; Matt. 25:23. "well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee a ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy lord;" thou shalt partake of the same joy thy master doth. This is that which makes the saints unspeakably happy above; they shall be with Christ, they shall be satisfied with his glory and in their conformity to it: for all the saints shall be conformed to the human nature of Christ glorified, as to their pattern and their great exemplar: "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Phil. 3:21. And our souls in heaven shall be conformed to his glorious soul.

(2) That which is the highest glory of heaven, is the enjoyment of God himself. Now for the opening of this to you, we are to consider first that rule I gave you before, that according to our love and our desire, such will be our joy in possessing the desired good. Now every saint hath a desire towards God, and a love to him; which I shall briefly open to you under these two considerations: 1st. That their love and desire is entirely fixed upon God himself; so that all other

things without him cannot make them happy. The love of the saints to God is entire to him, as the fountain of that felicity which alone can make them blessed. You shall find this in David, Psal. 27:4. "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:" where you see that he fixed his desire upon God, as the sole object of his happiness: for indeed true happiness is neither absque Deo, nor extra Deum; it is neither without God, nor out of God; it is in God himself: there is absolute perfection, where God is enjoyed, who is the spring of happiness. If you could abstract in your thoughts all the inferior glories of heaven without God, you would leave heaven without itself. It is only God's presence which makes heaven. The saints' affections are entirely set on God; they do not only desire God as the proper object of their happiness, but they desire him with the strength of their affections; that is, the full enjoyment of God alone can satisfy them. They infinitely desire him. Therefore you shall find the psalmist, when he speaks concerning the ardency of his affections to God he says, Psal. 42:1. "as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" These expressions set forth to us in a most lively manner, the ardency of his desire to enjoy God; his appearing before God, that is meant of the lower enjoyment of God in his ordinance: he was a banished person, and could not enjoy God in his tabernacle, the place of public worship. Now observe, this love and desire of the saints towards God is infinitely increased in heaven; therefore according to the love and desire we have towards God, so must be the joy that flows from his presence.

God doth most fully communicate himself to the saints in heaven. 1. By revealing all his amiable excellencies to their minds. Therefore it is said, Matt. 5. "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They shall see him with an intellectual eye; their understandings shall see all his glorious perfections, as much as they can receive of him; and only he that sees God, understands what a

happiness it is to see him. It may be, several of you that hear me, while I am speaking to you of seeing the Lord, can no more relish it, than if you should put a cold piece of earth into your mouths; but he that is a saint indeed, hath some glimmerings of it, and some foretaste of it. To have a clear view of those divine excellencies which are the happiness of God himself, which are his natural blessedness; to see his beauty, the beauty of his holiness, and the glory of his power, and all his other attributes opened to you in the most enlarged manner; if our souls were but enlightened, and sanctified, and raised, this would be very sweet to us: the very hopes of it would be a heaven to us. Thus the scripture doth represent to us what heaven is: "without holiness no man shall see God." Seeing God is the possession of his excellencies, by being brought to see and enjoy him "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence there is fulness of joy, at thy righthand there are pleasures for evermore." Psal. 16:11. God was from eternity a heaven to himself: infinitely glorious and joyful in himself, certainly then his presence must be a heaven to the blessed spirits. He that hath the revenues of a king, may easily discharge the expenses of a small family. If God hath that infinite excess of happiness to make himself happy, he can easily make those happy that desire it. 2dly. This shall be accompanied with the most fervent love of him. Every soul in heaven is inflamed with the highest degree of love to God, and therefore infinitely pleased in the glory of God. Now from the sight of that glory, and that love that he showeth in giving that sight, that love we have to him is fed, and consequently our joy must always be in its spring-tide there, because we have the continual presence of God himself. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Psal. 17:15. When my soul is perfected with righteousness and holiness, I shall see thy face and be satisfied. Whether you understand it of the likeness of God shining in our glorified Saviour or no, there will be satisfaction flowing from the discovery and enjoyment of God's perfection in heaven. The wise man tells us, "the desire accomplished is sweet to the soul." Prov. 13:19. It is the triumph of the soul. Whenever a man hath a strong desire accomplished, it is the greatest pleasure to him. Do but

consider then, what a paradise there is above, where all the desires are fully satisfied in God's presence. Do but seriously lay this to heart, whether is it possible to conceive any thing that is more joyful, than for the soul to have the most beloved, the most desired, and the most supreme good in its possession. Thus it is with the glorified saints above in heaven.

I shall not trouble you with a curious dispute, whether or no we shall see the essence of God in heaven; for such a discourse would be above your capacities and apprehensions. The scripture doth principally insist upon this, when it reveals heaven to us: we shall be blessed in the presence of God, we shall be happy in the fruition of him: therefore it is said, Rom. 8:17. "we are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And in the prophecy of Isaiah it is said, that God shall be our glory. And the prophet Jeremiah, Lam. 3:24. saith, which is principally accomplished in heaven, "the Lord is my portion, saith any soul, therefore will I hope in him." Now for us who are here in this lower world, we have but narrow conceptions concerning the enjoyment of Gods but die mere the soul understands God, the more it knows what happiness there is in the enjoyment of him. I would have you observe, that the more any man understands what this world is, the less he enjoys it; for the more he discovers the vanity of it, the more he understands how foolish and deceitful this world is in its promises of happiness. Therefore Solomon, who had an inquiring mind, and power and riches answerable to his mind, after he had made a diligent search into all the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, the result is, "all is vanity and vexation of spirit:" he had a sickly distaste of all the pleasures and delight he had enjoyed in this world. But now the more the soul understands of God, the more it enjoys of God: for it finds the divine perfections to be so immense, as to be above all that it can express, nay above all it could conceive or distinctly desire. So that the more God is understood, the more he is enjoyed, esteemed, and delighted in: and therefore in heaven itself, where God is understood and loved in perfection, there he is enjoyed in perfection. And there is great difference between the soul's

enjoyment of God in heaven, and on earth; those that are on earth enjoy not God so fully, clearly, and satisfactorily, because their enjoyment of God is mediately; either 1st, by creatures as secondary causes of comforts, as all things that in the order of nature are comfortable to us, they are but like cisterns that convey something to us from God our fountain: or else 2dly, he is enjoyed in his ordinances, in those sacred appointments wherein he hath promised to reveal and communicate himself, his grace and comforts to them. But now in heaven God's excellencies and perfections are communicated to the creature in a more immediate manner. When we taste any comfort in the creature, it all comes from God; that comfort we have in the creature is limited, but it is God that makes it comfortable, and communicates comfort to us by the creatures. God is the author of all that good we receive by them. It comes to us from him. That comfort which comes from God in the creature, is like liquor put into a bottle, that takes off from its generousness and richness: so all the comforts that come from God through the creature, there is a diminution of them as they pass through the creature. But when we come to enjoy the immediate excellencies of God, his goodness, power, and holiness, and the like; this will be our heaven; there is nothing that shall eclipse or allay that comfort. That which comes from the presence of God immediately, is all pure and unmixed joy, replenishing and satisfying.

In heaven we shall enjoy God's immediate excellencies by knowledge and love. There we shall understand his eternity, omnipotence, immensity, his infinite holiness, and all other perfections, so far as we are capable of understanding them. And there is one consideration the scripture adds to what I am speaking; we shall not only enjoy the perfections of God immediately, so as no creature shall interpose between God and us, nor these ordinances, which are lower administrations; but we shall enjoy God without the interposition of our Almighty Mediator. 1 Cor. 15:28. it is said concerning Christ our Mediator, "when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself also be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." I will open this

briefly to you: in our present state we have no communion with God, but through Jesus Christ the Mediator, reconciling God to us, and making us acceptable to God. All the spiritual benefits we receive, they are conveyed to us through Jesus Christ our Mediator; for the holy and righteous nature of God can have no converse immediately with an unholy creature. The best saints in the world are unholy in part; and there can be no converse with God, but through Christ our Mediator. Now observe, the Lord Jesus Christ hath a supreme empire delivered him by commission from his Father; and this he is to manage till the adverse powers are entirely subdued, till the powers of earth and hell are all broken and vanquished. This is to be done by Christ as God man. But when after the last day Christ shall by that supreme act of judgment cast the devils and all the wicked into hell for ever, and shall enter into heaven with his saints, then ends the government of Christ. That I may a little open this to you by a similitude or illustration that you will all understand: it is as if a king had a great part of his kingdom revolted from him, and those revolted subjects rising up in rebellion against him, and he hath a design to recover them by his mercy and clemency, and those that would not be prevailed with, should be instances of his just severity. He puts his own son into commission, to invite those that are capable of mercy, to accept of pardon, and to subdue those that are rebellious, and obstinately resist his power and authority, and gives his son full empire for the accomplishment of this design. Now when he hath by the offers of mercy and pardon won some, and reduced them to their duty and obedience, and broken and subdued the rebellious party that continued in their opposition against him, he delivers up his commission to his father. Thus when our Lord Jesus, who received a commission from his Father to make overtures of mercy and pardon to those revolted creatures that were proper objects of it, and would thankfully accept of that grace that is rendered to them; and also to subdue and vanquish the rebellious, and break their power that obstinately and finally oppose and resist him; when he hath accomplished this, there is no further work for Christ as Mediator, to reconcile and appease God in heaven: for then God the Father, Son, and Spirit will glorify the saints immediately; so

that there will be no interposition between a displeased God and sinners. For as the first creation of all things was from infinite power, wisdom and goodness of the blessed and glorious Trinity: so in heaven the felicity of the glorified saints is from the same blessed Trinity: for there is a concurrence of all the persons of the Holy Trinity in the happiness of heaven: the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are equally the fountain of that eternal blessedness the saints enjoy in their glorified state. O consider how happy the creature must be when it receives all from God's blessed treasury: when all that the creature can possibly receive, shall come from God immediately. And this is that which will cause that joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. If I would speak never so long on this subject all my thoughts and expressions would fall infinitely short of it. It is our happiness that we are incapable of understanding it: so that our incapacity turns to our advantage: it is infinitely above all we can ask or think, even this rest that we shall enjoy above with God.

VII. The Third Excellency of this Rest. It is Eternal.

It is an eternal rest. For God's love is unchangeable to them, and so is theirs to him.

iii. ANOTHER excellency of this rest is this; as it is a holy and a joyful rest, so it shall be an eternal rest. Eternity is an inseparable attribute of true and perfect blessedness. Now in heaven there is such a glory and blessedness, as will not only satisfy all our desires, but will exclude all our fears. There shall never be any danger of losing it; nay, there shall never be any fear of losing it. Now for the opening of this to you, there are only three things I shall touch upon: First, To prove to you, that it will be an eternal rest. Do but consider, the love of God that is the cause of it, it is unchangeable. The love of God is unchangeably set upon his people. Thus saith the psalmist, "thy

mercies, O Lord, are from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear thee." Consider the wisdom of God; it is impossible that he should change his love towards those that he hath chosen and consecrated to his service, and to be of his society, and in his presence for ever. It is impossible that he should change his love, because he did from eternity foresee what could fall out. There can be no cause why he should change his affection; for God is not man, that he should lie; or as the son of man, that he should repent. If one man love another, there may be something in the person that may cause his friend to withdraw his affection; but God saw man in the state of weakness and frailty; and if his love endured us in this present life, it will continue for ever; for his love is unchangeable and everlasting. 2dly. Consider this rest is everlasting, because there is no change shall ever be in those that are glorified. The saints shall persevere eternally in their love to God. In this world the affections of holy men to God are like the needle in the compass, though it tremble and point sometimes to the east or west, yet when it settles, it turns directly to its beloved pole, that is, the north. So it is with the saints; God is their pole and centre, their desires, and their whole souls tend to him. They have some variation, some slips and falls from God, which may cause him to withdraw from them, and leave them under a cloud of sorrow: but in heaven holy souls are directly, fully, and constantly fixed upon God, without the least cooling or intermission of their affections, God is their exceeding joy, and that for ever. He is the everlasting object of their love and praise; so that there can be no cloud there: for God's love is unchangeable to them, and their love is unchangeable to him; and therefore it is impossible they should ever be turned from God; for the light of his countenance directs and governs all their minds and hearts. For consider here below; do you think any one that is thirsty will leave a clear flowing spring for puddle water? So it is impossible that holy souls in heaven should ever turn their affections from God. If God's love be unchangeable to them, and their love unchangeable to him, what can change their blessedness? If there were any power superior to God, that could put an end to their happiness, then they might fear; but all their enemies are cast into hell, and they have no less than the

infallible promise of Christ to secure them: "because I live, ye shall live also," saith our blessed Saviour: if God lives and is eternally happy, we shall be happy for ever. They are in an everlasting covenant with him, and shall be in eternal communion with him. So that the rest in heaven is an immortal rest. There shall never be any diminution of their glory, no interruption of their joy, nor no end of it: "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." To conclude all, we are poor short-sighted creatures; we do understand things by our senses, and are most affected with those things which do touch them.

Do but consider with yourselves, whatsoever is pleasant to you in the order of nature, whatsoever it is that may gratify your sensual faculties, if it were possible for you to take in all those pleasures the world hath, and strain them all into a cup, and drink them up at one draught, they are not all comparable to the least degree of that joy and glory that is above for one moment. If you could live the whole circle of time, from the first rise of the world to the end of it, and enjoy all the pleasures that all others have enjoyed in all successions of ages, they are not to be named with one moment's enjoyment of God in heaven. As if one person could feel the poison and stings of all the torments, miseries, and calamities that all men endure in this world, it were nothing compared to the prepared plagues for the wicked in hell. If you have reason and faith to exercise your serious thoughts, nothing deserves your utmost endeavours but heaven. If you will not be guilty of the most stupid folly, then seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness of it.

VIII. The Love of God and the Sufferings of Christ are the Causes of Bestowing this Rest.

The good will of God, and the sufferings of Christ, the supreme causes of bestowing this rest: yet it is a reward, and in what sense. Merit excluded by God's absolute right to our obedience, and the quality of our good actions; which proceed from spiritual powers, restored by free grace; and are very imperfect; and no benefit to God; and there is no proportion between them and heaven. The blood of Christ mingled with them does not make them meritorious.

IV. I shall, in the next place, proceed to prove, that this rest is reserved as a reward to the people of God; in the opening of this, I will show you,

First, What are the supreme causes of this, that so you may not misunderstand the notion of a reward.

Secondly, That this is a reward for the people of God; in what sense you must take it.

Thirdly, I will prove to you by clear irresistible arguments, that there is a rest remaining for the people of God.

First. There are two supreme causes of this rest the scripture speaks of: the first is the eternal pleasure and good will of God to prepare this rest for his people, and to prepare his people for it: so you shall find; "fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Our Saviour comforts his disciples with this: where you may observe by the way, that it is not only said to be the good pleasure of God to give the saints this heavenly kingdom, but it is attributed to him as our Father: so that our possessing heaven is not by way of purchase, but gift. We are as heirs, as children of God; we are not purchasers, but inheritors of it, as the children of our heavenly Father. To bring this home to your bosoms, it is God's good pleasure to give this to his children as a Father, he dispenseth it to his children, and to them alone. There are two things included in the natural relation of a Father.

1. That he communicates being to a child; he is the secondary author of its life.

2. He communicates that life which he possesseth himself, as to the kind and nature of it: these two things are essentially requisite to denominate a man a father. Now that you may know whether you are the objects of this love of God, he gives it, 1st. To those that are born of him; that receive a new nature from him, John 1:13. "which were born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." 2dly. This new nature is called in scripture the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1:4. "whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Now there are two characters in this divine nature, whereby a saint is like to God; that is, the holiness and the immortality of that nature. 1st. The holiness of it; for God is a holy God, and his life is a life of holiness: and so all his children, to whom this heavenly kingdom is designed, are "holy as God is holy in all manner of conversation." 2dly. That holy nature hath immortality in it: so the apostle tells us, 1 Pet. 1:23. "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever:" that which is bestowed upon us is an immortal seed, that shall be always springing up till it come to perfection. Bring this home to yourselves; are you under the good pleasure of God? Are you sensible of it, that you are heirs of his kingdom and love? It must arise from hence that you are his children. Consider further, the good pleasure of God is made here the prime cause that appoints this eternal kingdom unto his children; the good pleasure of God is that which dispenseth this glory to them, and at last will put them into the actual possession of it. It is said to be his good pleasure, his love, his pure and mere mercy, Jude 21. "keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." It is a mercy which giveth us glory at the last: it is not only mercy that appoints it, but it is pure love that giveth us possession of it. 2dly. The next cause of this eternal rest which the saints have bestowed upon them is, the Lord Jesus Christ: so you shall find, Rom. 6:23. "for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is

eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord:" where you see still that eternal life is attributed to God as a free gift. The Greek word signifies, most gratuitous, most free, undeserved, and the pure effect of grace. "The wages of sin is death;" that is, it is a righteous recompence of sin, eternal death: (for you must understand it by the opposition to eternal life;) eternal death is a righteous recompence of sin. If you consider that God against whom it is committed, so it deserves an eternal punishment; but the gift of God is eternal life.

If you consider the sufferings of Christ, or his obedience in those sufferings, it will appear that to him we owe eternal life: consider what that death was that he suffered for us, Heb. 2:16. he expiated the guilt of sin, and dissolved that bond whereby we were obliged to eternal punishment, the death of Christ did that. If you could prescind and abstract the sufferings of Christ from his obedience, his sufferings might only free you from hell. But now the obedience of Christ was so perfect in itself, and so glorious to God, his obedience to the death of the cross, whose divine nature had an infinite worth in it, and whose human nature was spotless holiness, he procured for us a right to heaven; not only a freedom from ruin, but a right to a higher glory than was lost in Adam. Therefore we must attribute all to the love of God in Christ, on the account whereof the apostle breaks forth into a most solemn acknowledgment, Rev. 1:5. "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Now with respect to Christ's redeeming us from hell, and bestowing heaven upon us, we owe to him homage, worship, and praise for the heavenly kingdom, and we shall praise him for ever. So that here are the two supreme causes of this rest, the love of God, and the purchase of Christ.

Notwithstanding this, the scripture tells us, (and we may safely speak the words of scripture) that this rest is reserved as a reward to the people of God; so you shall find that expression, Matt. 5:11, 12. where

our Saviour encourageth the persecuted saints; "blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

Now for the understanding of this, you must distinguish; there is a double notion of reward. 1st. A reward strictly taken; and so a reward is a righteous recompence that is given to a person as an allowance for a due service, according to the proportion of its worth. So you shall find Deut. 7. God commandeth that we shall not detain the reward of the hireling, &c. But in this sense heaven cannot challenge any thing from God as a reward, in a strict sense.

There is a lower sense of a reward, and that, is, when there is a recompence given for a service that was due, and mean in itself, but it is given from the bounty and pure liberality and riches of the rewarder. Now in this sense you must understand it, when heaven is said to be a reward of the doing or suffering of the saints, because in the order of giving, it is a reward after our service performed to God: it hath the nature of a reward, because it hath respect to the service of the saints; but not as a reward strictly due to that service; and that will appear if you do but consider,

1st. The quality of the person.

2dly. The quality of the service.

1st. Consider the quality of the person; and here are these things to be considered.

(1.) That God hath an absolute right to all his creatures, so that by their obedience to him, they can merit nothing. All their power of acting, and all their faculties are from him. They can deserve nothing; all is his own, 1 Chron. 29:14. "Of thine own have we given thee," saith David: the product of our inward and outward strength; all our talents are from God. That I may illustrate this by a similitude that you all understand; the apostle Paul wrote to Philemon, to

prevail with him for a kindness to Onesimus; and it is an epistle very insinuating, where there is an intermixture of many powerful arguments. verse 8, 9. "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love-sake I rather beseech thee being such a one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and me; whom I have sent again; thou therefore receive him that is mine own bowels." After the apostle had used all the address of love, he makes use of a strain that which is the most artificial and powerful, verse 18. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth ought, put that on my account." A strange piece of rhetoric with which he concludes his arguments: "I Paul have written it with my own hand, I will repay it; albeit I do not say to thee, how thou owest to me even thine own self besides." It was but a small return he desired at his hands, considering how much he owed to Paul; probably he was his spiritual father. Therefore gratitude might oblige Philemon to answer his desire in this. Had Paul such a right in Philemon as that he owed himself to him, being his spiritual father, and an instrument of his conversion in bringing him to the knowledge of Christ; how much more do we owe ourselves to God, owe all to him, and therefore can merit nothing of him?

(2.) Another thing, with respect to the quality of our persons is this, the meanness and vileness of our persons; so that whatsoever comes from us, cannot possibly merit any thing of God. Abraham was a great prince, and a man that had abundance of treasure; but when he speaks to God he abaseth himself, and says, Gen. 18:27. "Behold now I have taken upon me to speak to the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." And John the baptist, though a person of eminent holiness, yet when he speaks of Christ, John 1:27. "He it is who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose." And the blessed virgin who had the honour to be the mother of Christ, how doth she break forth into praises of the Lord, with a reflection upon her own meanness, Luke 1:46. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; for

he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." We are so low, mean, and contemptible to God, that it is impossible we should oblige him: the whole world compared to him is but as the drop of a bucket. Now what a small part are we of that drop? Nay the whole world compared to him is but as the small dust upon the balance; nothing yea less than nothing, and vanity. So that there can be no obligation or merit arising from such creatures as we are.

2dly. If we consider the quality of our actions, it is impossible we should merit any thing from God.

(1) Because all our spiritual powers are restored to us by the free grace of God. The apostle Paul saith, "We have no sufficiency of ourselves, as of ourselves so much as to think a good thought," Phil. 2:13. "For it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:" so that all our spiritual power and strength is from God: and it being entirely his, we cannot merit any thing from him. For all the power and strength we have, we owe it entirely to God and Christ; therefore John 15:5. our Saviour compares himself to the vine, and the church to the branches, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." The branch hath no power or living juice of its own, but what it derives from the root. So all our habitual graces, and all our exercise of those graces, is from God and Christ; therefore there can be no merit on our part. For, indeed our obligation is increased, by the exercise of graces, and we are debtors to him by it.

(2.) Do but consider what imperfection attends all our services; so that were there not a Mediator as well to make our services acceptable, as to justify our persons, we should be exposed to the displeasure of God; for the relics of sin stain and defile every service that comes from us.

The Holy Spirit is the immediate cause of every grace in us; but it is we that act and exercise grace. Christ is the author and finisher of our faith; but it is we that believe: the Spirit of Christ is the cause of our obedience; but it is we that obey; we are the next agents though he be the supreme cause.

There is a great imperfection in all our services that we perform to God: in our faith there is much of unbelief; and in our obedience, there are some degrees of disobedience; all our duties have an alloy, and such blemishes in them as would expose us to the anger of God, did not God for Christ's sake, pardon and accept us.

(3.) Our services are of no advantage or benefit to God. "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth." Psa. 16:2. If you had the affections of an angel to praise God while you are upon earth, his majesty and glory would not be increased by all your praises: for "His glory is above the heavens." If the sun should shine upon a clear crystal glass, that should reflect the beams of the sun, it could never reach the body of the sun, so as to increase the light of it: so it is with us; God shines upon us by his mercies, and we reflect them back again by our praises and grateful acknowledgments, but his essential glory is not increased by it; our righteousness doth not profit him; you can lay no obligation upon him; none but those you do some kindness to, receive some benefit from you; God's glory is above all the power of the creature; he is immense, and infinitely above all our services, we cannot oblige him.

(4.) There is no proportion between what is done and suffered by us and the glory of heaven, for saith the apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." "I reckon," upon due weighing all things together, it is the result of my judgment, there is no comparison between the one and the other. When the apostle put them in the balance with the glory of heaven, the afflictions of this present life were light and inconsiderable. If sufferings, afflictions, and troubles are light much more is our obedience. If a father should

see a child write a line after a copy, with an unskilful hand, and give him a twenty-shilling-piece for that writing, you cannot say this is a just reward; no, but from his father's love and bounty. So God gives us heaven for our service here, but there is no proportion between our doings and sufferings and that exceeding eternal weight of glory; it is purely from gift and unmerited bounty: though it be a reward in respect of order, given to us for sincere service, performed to him. Now the papists do stand stiffly and confidently for a strict reward: it is true say they, our works and services do not deserve heaven, but the blood of Christ mixed with them, may make them meritorious. If you should take the dust of gold and mix it with sand and say it is worth so much, it is not the sand, but the gold that is to be esteemed and valued; for the mixture of the sand doth not make the gold of greater value: so our works mixed with Christ's merits are like gold mixed with sand. And therefore heaven is given with respect to Christ's precious blood, and not to our merits. Now it is observable that the papists, that build their hopes upon this fallacious and deceitful ground, do also very congruously determine, that it is our duty to live in doubt of heaven and salvation; for they look upon assurance as the effect of pride and rash presumption. So that by their doctrine there is no solid hope of salvation. How much better is hope and well grounded confidence in Christ, than doubtful fear. Heaven is bestowed from the rich bounty and liberality of God: it is a reward that hath respect to the sincerity of our service, and not to the real worth and value of it. For heaven is a reward that is merited only by the sufferings and obedience of our blessed Redeemer, who is the author of eternal salvation, to all those that love and obey him.

IX. Proofs that this rest is reserved for the people of God from his immutability, justice, special love, and power

This rest is certainly reserved for the people of God; because of the immutability of God's promise, which promise is agreeable to the general justice of God, and his special love to his people. The divine power is their great security. Why it is not given till after a life of service. This method most honourable to God, because hereby he tries their faith and love: and most comfortable to them.

I Shall now proceed to show you, that this rest is certainly reserved for God's people; and that I shall make apparent to you from these following considerations.

i. The immutability of the word of God, wherein this rest is promised to his people. There are many promises in scripture, the subject matter of which is this; that there is a state of blessedness reserved for the saints. Rom. 2:7. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life." Thus the apostle expressly sets forth this rest, which is a variation of it under several notions; and tells us, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. If we suffer with him, that is, in imitation of his example, and in obedience to his commands, we shall then reign with him. Rev. 2:10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." The heaven is not more studded with stars, than the scripture with promises of this nature. Now it is true, before the promise is made, there is an absolute sovereign liberty in God, whether he will give such a right to the creature: but when God hath made a promise, he doth (as I may so speak) make himself a debtor to his servants; though you must not take it in a strict sense, but there is an obligation lies upon him to fulfil his promise. The apostle when he gives you an account of the foundation of his faith says, "For I know in whom I have believed; and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" that is, I know him to be a holy and true God, upon whose promises I have a blessed dependence, they all being of infallible certainty. The truth of it is, the word of God when it is once passed, is a more firm assurance to us, than we can have, that the sun will rise the next day; a greater assurance is given to us, than all this regular course of

nature, that is established by the works of his providence; for we cannot tell when the course of nature shall have its period. But we have a most uncontrollable assurance for that, which God "who cannot lie promised before the world began." God cannot deny the essential perfections of his own nature; therefore he will most certainly perform his promise. Upon this we may venture our hopes and our souls, as upon the most calm and clear security: God hath promised it, and he will do it.

ii. Let us consider those excellent properties in the divine nature which may still confirm our faith in the promise of God.

1st. This promise of eternal life to his servants is that which is consentaneous to the general justice of God, "Say to the righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The general righteousness of God hath so disposed the distribution of rewards and punishments, that those that fear him, though indeed they can deserve nothing of him, yet from his pure love and according to his justice and righteousness they shall have a reward. The wicked indeed, according to strict justice, shall be rewarded; so the apostle speaks 2 Thes. 1:6, 7. "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us;" that is, according to the holy and righteous nature of God. It is not according to strict justice, but there is a clemency of God manifested in the pardon of sin, and his admirable love and bounty in recompensing the righteous: yet it is consentaneous to his justice that those who serve him as sons do a father, he will spare them and reward them.

2dly. It is according to his special love. It is not only from general justice, but special love and goodness is the fountain of this promise. Pray observe how God deals with his chosen people; the foundation of all his blessings is love, a love that is free and unmerited, a love that is rich, and glorious, and liberal; this love proceeds from one thing to another; God gives, that he may give; he gives his people

grace that he may give them glory. He begins the work of holiness in them here, he perfects the work he begins, and he crowns the work he perfects and all from free love. This is the foundation of his promise, that love that is rich and free and glorious, so that one mercy to them is the earnest of another, and his promises are so concatenated that where he gives grace he will give glory.

3dly. The divine power is our great security; that God can and will accomplish those promises that he hath made to his people. "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12. What is the depositum Paul commits to God? I know divines generally interpret it of his departing soul. A believer when he comes to die, resigns up his soul (as his Saviour did) into God's hands. This seems not to be the true meaning of the apostle here, for while a man hath a soul living in his body, and in his possession, it cannot suit with the notion of a depositum; for a deposition is that which is out of my possession and committed to the hands of another: therefore this depositum is the crown of life and glory which God hath promised to believers; a believer trusts it with God. I have trusted my eternal happiness with God, the crown of life I trust with him. He is gracious and powerful, and can bring me through all the dangers and temptations and troubles of this present world to eternal felicity; although they interpose between me and the divine world, and my body must descend to the grave before I can obtain life, yet I know divine power can raise me from the dead and bring me to eternal life and glory.

It is an interesting inquiry, which next demands our attention; why this rest remains, and shall be given us afterwards. At present it is an unseen rest, it is above our reach, it remains, saith the apostle, we do not possess it yet. Why is God thus pleased to dispense and give us it? I answer;

1. In general; the infinite wisdom of God appears in the order of giving; observe the expression of Paul, Eph. 1:8. The apostle in these words hath a respect to the particular foundation of the gospel-

covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. God did in wise manner order that the honour of his justice might be secured and yet his mercy advanced. The apostle, speaking of the forgiveness of sins in the blood of Christ, herein appears saith he the wisdom of God to honour his justice and holiness, and advance the riches of his grace; the wisdom of God appears in the whole constitution of the gospel, in framing the covenant of grace so, that rest and blessedness shall be dispensed as a future reward, to the people of God, that are obedient to the death: so that as the combat goes before the triumph; and the race before the crown, so a life of service and obedience always goes before the eternal enjoyment of God above.

2. More particularly. It is that which is most honourable to God; and infinitely comfortable to his people. Honourable to God;

(1.) As he is pleased to honour himself, by the trial of their faith, which is a grace of that precious nature and importance, that the apostle Peter tells us, that the trial of it is much more precious than gold. 1 Pet. 1:7. How honourable is it to the truth and power of God when a believer doth give credit to his relation of the unseen world, firmly believing, that there is another life after this; another happiness that sense cannot discover; as firmly believing this as if he saw it. What an honourable testimony is this to God, when his word shall be such a security, that we can venture our all upon it! Abraham when he had given such an excellent testimony of his faith, believing the promise of God that he should have a son in his old age, though he was dead in nature as to generation, it is said, he believed God and it was imputed to him for righteousness: God esteemed that as a noble testimony of his faith, and consequently rewarded him for it. So those who are clothed with flesh, and are conversant only with sensible objects in this lower world, when they can give such credit to the promise of God concerning invisible and eternal things, as to govern themselves entirely in their lives, with respect to them; this is giving God as much glory as we are able while we are in this state.

(2.) For the trial of the truth and strength of our love to God, whether we will prefer the enjoyment of him hereafter before all the pleasure of this fading world. Love is best discovered by comparison and choice: when things are presented to your will, and you despise the allurements of the one, and chose the other, this discovers love. There are in competition with you the vanities of the world gilded over, and very pleasing to sense; but God sets against them an everlasting reward in heaven, the enjoyment of himself as our portion. Now when in the midst of all these tempting vanities, I chose God for my portion (Lam. 3:24.) though that choice divest me of all that fools admire, and that carnal men choose; it declares that my love to God is cordial and real, is predominant, and hath a pre-eminence above all other affections. How honourable is it to God, when the creature loveth him above life, and all the comforts of life! God reserves this reward then, for a trial of our love.

(3.) He is honoured by our sincere obedience. Did a present temporal reward always attend holiness, who could tell whether men served God for nought or no? You know the devil cast it as a reproach upon Job, when God had hedged him about, and given him a princely abundance, and he seemed the happiest man in all the east; as if Job's obedience to God, was merely the effect of that temporal happiness he enjoyed. But God is pleased to offer to us an eternal estate, and this estate is a future one, and an estate that hath many incumbrances upon it, that must be removed before it be enjoyed. You must pass through many difficulties on the one hand, and on the ether; and you cannot come to it without dying; and whether it be a natural death, or a violent one you cannot tell. Our obedience is from pure love to his majesty; for the rest that is in heaven, is the enjoyment of the law of God: so it is pure love that can animate a christian to despise all things in comparison of God. Now consider how honourable our superlative love is to him. It is true it would be equally bounty for God to take a person to heaven as soon as he hath formed him; but it is more honourable to God, when we have such a love to him. And hence it is most comfortable to God's people; and

who would not choose such a way as doth most clearly and undissemblingly express our love to God?

X. APPLICATION of the subject. The first use. How dreadful will be the future state of God's enemies.

Application of the Subject

How sad is the future state reserved for God's enemies. The false principles and motives of their present peace: false apprehensions of the mercy of God: future purposes! Plunging themselves into worldly business and pleasures. A miserable state remains for them. They shall be deprived of this rest; which alone will be very afflictive, because they shall perfectly understand what they lose; that this is owing purely to their own folly, for the sake of perishing vanities. They shall be in a state of positive misery, directly contrary to the happy state of heaven; and an eternal one.

IF there be such a rest "remaining to the people of God;" we may hence infer how sad is that future state that remains for God's enemies in another world. And these contraries being set together will illustrate one another. O the heavy doleful state that remains for those who are rebels against God! It is true, here they may have rest; they may be quiet and undisturbed in their minds, and sleep securely in the very shadow of death. But O the fearful awaking they will have when they come into eternity! O the strange convulsions of conscience then, and those dreadful disorders and tumults that will be in their souls! To make this more clear and affecting to you, I will a little touch upon those false principles and motives of peace and rest that wicked men have here, which will shortly all be taken away: and then I will show you what a restless condition they will be in, in

the next life; what an incessant remorse will torture them to the days of eternity.

As to the false principles of reason, there are some that are very obvious and very necessary to touch upon. We find that these two attributes of conscience meet together, a bad conscience and a quiet. None more secure, none more undisturbed, than those that are in infinite danger of ruin. And although God tells us, there is no peace to the wicked, there is no solid well-grounded peace; yet the scripture tells us in another place, Deut. 29:19. "And it comes to pass when he hears the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man."

1. I will show you a little the vanity of this peace. Now that which lies at the bottom of all is this: they have false apprehensions of the mercy of God. They have a false peace and we cannot rob them of it, but whatsoever is spoken to them against it, they notwithstanding still cherish it. It would be a great charity to rob them of this false peace; but they will flatter themselves, and say, God is infinitely merciful, and they hope, he will not be so severe as preachers declare him to be. Nay though the book of God hath threatening and thundering words against the wicked, yet they are no more afraid of those threatenings, than a company of boys are of their squibs and crackers which are of their own making. God is more gracious than he is represented to us, say they; therefore they will put their souls to venture. I shall only tell these deceived wretches, that though they can never enough amplify the mercy of God, for it is infinite; let them remember, God's mercy is a holy mercy, and a just mercy: and there are other perfections in God besides his mercy, and that God will glorify his mercy in a way suitable to his own nature. O vain man, never be bold upon this attribute, whilst thou hast the character of one of God's enemies. Observe the Lord Jesus Christ, the meek Lamb of God, who was made of love and mercy; observe what he saith to

the pharisees, which is applicable to all wicked persons, Mat. 23:33. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers how can you escape the damnation of hell?" With what zealous indignation doth he speak! Perhaps you may think you are not such sinners as the pharisees. Do not deceive yourselves; all that are unregenerate are a generation of vipers, Rom. 1:29, 30. Read that catalogue of sinners being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, &c. Such as these shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. You think you may obtain heaven because you are such as these; but see what is written, John 3:3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Consider, I beseech you, in what a solemn manner our Saviour speaks this to Nicodemus. This Christ himself the purchaser of divine mercy hath assured us of. What a vain thing is it to be at rest with false presumption, that a man shall do well because God is merciful; while he doth not believe what God declares of his justice and holiness.

2. Another common motive of their rest and quiet is this; press them to a speedy turning to God, then they will tell you, that they will secure their title to heaven at some future time. They think they have time enough yet: they will escape hell by an act of future repentance. But O dread this and consider the certain shortness and uncertain continuance of life! O remember if it please thy Judge, thy death is as near thee, as thy sin that deserves it! Thou canst not have the least security that thou shalt survive this sermon. Therefore to put off repentance is such folly and stupidity that no man would be guilty of in a temporal respect. Were it not commonly practised, one would think it so absurd a folly, that human nature were incapable of it. We carry our lives in our hands as David speaks. "There is but a step between us and death." If sickness should seize you suddenly, how terrible would it be to have the first death and the second invading you at once!

3. Another motive and false principle is this; they plunge themselves into the business and pleasures of the world. Into the business of the world; all their senses are abroad, not so much as one sense stays at home to consider their state. They are never left at freedom to think, what their condition is. Others are dipped in pleasures, and they follow the vicious stream of their own hearts pleasantly and nothing disturbs them. It is just as when the wind and tide go together, the stream is calm and smooth; so while their hearts, and the things of this world join together, while the current runs one way, they are at peace. But remember when the wind blows against the tide, all the waves are tumultuous and impetuous, and break into rage. So there is a time coming, when this world shall blow contrary to you; then you shall be distressed; then there will be time enough for an uncomfortable remembrance of your folly.

These are some of the false grounds upon which men cherish rest here, and will not be brought out of the possession of it. But this will not last long; you may please and ravish yourselves with sensual delights and dreams till the justice of God awakens you; and in the next life there is nothing but sorrow and trouble and anguish and vexation. There is no rest unless you can rest in chains and flames of fire, and under the gnawings of an eternal worm and the everlasting wrath of God. If you saw a person upon a rack, his body stretched and tortured, and all his bones disjointed; can such a one have rest? then you may have rest in hell! Do you think that one who lies under the torturing pain of the stone or gout, and every pang cuts like the very pang of death, do you think that such a person can take any rest? All the parts of the body and all the powers of the soul shall be tormented in hell: as they shall feel those torments, fears, and sorrows, which shall prey upon them in that endless state.

Hence we may infer how miserable will be the state of those that are strangers and enemies to God. For the blessed rest is only prepared for God's people. This inference is so well grounded, that it admits of no doubt, as we find in Rev. 14:13. "And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,

from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Where you see this blessedness is appropriated to those that die in the Lord. From whence we have this clear deduction; "Cursed are those that die in their sins." He that dies in Christ is blessed, for he goes to the fountain of his life: but he that dies in his sins, carries that heavy weight with him that will sink him into the abyss of misery. This doth not respect only those that live in gross sins, those that are desperate and dissolute; but it is a bar against all those that are unregenerate and unrenewed. 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. You have a catalogue of notorious sinners, "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind; nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." But it may be now you will bless yourselves in your hearts, to think that you are not of this number; my brethren, remember what that Lord of life tells you, John 3:3. with an asseveration, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you have not a reformed mind, a reformed will, and reformed affections; and if your lives be not reformed you can never enter into God's kingdom. In short before I go to a more particular opening of this, take a character of those persons he excludes from the reward in these three particulars.

1st. All those who are contrary to the nature of God who is infinitely holy shall be excluded from this rest. Wherever there is one sin in dominion this doth imply a standing contrariety to the nature of God; whatsoever sin it be whether it is visible to the eyes of men or no, or whether it is a secret sin, if it hath a throne in your hearts, this implies an utter contrariety to the nature of God. It is impossible for such a person to be received into this rest. You may sooner reconcile night and noon-day, than the presence of God with such creatures. The truth is, if they could be transported to heaven by divine power, heaven would be no more heaven to them, in whom there is a contrariety to the nature of God. To make it sensible to you all; there is nothing in the world more pleasing and more refreshing than the

light of the sun to a sound eye; for light is that which makes the whole creation beautiful and pleasing to us; yet there is nothing more uneasy or more vexing to a sore eye corrupted with humours; therefore such persons will seek for retirement, make every thing dark, because the light of the sun will so afflict them. Indeed the presence of God is a heaven to a holy soul; but to those that are contrary to his holy nature, it is not so, therefore it is that they are objects of God's rejection; he cannot take delight in them, and they cannot delight in him, there being a fundamental opposition in the nature of God to such sinners, and in them to God; therefore you may be assured, that all such shall be excluded from this rest.

2dly, The notion of God's people implies obedience. Now by way of opposition; those that are rebels against his law and government, are none of his people; those that live in a known violation of his precepts, are all rebels to him. They may, indeed, own his government in words, but if it were in their power they would pluck him from his throne and set up another king, the God of this world. These are excluded from this rest.

3dly, Those that are not affectionate to God's glory, nor concerned for his interest in the world, they are none of his people, they are all to him. Those who, if they can preserve their own private interest, let the affairs of the church sink or swim; if they can have a flourishing prosperity in their families, let the cause of God decline or prosper, they care not; these are none of God's people, they shall be excluded from this rest.

This being now laid as that which shall direct you in all I speak after, I shall proceed, and being now to speak to you of the most displeasing subject, the torments of hell, I shall only say this, that were not the subject necessary, it is that which of all subjects a gospel minister would be most unwilling to speak of. For as God himself hath prepared and threatened hell for this end, that men might choose heaven and avoid hell: so none that hath a heart like our Saviour, but whenever he doth open these treasures of God's wrath

to you, doth it merely upon this account, that you may escape them and be compelled to turn into the way of life.

This state of misery, which is contrary to the rest I have been speaking of, the scripture sets forth to us in that manner that may most affect and arouse us. So the apostle, Rom. 2:7, 8. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Now that which I observe is this, the Holy Spirit doth by variety of expressions signify to us the extremity and perfection of that misery that is in hell; he calls it indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to enlarge your apprehensions concerning the perfect misery of that state. As it is said before of heaven, that it is a state of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life; and all to raise your apprehensions, and attract your desires after heaven; so here you have expressions multiplied to impress upon you the fearfulness of that state. As in heaven all is composed, for the comfort, joy and blessedness of the saints; so in hell all is prepared for the torment and misery of the wicked. All within them and without them is to aggravate their misery. The judgments of God in this life, which he lays upon sinners, here in the day of his patience and clemency, are many times very heavy, and exceed the strength and courage of men to bear them; but all of them are nothing to that full vengeance, that complete recompence of sin, that God shall bring them, in the day of his righteous judgment. We read Deut. 29:19. an expression of Moses to the Israelites; "And when it comes to pass he hears the words of this curse, and he bless himself saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, and add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." All the judgments of God in this world against sinners, are but the smoke of hell-fire; no more comparable to the enduring the torments of hell, than the feeling hot smoke to the burning of hell itself, as those intermediate comforts which God gives us in this life are nothing to the consolations, which he will give us in heaven; so

all the temporal evils which the wicked meet with here, are nothing to the torments of hell. This being laid down in general, I shall come to open it to you more particularly.

1. The first thing which is considerable is this; the deprivation of this blessed rest, which none who are enemies to God shall ever obtain. When the great King shall call the world to judgment, and pass a sentence upon the wicked, the first part of the sentence will be, "Depart from me," that is, depart from Christ, who is the fountain of life and joy, whose presence is the heaven of heavens. "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. 25:41. The carnal sinner will think with himself, if it be but the loss of heaven I shall do well enough, if that be all damnation signifies, I shall not be much concerned; but now to make you understand the dreadfulfulness of this sentence, consider.

(1.) You shall then more perfectly understand what that blessedness is you lose; and so you shall feel yourselves infinitely miserable upon this account. Indeed in the present state, the carnal unbelieving heart despiseth heaven, he looks upon nothing to be substantial, solid good, but what is sensible to his lower faculties. We preach heaven to them, which they think is but an airy happiness, a notional thing; there is no seeing or feeling, or tasting of it. So the carnal wretch thinks the loss of heaven will be an easy thing. But in the other world their sight shall be cleared, and their judgments changed, they shall know what they lose, and that loss will be accompanied with stings of conscience, and those dreadful tearings of themselves, that it is impossible to conceive. When Elisha said, thus saith the Lord, about this time to-morrow, shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, behold if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? and he said behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 1Kings 7:1. I apply it thus; the damned shall see the glory of heaven, but they shall not partake of it. They shall see it only to their terror and sorrow. Now to put it in an

ordinary case: if a man hath made a foolish bargain, and after comes to understand his folly in parting with such a thing, the price and value of which he did not understand, it will cause troublesome reflections upon himself. I remember a story, that when Charles the bold, one of the dukes of Burgundy, took a great city, there was a jewel found of incomparable value; the soldier that found it sold it for four florins (about twenty shillings) but after it was sold for many thousand pounds. If the soldier had known the price afterwards, how it would have enriched him, it would greatly trouble and vex him, that he had made so foolish a bargain. The wicked part with heaven foolishly, and lose it for trifles; but when they come to understand what a jewel it was, of what incomparable value, it will greatly afflict them; and the remembrance of their folly will be always grating upon their spirits and torment them. In hell, shall be "weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth" when the wicked shall see "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and themselves shut out for ever." This will cause dreadful tormenting reflections, though now possibly you may pass it over with slight unconcerned thoughts.

(2.) They will owe this privation to their own folly and wickedness, and this will be as tormenting as the loss itself. And because this is so material a thing I will open it to you.

I speak now of those that live under the gospel, they shall not be able to pretend, that they are ignorant of this rest, and therefore fall short of it; no, for our Saviour hath abolished death, and brought light and immortality to light through the gospel Our Saviour hath, as it were, rent the veil of heaven, and given us a discovery of the glory there. He did not only reveal heaven to us, but rose from the dead to give us an argument and an example of that blessedness that all his believing members shall be raised unto. He hath brought life and immortality to light, so that there can be no pretence of ignorance. Under the law they had but as it were a twilight, some faint glimmerings of this state; but now it is clear and open to all, that there "remains a rest to the people of God." So that they shall never be able to say, they never heard of heaven.

Again; as they cannot say they never heard of heaven, so neither can they pretend it was never offered to them: for in the preaching of the gospel, there was a continual offer of the kingdom of heaven. The very threatenings of hell were in order to make men accept of heaven. All the commands, all the entreaties, all the threatenings of the gospel centre in this, to make people willing to accept of heaven. They are all concurrent means, to make you "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." None are excluded from the promise of God. Whosoever will let him take of the waters of life freely. So that there is not a bare possibility of obtaining, but a certainty, if you be not wanting to yourselves, and if you be not rebellious against God; this will be another aggravation.

(3.) Hell will be increased by this consideration; that although heaven is revealed and offered to us, it is not offered upon impossible terms, upon such conditions as the human nature cannot comply with. No, this cannot be pretended; for whatsoever difficulty there is with reference to our corrupt affections, or our unprepared hearts, yet nevertheless the divine glory is so freely and richly offered to men in the gospel, that if they will accept of it, they shall be conquerors over all obstacles; God offers his Holy Spirit to them that ask it. "If earthly parents, who are evil, know how to give good things to their children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it?" Now the Holy Spirit by his assistance, will make every command easy. He will make the yoke of Christ an easy, gracious, and benign yoke. Now to make this sensible to you; it is with a sinner in his carnal, corrupt state, with respect to the things of God, as it is with a man in a burning fever or dropsy, that cannot abstain from drink: I cannot forbear drinking, saith he, for I am almost burnt up; but if a physician comes and tells him, I will give you a julap that will quench your thirst; now if he refuses it, he dies voluntarily and wilfully. Men have dropsy desires after the world, and are inflamed with an insatiable thirst after it; but saith God, I will give you my Spirit that shall change and purify you from all those vicious affections that make you thirst after earthly things. Now they grieve the Spirit of God, resist it, and quench all the holy motions;

they will not comply with it. It is hence evident, that they are guilty of their own ruin; all this loss of heaven is from their own choice, and the natural effect of their own perverse wills. The sinner will not be able to stand under the burden of these thoughts, I have lost heaven because I would not have it; this will be more tormenting than all the infernal fiends, that, their loss of heaven is owing purely to their own folly.

(4.) To show you what a hell it will be to lose heaven, a sinner shall then reflect for what perishing vanities he lost heaven; he shall be able to make a true comparison between what he lost, and that which he lost it for. This is consequent to the former, because he shall know what heaven is. The great reason why men pursue the things below, is because they undervalue the things above; they have no esteem, no taste for them; but then they shall be able to understand what heaven is. Then it will appear what a wretched bargain they made to part with heaven for these things. O when the considering soul shall come to compare things, to think that I have lost the perfections of heaven for vexing and transient vanities, we cannot conceive the detestation the soul will have of itself. That the soul which was a spiritual, immortal being, should for sensual, transient vanities lose heaven! When you hear at any time of a person mixing with a brute, it raiseth a disdain in you, and you will count that person the worst brute that doth so. He that sets his heart upon the world is a more prodigious monster; he that joins an immortal spirit with spiritual dust. The soul will aggravate its misery that it brought upon itself for such mean and cheap vanities.

Again; that which will be an aggravation of this loss of heaven is, it is then irrecoverable; the day of mercy is expired, God will be justly inexorable to all their lamentable cries. For the time of his patience being expired, pure and strict justice takes place, and will exact from the sinful creature the payment of the rights of it for ever.

2. Now besides this deprivation of the rest of heaven, there is a positive and contrary state of misery, that those which are rebels to

God shall be plunged into. To open this briefly, consider, that hell is represented to us in those expressions that have an absolute direct contrariety to the state of heaven, and all to signify the positive misery of that place. For example; heaven is said to be an inheritance of light; 1 Cor. 12. Hell is said to be a region of darkness, perpetual darkness, Jude, 13. you have an expression so strong and full, that nothing can exceed it; "they are wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." O that thick and disconsolate darkness that shall never be refreshed with the least star, no, not with one spark of light; blackness of darkness, darkness that may be felt, like that in Egypt. Heaven is said to be a place of joy; "in thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." But in hell there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. All which are expressions of desperate sorrow. Sometimes in scripture heaven is set forth by springs of refreshing water; so you have an expression which may be applied to heaven, Rev. 7:17. "for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." It signifies both refreshment and abundance of that refreshment that is in heaven.

It is said that hell is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone; where the damned shall be drowned in flames, and burned in streams for ever. A strange expression, a lake that burns, &c. In heaven the saints shall be always praising and glorifying God, they are filled with joy, and it breaks forth with overflowing thanksgivings. But in hell there is blaspheming God, and cursing the Holy One, that is blessed for ever. So it is said concerning those that are punished in hell, Rev. 16:10. "and the fifth angel poured forth his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, and they repented not of their deeds." Ver. 21. "And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and they blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great" Hell is the region of misery, they blaspheme God there for the extremity of their torment.

It is said of heaven, it is the saints' rest; they have a sweet and calm repose in the enjoyment of God. There a believer can say, "return to thy rest, O my soul." But in hell they rest neither night nor day, but they are under continual tormenting reflections on their own wickedness and the extremity of God's wrath. They have no interval nor space of ease. They are always upon the rack; torn and miserable in their own sense for ever. The scriptures set forth the positive torments of hell thus; and all this shall be for ever; the door is sealed upon them and their state is unchangeable, and they are continually restless, not only under the impressions of their present torment, but by the foresight that this shall never have an end. O this is the very hell of hell! O saith the forlorn wretch, if I could but live again, and have a trial, whether I would repent or no, or, O if I might at length die, and have an end of this torment, then hell would cease to be hell. But all their wishes shall be ineffectual, for they shall never have any ease or end. You cannot think they can free themselves by power. All the armies of darkness cannot resist the powers of an infinite God: our Saviour hath an expression applicable to this purpose, "bind them hand and foot, and cast them into utter darkness;" which implies, they have no power either to escape or make resistance. This is that which makes hell to be so terrible, after the damned have run through millions of years, the sum they owe to God's infinite justice is entire, they have made no payment yet. It is impossible to think of this without horror, that then a person shall be entirely and eternally miserable. I remember what I have read, of one that was an impious atheist, who was struck at last with an ulcerous distemper that run throughout his body, and filled him with noisome vermin accompanied with the most cruel pain, that he was ashamed and afraid of society, and he retired into a private room; and when one asked him how he did, he put his finger or thumb through the hole of the door and bid his friend take notice and see how it was filled with ulcers and vermin, saying, just as this is so it is with my whole body. So the damned shall be miserable in all parts. Dives begged for a drop of water to cool his tongue, when he was tormented in the flames. It is not to be understood as if his tongue only was tormented, but by that we may make a judgment, how miserable he

was in every part. But will not God change the sentence at last, when the damned creature has endured ten thousand years of torment? No, God will not repent nor retract his sentence. Not to speak of the desert of sin, nor the justice of God in it, that they preferred misery before heaven and happiness, they cannot complain of his justice in their punishment; because though these wretches are in perfect misery, yet their hearts are not changed to love a holy God; they are blaspheming and filled with rage against a holy God: they are continual objects therefore of his hatred, not only for their sins in this present life, but for that cursed enmity that is still in their hearts against him. As the most holy and powerful Judge, they eternally hate him; and they are the proper objects for his holiness, and justice, and power to work upon for ever. And they are not only objects of his hatred, but of his scorn and derision, "he will laugh at their calamities and mock when their fear cometh." If you believe the scripture, it is a wonder that any of you can live in an unrenewed state one day or hour. There is nothing more amazing than this, that any man that hath so much faith, as to believe an eternal hell, and hath not any love to God and holiness should be quiet one hour! Men will not part with their beloved sins though hell attends them. I remember reading of one who had a voracious appetite, that when he had meat laid on the coals to be broiled for him, he would snatch it up greedily, and eat the flesh and burning coals together. So some persons are set upon their lusts, though the coals of hell fire cleave to them. And if there was not a terrible Judge to punish them, they would create a hell to themselves by reflecting upon their sins, which will bring them torment and anguish, and horror for ever.

Thus from what I have spoken yon may see something of the doleful state that the enemies of God shall be cast into. And this may be a powerful persuasive to you to flee from the wrath to come, and to seek after the kingdom of heaven.

The sum of all is this; they are entirely and eternally miserable, they shall in hell be dead to all the joys and hopes of life; nay to all the

hopes of dying, but alive to all the agonies, to all the torments of death for ever.

XI. The Second Use. Learn the Vanity of this World.

We hence learn to understand this world with all its allurements: which can afford us no true content, as appears from the testimony of God, and the experience of man: nor is it of a permanent continuance. The sudden change that death makes will cause a quicker sense of misery in hell.

I Shall now pass on to the second use from this doctrine of the divine and blessed rest of the saints in the next world, which is this: from hence we may be instructed how to disparage this world with all its temptations, with all its allurements, whereby it deludes and destroys the souls of men.

There is a necessity to make use of the revelation of heaven and to compare this world with it, to take us off from its inviting efficacy; because that which diverts us from heaven, from seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness thereof is this world. This is the great temptation that the devil makes use of unto that end. And the world hath this advantage from its being present. It is the expression of the apostle, Gal. 1:4. "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." The world is that which we converse with, it is that which is hourly incumbent upon our senses. And so you shall find the force of that temptation upon Demas, the apostle puts it upon this, "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." And the great disadvantage that heaven has, is this, because it is a state that is future. And distance in time hath the same effect that distance in place hath. Distance in place makes objects of immense greatness as nothing to us; it lessens

the angles of the eye so, that stars of the first magnitude are but like glittering spangles and sparks of light, though one of them be sixty times bigger than the whole earth. Though heaven is so glorious a blessedness, yet men look upon it at a vast distance, and so it lessens their esteem of it. And though God hath made such a revelation of this blessed state, that if reason ruled us we should abhor all things in comparison of it; yet because it is not at hand, lower things prevail with men, which are visible to their senses.

Now I shall endeavour to make a right comparison between this world and this heavenly blessedness, and show you what heaven is, and by a just deduction, I shall show you that there is nothing but folly and madness, or something worse, that can possibly incline the heart of men to neglect heaven, and pursue the world. Let us but consider and compare heaven, this eternal rest I have been speaking of, and this world, in these two respects, and you shall see, if you put them in the balance of the sanctuary, how light this world is, and how that exceeding eternal weight of glory will turn the scales; and accordingly you shall choose and pursue the things above. Heaven I told you consists in two things, to sum up what I then spoke: it is a state of perfect satisfaction, and a state of eternal satisfaction. Psal. 17:15. "As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." What this likeness is, whether or no it be the essential glory of God, or whether it be that glory that eminently shines in the human nature of the Son of God, or whether it be that likeness of God, that shall appear in every saint, in every one of the blessed; take it as comprehending all these, "we shall be satisfied with God's likeness," in the next state, which is a state of true life; and in the eternal exercise of all the faculties of life. Now compare this world and heaven in both these respects, and you will see an infinite disproportion. First, for the world and all its offers to us cannot afford us true content: and, Secondly, if it could, we have no permanent continuance; and you shall see in both these respects how incomparably heaven exceeds it.

1. This world can afford us no true and perfect content. And for this we have both the testimony of God, and the universal testimony of mankind. We have God's testimony in his word; so that if you will believe him that knows what is in the creature, and that put into it all those degrees of comfort and goodness that are in it; if you believe him he tells you that all worldly things have but the appearance of happiness, 1 John 2:16. All that is in pleasure, riches, honour, is but vanity in masquerade, vanity gilded over with the appearance of happiness, and men are deceived with false titles and empty names. There is no such thing as true pleasure, true riches, and true honours in this world. These are too high titles for things below the moon; all the colour and false appearance of these things is maintained by those solecisms in language which are current in the world. We call them riches and pleasures and the like, but in truth they do not answer those names. Therefore the heart is still empty and full of anguish amidst all these things. Nay the very senses are not satisfied with them. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Eccl. 1:8. All this world cannot fill the emptiness of the eye, or the ear. Pray do but consider the wise and tender mercy of God to us, that he hath made these things, although necessary for the support of the present life, and some way refreshing and ornamental, yet nevertheless he hath not given them such a degree of good as shall satisfy the soul of man. What is the reason of it? It is his wise love. Wise love, that you may seek for happiness in himself. He hath declared what the world is, that you may not be deceived with it; he hath made it to be empty and unsatisfying, that you may seek for happiness in himself. I remember an observation of a philosopher, speaking of the wisdom and goodness of divine providence in making the winds in this natural world, that so they may be instrumental to men's discovery of foreign parts, that they may not be confined to the country where they are born.

The application is easy: the desires and affections in man are as the winds. God hath given you these desires to make you seek after heaven. The affections are given to us, that not being satisfied with this world, we may seek after the world that is future.

Now what the wise man saith concerning riches, is applicable to all other things in the world, "wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" Upon that which doth not answer the title of it? You may call it substance, but it will never satisfy you. Will you set your hearts upon the world, which can never answer your affections, that can never give you true and perfect joy, where you cannot obtain rest for your souls? This should make you to seek earnestly after the kingdom of heaven. It is true, if there were not a revelation made of this happiness, all the arguments that I shall use would be of no effect; if you were as the heathen world, upon whom, the Sun of Righteousness never rose, who never had a state of immortality and blessedness revealed to them. If you did think that because the soul and body are born together and live together, therefore they shall die together: that when one shall be resolved into the dust, the other shall vanish into the air; then it were wisdom for you to make the best of what you have at present. But when God hath promised us a heavenly and eternal rest, for a person to make the world his happiness, it is just as if a person should have the purest meats, and should choose to feed upon husks; or should pitch upon acorns, when he hath the choicest fruits of the earth to eat of.

Now to express this to you by a familiar and plain similitude, suppose that the moles, which are blind naturally, and never saw the light of the sun, nor the beauty of this visible world, if they keep their holes, and think there is no better state, and feed upon mean and bitter roots, and think there is no better food, you do not marvel at it. But if you see the birds of the air that behold the light of the sun, and feed upon sweet and pleasant fruits; if you should see them run into the holes and caves of the earth, you could not but wonder. If a heathen confine himself to the things of this lower world, and make them his happiness, he is like a blind mole that knows no better things to feed upon and delight himself with than these perishing pleasures. But for christians, those that pretend to believe and expect a heavenly eternal rest, that they should mind this world so as to neglect heaven; it is the most amazing prodigious folly. For both reason and sense tell them that this world cannot give them

true content. And we have the concurrent testimony both of God and man, for all persons must grant it, there is no true and perfect satisfaction here.

2. Suppose there were, there is no permanent continuance of it. It is an inseparable adjunct to all our enjoyments here, they are but temporal, they are but for a short space. For you are liable to one of these two things, either you shall have your end shortly, or they shall have their end. With reference to all you enjoy and possess, you shall have your end in dying; or your riches and enjoyments shall make themselves wings and fly away from you, before you leave the world. However, they shall not attend you one step beyond the grave, not one, not one moment beyond death.

Where sense is so convincing, one would think we should need no other argument to make us lay it to heart. 1 Cor. 7:31. "For the fashion of this world passeth away," where the apostle intimates the vanity of it, it is but a fashion, it is but a shadowy happiness, there is but a mere appearance. This fashion passeth away, and what should more cause our undervaluing of it than this? Suppose it were greater than it is in its own nature, yet if it be always in a fleeting posture, if the most substantial happiness here is but like a heap of snow before the heat of the sun, like a shadow that flies away at noon-day-light. If it be but the shadow of a shadow, or less, if one would speak any thing more diminutively; how great a folly is it to set our hearts upon it? Of Christ's kingdom it is said there shall be no end; but this world is always in a flux, always lapsing, and tending towards its period.

I remember Seneca speaking of his master Attalus, that which cured him of the inordinate love of the world, was the sight of the triumphs of Rome, where there was all the magnificence, and splendour, and grandeur of the world made most conspicuous: after he had stood some hours in seeing all, saith he, 'I have seen all this pomp and magnificence put in such order, and passing slowly along, yet it is all gone; and why should I esteem and love this which is so transient and momentary? Why are we struck with wonder and amazement at

this? It is but a vain pomp, and passeth away; the scripture tells us so, "the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever." 1 John 2:17.

Let me tell you further, upon this account that is so short, and an eternal state follows it, that there is no such unhappy person in the world, as he that is happy here, because of the sudden change that death shall make in him from his present pleasure to everlasting misery. This is that which will double his misery.

As I remember it is an observation of physicians, that there is nothing more destructive to health than the sudden change of the seasons, when we pass from extreme cold to extreme heat. O the sudden change from the pleasures of this world to everlasting torment, will double the misery. Remember when you live in the world, shining in pomp, and flowing in pleasures, and enjoy the greatest prosperity, and have the strongest bodies, and the firmest health, you may be struck with death suddenly; but suppose you do not die suddenly, but have the preface of a sickness before your dissolution; yet when the physician comes and speaks but a few words of some cold hope, that there is only some possibility of your recovery, it is like the sentence of death to you. But when you are ready to depart, and your soul sits trembling upon your lips, and you are ready to take your flight, you have nothing to pitch upon but heaven or hell. Now since this world is so shadowy and short an enjoyment, shall this take you off from seeking heaven? One would think it impossible that the reasonable creature should be guilty of such folly. Bring this down to yourselves, if this world is that which makes us neglect heaven, let us learn to disparage this world, by comparing it with the eternal world, that so we may seek the things that are above.

XII. The Third Use. The Hope of this Rest Should Fortify us Against Present Afflictions

This rest should fortify us against all the afflictions of this present life, whether they be chastisements, or persecutions.

SINCE there is a divine and blessed rest hereafter for the saints of God, it should fortify us against all those afflictions and calamities that befall us in this present world; First, against all those afflictions that befall us as chastisements from God, those which are designed for preparing us for this blessed rest, and these are most usual. And Secondly, those afflictions which we suffer for righteousness sake.

1. Those afflictions that are chastisements of us not for righteousness sake, but with respect to sin. There are two considerations which will render them tolerable to us: (1.) Consider they come from the love of God, though that love be displeased. Rev. 1:17. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." O it is a dreadful state, when God doth take away his rod from a person, as one that is incorrigible! if God once say, "why should they be smitten any more, they will revolt more and more?" It is the most terrible word next to that of, "go ye cursed." But when God doth afflict in order to make us better, when he doth correct us for our good, O this sweetens the cup. When I have this argument, I am part of God's paternal care, and under his gracious providence, that he doth not leave me unchastised in sin. But which is more particularly to my purpose, because these chastisements are in order to an eternal rest, they are to purify us, and to prepare us for that rest. When he is pleased to put his people into the fire, it is to refine them, and burn up their dross; it is to make his image more bright and shining upon them, and that is the principal cause; I speak with reference to God, it is his love, though displeased that afflicts them. So then the issue of all, shall be the eternal enjoyment of God in heaven, how should this make God's people willing to bear his present displeasure, when God's rod is upon his children; it is

more powerful to convince them, for thereby he makes them sensible of the evil of sin, which only can bar their entrance into heaven; he takes their hearts off this world, which would turn them from heaven. When you are under the sharpest afflictions, you may comfort yourselves with this, that there is a blessed repose in the bosom of God, when you shall enjoy his favour without eclipse or interruption. I speak this to the people of God that labour to have his chastisements sanctified and effectual upon them. The very belief of this is able to sweeten all the afflictions that we can meet with here. It is an expression of the apostle; "rejoicing in hope." Rom. 15:13. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

2. Especially those sufferings that are endured for righteousness sake, are not only made tolerable, but easy and amiable to us. I shall tell you that which at first you may think a paradox, but is an eternal truth; he is the happiest man in the world that suffers most for God, and receives least of his reward here: because of the degrees of glory that are reserved for such a one hereafter, which shall infinitely recompense all that he suffereth here. There are two scriptures that I shall set before you for this purpose. Rom. 8:18. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." "For I reckon," as if he had said, I have made a strict search into it, I have thoroughly examined the matter, I have, upon a just computation of the future glory, found that it is incomparably above our present sufferings. Who is it that saith this? It is the most afflicted person in the world, and one that had such a sight of heaven while he was here, that he did, as it were walk by sight. As the Israelites sent spies into the land of Canaan, to give them an account of the fruitfulness of that good land; so Paul was as it were, sent from earth to heaven to discover it, and give us an account of it. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us." All the sufferings of this life are moderated and allayed by the sense of God's favour to his people, and they are all but for a time. Therefore you find Paul instancing in this very case, 2 Cor. 4:17. "for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Where you see the opposition is made both in the degree and duration of those things. All the afflictions of this world they are but light and momentary; but it is an eternal weight of glory. And will not infinite and eternal glory support us under short and light afflictions? I know many times they are very heavy to sense, and very afflictive. But then faith and hope represent to the soul, and give assurance of this eternal rest, which is a great support to the soul. The more tempestuous the sea is, the more sweet will heaven be. Therefore comfort yourselves under all your afflictions that you suffer for Christ's sake.

XIII. The fourth use. This rest affords consolation to the saints in their conflict with death.

This rest affords strong consolation to the saints in their conflict with death. Death considered as it either affects nature, or is an inlet to heaven. The saints must undergo it, that the relics of sin may be extinguished; as a means to bring them to glory; because they must run the race before they have the prize; that there may be a distinction between the present and future state; that divine power may be glorified in their resurrection. A threefold temper of spirit with which a saint should die; with submission to the will of God, with joy from a consciousness of his own sincerity, and a prospect of heaven. It is very dishonourable for a saint to be unwilling to die; it argues a great defect in his faith and love, and too great a value for this world.

IF there be a blessed rest remaining for the saints in the next world, this will afford strong consolation in their conflict with death, that universal enemy of mankind. For this is now by a merciful providence of God appointed to be a means of conveying them to the

possession of this rest. Therefore the saints should meet death, not only without those terrors and fears which naturally we are liable to upon that account, but with joyful affections, as the psalmist said, "I was glad when they said, let us go up to the house of the Lord." So when the compassionate call of God by death shall sound in the ears of a christian, that he should come up to this rest, he should receive that call with joy.

It is otherwise with wicked men; to them death is (and ought to be) the king of terrors. And in truth it is the saddest sight in the world, when one who hath lived a careless life, neglecting God and his soul: when such a one dies with the same indifference as if he was going to sleep, without any solicitousness or concernment about his future state. It is often thus, that an affected security in this life is punished with an inflicted security at death. It is often so that the sinner goes from an inward darkness to outer darkness.

On the other side it is sad to see an awakened and terrified sinner die; when one that hath lived in a course of sin, and God by the cold hands of death attacks, and seizes upon him to bring him to judgment; and conscience begins to take courage, and speak to the sinner, and tell him what his state is; and his fear presently turns into despair. This is a most dreadful sight, to see a man that hath lived as if he should never die, to die without any hope of living in another world.

But to see one that hath been a sincere servant of God, one that hath lived a life of holiness, to see this person joyful upon a death bed: when the fainting flesh sinks under the weight of a disease, to see the soul supported and raised with the blessed hopes of heaven, it is certainly the most comfortable sight in the world. Nothing is so honourable to religion; nothing so encouraging and consolatory to those that are round about such a person; nothing so much discovers the power of godliness as to see a servant of God not only die in peace, but to die in triumph. As I remember Bernard tells us of his brother, I was called (saith he) to see a miracle, to see a man

triumphing in death, and over death. O this is that which makes religion to be so valuable. This is that which is the way to convert sinners indeed.

To improve this part of the application, I will, First, show how we are to consider death; Secondly, upon what account this dispensation is continued to the saints, that they cannot obtain heaven but by dying; Thirdly, with what frame and temper of mind it becomes them to receive death; Fourthly, how dishonourable a thing it is for the people of God to be unwilling to die.

1. Show how we are to consider death. Death may be considered two ways (1.) as it affects nature, as it dissolves the vital intimate union between soul and body, and separates those near and dear friends; so it hath an aspect that is displeasing to us. Considered thus in itself, death is so far from being an object of ones desire, that our blessed Saviour who was a person holy, harmless, undefiled, who never had an irregular passion, yet when he drew near to death, he prayed, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me." There was an aversion to death in the human soul of Christ. You must understand it thus: his death was attended with all those circumstances, that made it truly formidable. Take an instance in one of the holiest persons that ever was in the world, and that is Paul, 2 Cor. 5:4. after he had expressed his desire to be in heaven, "for in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." In the fourth verse he tells us, "for we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." If it were possible, and if it were matter of a lawful wish, a saint would not desire to be unclothed, but have this body of flesh changed into an immortal body. But if heaven be obtained by dying, if God will take off this vile garment of flesh, that he may put the royal robe upon us, we must be willing to be unclothed.

(2.) Consider death as a means to bring us to everlasting blessedness: so it is the proper object of our desire. Phil. 1:23. "Having a desire to

depart and be with Christ which is far better; yet nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." I desire to depart, at my being present in the body, implies being absent from the Lord. So the apostle desired to be divested of this body that he might see Christ face to face. Though all the saints of God have not such wings of fire as the apostle had, such ardent affections to be with Christ, yet where there is a renewed nature, there will be a tendency and an inclination towards it, that so they may be with God and Christ which is far better, and in this respect the nature of death is changed to the people of God. It is an enemy to nature; but considered by this merciful order of the divine providence, as it is a means to bring us to heaven, so it is reconciled to us. Prov. 14. "If a man's ways please the Lord, he will make his enemies to be at peace with him." So if your ways please him, he will make death, your last enemy to be a friend to you; and it will be the best and most blessed friend to remove us from this sinful world to the enjoyment of the most holy and blessed God. 1 Cor. 3:22, 23. "All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's." Where you have the scale of subordination the gospel makes; Christ is God's, and you are Christ's, and all things are yours.

There is such an intimate union between God and Christ, and Christ and believers, that all is theirs, whether life or death; death is for their advantage: Phil. 1:21. "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" but to a carnal man, death is the greatest loss, he loseth all his good things in this world, and his hopes of all good in the next. He loseth whatsoever he values here, and what is valuable in the next life. Death is to a carnal man a fiery stinging serpent, it wounds him and delivers him to eternal death. But to a saint death is an advantage, it brings him to the enjoyment of God, and the blessed spirits above. And further there is an expression, that is most remarkable to this purpose, to show that the nature of death is changed to a believer, that which in itself is the doom of the law and curse and punishment of sin, yet the death of a saint is of most precious account in God's sight; Psal. 116:15. "precious in the sight of

the Lord is the death of his saints." God never looks upon his people with a more tender compassionate eye, than in a dying hour: suppose their death be attended with all the circumstances of ignominy and scorn, and contumely in the world, it is most precious to him.

Now if it be said, if this be necessary in order to the making of death desirable to us, what is the reason that God doth by dying bring the saints to heaven? he could if he pleased, change all, as those that shall be found alive at the coming of Christ at the last; God could, if he pleased change them by his infinite power, and give them a blessed immortality instead of death. This leads me to remark,

2. What is the reason of this dispensation, why death is continued to the saints? For these reasons.

(1.) God is pleased to continue death in the world to saints and believers, because by this he would extinguish all the relics of sin; which are principally seated in the carnal and sensitive faculties. Death is a mark of God's displeasure against sin, and he continues it so to be to the end of the world to all his people, that he may make death instrumental to abolish sin, that so no root or fibre of it shall remain. It is true, God could abolish it by his infinite power immediately; but he doth it this way to declare what an evil thing sin is. As soon as the soul is separated from the body it is presently freed from all the taint and defilement of sin (I speak now of the saints.) The body indeed falls to the grave, and God will at last recompose that in honour and glory, and in a state of perfect purity. But this way he hath chosen to extinguish the relics of sin by death. Suppose that a piece of plate be battered and soiled extremely, so that neither the fashion nor the lustre of it remains, a goldsmith will melt this down and put it into a new figure and form. Thus it is with the body of a saint, it is like a piece of plate soiled and battered by sin, and God melts it down in order to its being refined and made meet for a glorious state.

(2.) Death is a means to bring us to glory; it is the way that our Saviour went in before us; he ascended into heaven by the grave, and is an example of our glorification; "our vile body shall be changed by Christ," that it may be "fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." Phil. 3:21. We must be the food of worms, and lie in that place which is called the land of forgetfulness. When our Redeemer ascended into heaven, he took the grave in his way; and he hath perfumed the grave, and made it a bed of rest to his people.

(3.) Another reason why death is continued to the saints, is, because this is the order of the divine wisdom in the gospel, that none should receive the prize but those that run the race. Therefore till we have run that race that is set before us by our dying, which is the accomplishment of it, we have not a right to the crown. "None are crowned," saith the apostle, "but those that strive lawfully;" and in our encountering death, the last enemy, we declare our love to God: for "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." And till we overcome death we are not qualified for the crown of righteousness, life, and glory: therefore God dispenseth his reward after we have persevered in his service. For he hath chose this way to give heaven to us. Although it is a most free favour and gift of his love, and the richest liberality of his hand; yet it is after we have glorified him by perseverance, and that dying as well as living.

(4.) God continues this dispensation to the saints that they shall come to heaven by death; that he may distinguish between the present state and the future. If every saint and holy man should be glorified after such a term of years and ascend to heaven as our Saviour did, we should not then walk by faith, but by sight; and so there would be no distinction between this and the next state. It is ordered by God in the gospel, that we should live by faith. God is therefore pleased to reserve that glory for the saints in the other world, and they must pass to it by dying. He will try their faith, and exercise their reason too, whether they will believe him upon his promise.

(5.) Another reason why God continues death to the saints in all ages is for the greater glorification of his power in raising their dead bodies at the last day; when all that have lain in their repositories for so many ages; all the saints whose bodies have been resolved into their elements, and scattered abroad, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, shall all be re-animated and reunited to their souls, and made possessors of God for ever. The resurrection of the body is a miracle almost equal to the creation; for it is the raising a glorious body out of matter most unprepared and indisposed. The apostle tells us, our Saviour shall come to be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," 2 Thes. 1:10. the angels themselves will then be struck with a noble wonder, to see springing out of the dust innumerable glorified bodies. So when the apostle speaks concerning the resurrection of the just, Phil. 3:21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of his mighty power, where-by he his able even to subdue all things to himself." With what an emphasis doth he speak of the divine power that shall raise our bodies? Thus I have opened to you the reasons why God is pleased by dying to bring his saints to their everlasting rest.

3. Let us now see with what temper and frame of spirit it becomes the people of God to leave this world. There are three things to which I shall advert.

(1.) That which is the lowest degree of grace is this, a saint should die with submission to the will of God, with an acquiescence in the will of his Father. There may be some stormy affections in our nature, considering death as a natural evil; yet nevertheless, when we consider it is God that gave life and it is God that takes away life, our death should be with resignation and yielding up ourselves to God. Observe that most passionate story concerning Abraham's offering up Isaac. He was commanded to sacrifice his son. Consider what a hard work it was for Abraham to offer up his son, and for his son to be offered up. Yet we do not read of the least reluctancy either in Abraham or Isaac; for there was a superior consideration both in the

one and in the other, that silenced all the motions of nature. Abraham complies with God, and Isaac readily yields up himself to be sacrificed by his father. When God signifies his will to us, that we must die, whatever are the next causes of it, they are but instrumental to his providence, and therefore it becomes us, with the greatest willingness, to resign up ourselves to God. Indeed when a wicked man dies, his soul is often rent from him by an act of violence and force. O how unwillingly doth he go! for what is the hope of the hypocrite, when God shall take away his soul; that is, take it away by storm. But a gracious person should deliver up his soul to God. "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." How voluntarily doth he commend and resign up his soul to God! if you should say it is true, I am willing to yield up my soul to God, but I am afraid to die: many of the most holy servants of God are most sensible, even in a sorrowful manner, of their appearance before the great tribunal, and the account they are to give to the Father of spirits; and this makes them unwilling to die. To that I shall only say thus much; it is a very sad case, though the soul is safe as to its eternal interest, if there be an uncomfortable apprehension of our being in danger, yet even then it is the duty of the creature to submit. This is a duty that must never be violated. You may pray indeed with earnestness, as David, "O spare me a little that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Psal. 39:13. And this is becoming the servants of God. But if God by his providence show it his will they should die, submission to his decreeing providence is entirely their duty; and this is the lowest step that we can go.

(2.) To ascend higher; it becomes a saint to receive death not only patiently, but joyfully, as it is that which shall bring him to the sight of God, to the perfect love of God, to the enjoyment of the blessed society above: I say a saint should receive death joyfully. It is that which is the end of his faith, and of his hope; and that which if he be a true saint, hath been the supreme object of his desire, for in truth, no man can pray in sincerity, "thy will be done and thy kingdom come," but in that very petition, he desires God to fit him for heaven,

and to take him to it. Therefore he should receive death joyfully when ever it comes. We read in the 42 psalm, a very passionate expression of David, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before thee?" He was then banished from the tabernacle. How much greater reason have we to say, O when shall I appear before God in his temple above, and see his unveiled glory, and love him as much as I am capable of loving? O consider when the body dies, the soul is not oppressed in its ruins, but is delivered by it. The soul hath an immediate entrance into glory, and a full possession of the kingdom prepared for it. And O the joyful reception that the holy soul hath when it comes to heaven. Therefore with what joy should it go thither: it is welcomed by its God and Jesus Christ, the fruition of whom is its blessedness for ever. Christ will pronounce the blessed sentence and say, "Well done good and faithful servant enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," O what an ecstasy will a holy soul be in when it hears those life-breathing words from the mouth of Christ! All the angels and saints above, have, as it were, an overflowing joy, when the people of God are brought safe to the everlasting kingdom. You know when there is a great fleet of ships, that are all designed for one harbour and port, some come in before the other into the harbour; how do they welcome the rest that come after! What expressions of joy, what caressing and feasting between friends, when they are safely arrived in the same harbour! This is a little emblem of the joy that is above. With what triumphant joy do the saints welcome one another after they are passed through these dangerous seas, the troubles and temptations of this wicked world, and are arrived safe to the bosom of God. But you will say there are many of the people of God, that do not feel this joy when they come to die. I answer it is their own fault. They do not only lose a privilege, but they neglect a duty. It may be, that they have not lived with that holy care, and circumspection, and accuracy as becomes those that made it their business to finish their course with joy. Yet nevertheless the saints of God, where there is true grace, though they may experience fears, and doubts, and troubles, yet their happiness is secured. It is with them as it is many times with a setting sun, that is obscured with thick vapours; but it ariseth in the morning in a

beautiful horizon. So many a saint may set in a cloud, and be afraid of appearing before God; but when they come into the other world, they are received with joy and triumph. We should labour so to live, that we may die joyfully. There are two things which are causes of joy to the dying saints.

1st, A reflection upon a life sincerely spent in the service of God, though attended with infirmities and failings. For thus saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 1:22. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God we have had our conversation in the world." The reflection upon a life that hath been pleasing to God in the main course of it, and a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, O it makes death desirable, it makes a man joyful in death. And this joyful reflection upon our past works, is an imitation of God. For when God looked back upon his works of creation, and saw that they were all very good, he rejoiced in them, he delighted in the review of them; then he appointed a sabbath, and a day of rest, so when a christian looks back upon a life regulated by the gospel according to that acceptance that God declareth there; O the peace and joy that is in the soul!

2dly, Another cause of a christian's joy in death, is the prospect of eternal blessedness that is before him: it was the saying of a holy man in a dying hour, there is no man can overcome death, but he that looks beyond death. Now a christian by faith looks through the dark cloud; he sees that when the natural life shall be extinguished, the spiritual life shall come to its perfection. This prospect makes the saints joyful. I read of the famous astronomer Hipparchus, one speaks in praise and admiration of him; O the divine wisdom of Hipparchus, he freed the world from a double darkness and inconvenience, of ignorance and fear, when he discovered the causes of the eclipses. For the people thought that they should lose the sun and moon when there was an eclipse of them. Thus death is an eclipse; it eclipseth this natural life for a time: but he that hath an enlightened faith and hope of an eternal rest, knows a better life shall

be restored to the body, and the soul shall enter immediately into the possession of eternal life. Therefore although the body of a saint may sigh and groan for the pangs and agonies it endures in a dying hour, yet he can rejoice and lift up his head, because the day of his redemption draws nigh.

(3.) It becomes a saint not only to die joyfully, but thankfully, with solemn praises to God that he will be pleased to take him to himself. "Father I will, saith Christ, that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." This may make a saint to die triumphantly, considering that divine grace hath made him persevere to the end. For perseverance is that which qualifies him for heaven, and entitles him to it by the promise, "Those that patiently continue in well-doing, shall have honour, glory, immortality, and eternal life." O with what thankfulness should a saint of God leave the world, seeing God hath pleased to fortify his spirit against all those temptations that have ruined so many souls, and to keep his love alive acting and governing in the breast of a saint, and that he is pleased to take him immediately to himself. A saint should die with hymns of praise in his mouth, and begin his heaven here. It is observed, that when great rivers near the sea break forth and overflow the banks, the sea meets them and mixeth with them: so when a saint ascends to heaven, many times it descends to him and refresheth him in his dying agonies. A dying saint should begin the work of praise here, that shall be his employment and blessedness for ever. We are never more indebted to God, than when we come to die. When he hath carried us through a sinful tempting world, and hath conveyed us safe to eternal felicity.

Thus I have shown you how it becomes a saint of God to die. O that you would labour so to die, for it will be your unspeakable advantage. I am sure you will be of my mind then, unless you are under a fatal stupidity, and a damnable delusion. You will wish you had prepared yourselves to die comfortably. O that we could despise all the terrors and allurements of this world, that we may die a happy death!

4. I shall show you how dishonourable a thing it is for the people of God to be unwilling to die; how it doth reflect upon them and argues that which should be matter of continual sorrow and grief.

(1.) It argues a strange defect in his faith. We have a double apprehension of death, the apprehension of nature, and the apprehension of faith. Indeed in the apprehension of nature, there is nothing to sweeten it, considering it in itself. He that looks upon a dying or dead person merely with a carnal eye, will see matter enough of dread; to behold a body labouring under agonies, and either painful or languishing distempers; to see it, as we read of the possessed person in the gospel, sometimes cast into the fire, and sometimes into the water; sometimes it may be in a burning fever, and sometimes in a cold sweat; here is nothing to make it desirable. To see a dead body, pale, cold and stiff, without motion or life, this is still matter of terror. But if you look upon it with the apprehension of faith, it gives you another prospect of it. For death is that which is ordained by the Father of mercies, to put us into a state beyond dying. In the apprehension of faith, death is so far from wanting consolation, that it is the greatest consolation in the world to a believer, because faith tells him that after death we shall sin no more; weep no more; and be above all afflicting evils. Faith assures a believer that his soul shall immediately enter upon a blessed immortality as soon as he leaves the body. It shall be transported by a guard of angels, those immortal warriors, through the devil's kingdom, safely to eternal rest. And for the body that indeed falls to the dust; but faith assures me, that this shall be transformed and made like unto Christ's glorious body, and shall be re-united to the soul, and be its consort in everlasting happiness.

We read in the book of Leviticus, concerning the house that was infected with the fretting leprosy, God ordered that it should be pulled to pieces and demolished: and we read of the order of God concerning the tabernacle, that it should be taken down when it was to be removed. Now the death of the wicked man, and the saint may be compared to these two, as to the difference of them. When a

wicked man dies, his body is like the house infected with the leprosy, all the parts of it, after being pulled down are thrown into ruins and rubbish with execration. But when a saint dies, his body is taken down as the tabernacle was, with a great deal of care, to be preserved till it be raised a glorious temple, for the Spirit to dwell in for ever. Now since faith giveth us an assurance of these things what a dishonour is it to a christian, that he should be unwilling to die. We read of the disciples, that when our Lord came unto them upon the waters, they said it is a spectre, it is a spirit: they could not bear the apparition: but our Saviour said unto them, "Be not afraid it is I;" It is I that am your merciful Saviour. A strange thing that we should be afraid of death! It is Christ that comes by death to take us to himself. The reason why a saint dies, is this, because Christ will have those souls, which cost him so dear, to reign with him in glory above, that he may obtain his purchased possession. Do but then consider with yourselves, how dishonourable it is to a christian, one that hath made it his business and work to glorify and please God; what a shame it is to be unwilling to die! It argues as if there were some relics of infidelity in him too powerful for his faith. Is it not a shame to a christian to read what is reported concerning a philosopher among the heathens, when Antigonus the emperor threatened to put the philosopher to death; threaten this, said he, to your insolent courtiers, that are softened with sensuality, for I am prepared for death. Is it not a shame to a christian that he should not be above the fear of death, when a heathen philosopher speaks thus with courage and bravery, unmoved at the threatenings of it? What a shame it is for a christian to be afraid of death, when God hath given him assurance, that there is eternal rest above.

(2.) It argues the coldness of our love to God and Christ. Love is an affection of union; it is that which is always aspiring and acting in desire, after the full fruition of the person beloved. And if there be the least degree of holy love in the soul, it is that which causeth it to ascend in its desires towards God, to be with him. You know as soon as the fire is kindled, the sparks will be ascending, and the flame arising; so where there is a sincere love to God and Christ, it is

always in a tendency and inclination towards him. Therefore in the New Testament you have this as the universal common character of christians, they are those that, "Love the appearance of Christ." This is their character. And pray do but consider how this coldness of our love that I am now speaking of, is aggravated upon one account: our Saviour had such a love for us, that he left the bosom of his Father, the throne of his glory, and descended into this lower state of misery for us, that he might redeem us from iniquity, and recover us from our lost and undone condition. And shall not our love make us willing to ascend to him where we enjoy him in glory? When the soul is divorced from the body it is immediately united to Christ, married to him for ever? Shall we not be willing to leave this world, that we may be united to him that loveth us? How can we pretend to the love of Christ, and not have this inseparable effect of it, earnest desires to be with him? Certainly this consideration should make us ashamed, that we live so patiently in this world, that we are not always under earnest longings and languishings to be with Christ above, that he may "Kiss us with the kisses of his mouth, whose love is better than wine;" and that we may enjoy his love which is infinitely sweeter than all the festival entertainments of this world. Did the love of Christ make him willing to come from heaven to earth to suffer for us; and shall not our love make us willing to ascend to heaven to reign with him? I know what I am now speaking, does no more affect a carnal heart, than if I were offering him a stone for food. But I speak to those that have this holy fire in their breasts, and that sincerely love Christ. Methinks it should make us ashamed, to be indifferent whether we continue still in the world, or go to heaven.

(3.) It argues too great an attachment to the world; and how dishonourable is this to the christian. As if his heart were glued to these things; as if they were his chief happiness! I do not wonder if I see a carnal man that is rich and lives in pleasure, if he be unwilling to die. What our Saviour tells of the young man in the gospel, is true of such, "He went away sorrowful from Christ, for he had great possessions." For such a man to leave the world sorrowful, that hath his heart here, and his happiness here, I do not wonder at it. It is a

bad exchange that such a one makes. But for the man that hath a title to an eternal kingdom, to be unwilling to die and leave this world, surely argues a great degree of carnality in his breast, that he should be so taken with these trifles of time, these empty vanities, and that he should be so unwilling to go to that place, where there is the only true treasure, and the only true pleasure and delight, and perfect satisfaction!

Consider how very dishonourable it is for a christian to be unwilling to die, therefore let us labour constantly to conquer this aversion to death, this fear of it; the truth of it is, there is no excuse that a holy man can bring for his unwillingness to die; but indeed the very excuse increases the fault. If you say you are not yet prepared to die, therefore you fear death; it is your own fault that you are not every day prepared, seeing there is a strict and peremptory command of Christ to partake of the symbolical representation of his sufferings, if you neglect to come, and say, you are not prepared; why are you not? It is a guilty neglect of your souls that you are not prepared for this blessed ordinance. It is not your pretence of unpreparedness will free you, if you neglect and disobey this charge and command of your heavenly Father. So if you are unwilling to die and unprepared it is your fault that you are not ready for death. All those that are united to Christ and have an interest in him, and have mortified their lusts, O let them not be unwilling to die. Indeed many of those that walk holily and humbly, and are conscientious christians, are many times afraid to die; I do not deny this. Sometimes it is with them in reference to the fears of death, as it is with one that hath wasps humming about him that have lost their sting; they may terrify him but cannot hurt him. Death to a saint is like a wasp that hath lost its sting, it may make a humming noise about him, it may raise trouble and fear in him for a time, but cannot really hurt him. Now to such I shall only say this; where there is a sincere humble soul, that hath made it its business to please God, although many infirmities and many sins have attended his performances (which the best saints are guilty of) nevertheless do but consider, what the gospel saith concerning our Saviour, it tells you he is your Judge; he that valued

you so much as to give his life for you; he is your Judge; your Advocate is to pass sentence; and shall we not be willing to appear before him that is our Saviour? Shall not the ransomed with joy give up themselves to their Redeemer?

It is a terrible consideration to appear before an infinite God, but this is a comfortable consideration, that his goodness is answerable to his greatness. That I may allude to that scripture, that respects the saints coming to the throne of grace, saith the apostle, "Let us come boldly to the throne of grace," Heb. 4:16. So I may say, let a saint go boldly to a throne of glory; with boldness, calmness, and joy let the saints deliver their souls up to Christ!

XIV. The Fifth Use. The Subject Affords Comfort in the Death of Holy Friends

This affords comfort in the death of holy friends.

THE next use of the point is this; if there be an eternal rest remaining for the people of God, then this affords us solid comfort in the death of our dearest friends who die in the Lord, and who are ascended to enjoy this rest. It is one of the tenderest trials in the world, when God takes from us our dear relations and beloved friends. There is nothing more affects humanity, nothing more wounding, than when those we value, love, and esteem, and delight in are taken from us. Now the apostle gives this direction, 1 Thes. 4:13. "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you sorrow not even as others which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Indeed for the heathen, that looks upon death as a gulph that swallows a man for ever, there might be sorrow to part with their dearest relatives; but for the saints that believe an eternal state, and have a well-

grounded hope that those that are near them, either in consanguinity or affection, are removed from this land of darkness to the inheritance of the saints in light; they should not be dejected, nor overwhelmed with sorrow.

A dying believer should speak to his friends, as Christ did to his disciples, "If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I am going to my heavenly Father." They are going to a place where they shall never be in danger of losing God, or their souls. We should refresh ourselves with consideration: though our departed friends are dead to us, they are alive to God in their better part; they are now infinitely and eternally happy. I shall apply by way of illustration for this part of the argument, that which we read concerning Jacob and Joseph; Jacob, you know, was overwhelmed with sorrow at the apprehension of Joseph's death; when he saw Joseph's garment torn and covered with blood, Gen. 37:33. he said, "It is my son's coat, an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph without doubt is rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days." He thought a wild beast had devoured him, when at the same time, Joseph, the beloved son of his father, was seated next to the throne of Pharaoh in the rich kingdom of Egypt, and made governor of the land. We are wounded many times by the apprehension that our deceased friends are torn in pieces by death, this fills the channel always with new sorrow, when we reflect upon it. But remember, if they were saints they are reigning in a better kingdom than that of this world. Your holy friends, you mourn for them as if they were torn in pieces by death, when they are reigning at God's right hand; "In whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand, there are pleasures for evermore." Therefore dry up this current of tears that you shed for the departed servants of God.

XV. The Sixth Use. Exhortation to Prepare for this Rest.

Exhortation to prepare for this rest. General rules for it; to purify ourselves more and more, and perfect holiness in the fear of God; whereby our title will be clearer, and our assurance more joyful. Special rules, to fix our choice on this eternal rest as our portion; frequently and seriously think upon it; keep up earnest desires after it, and a lively hope of it; and strictly observe the Lord's Day.

BY the way of exhortation to you all, to prepare for this eternal rest. It is at a distance from us, though the distance be but small from many of us. And there is a great deal of difficulty attending it; but the excellency and the glory of it is that which will justify our greatest pains and diligence in labouring for it. It is our Saviour's counsel, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you," Mat. 6:33. Therefore seek it first. As we read the first part of God's creation was a heaven, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." An empyreal heaven, the heaven of heavens was the first part of God's creation. And as it was the first part of God's work, so let it be the first part of our work to obtain a title to it, and be qualified for it. Thus saith the apostle Paul, Phil. 3:13, 14. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting, those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "I press towards the mark;" what vehement contention and earnestness do these words signify? So the apostle, 1 Tim. 6:19. "Charge those that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all thing to enjoy, and that they do good, and be rich in good works, &c. laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." And our Saviour tells us, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." All these scriptures

I adduce to show you, with what vigour, and diligence, and zeal, you should labour for an eternal rest.

Now in the management of this,

I. I shall lay down some general rules how you should prepare for an eternal rest.

II. Then some special rules for the government and conduct of yourselves for the obtaining of it.

1. The first general rule is this in order to your preparation for this eternal rest: let it be your constant care to purify yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7:1. saith the apostle, "Having therefore these promises; dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." What is that promise? It is this in the 18th verse of the last chapter, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." O cleanse yourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit. Under the law no person was permitted to enter into the tabernacle but those that were legally cleansed. He that should go to sacrifice with his legal uncleanness died for it. O consider what is that legal uncleanness to the uncleanness of sin? What is the touching of a dead body? What is this? It hath no guilt in itself, no moral turpitude in it. God for wise reasons enjoined it, and expected obedience to it, that a man that was thus typically unclean should not enter into the tabernacle. But O consider, one that hath the uncleanness of sin shall not enter into the temple above, he must be purified. Thus saith the psalmist, "I will wash my hands in innocency, and compass thine altar, O Lord." He speaks of the material altar; how much more should we be pure, holy, and undefiled, if we enter into the tabernacle above? We read in the book of Esther, 2 chap. 12. "Of the virgins that were prepared twelve months for king Ahasuerus." The time that we are in this world is but as it were the months of our purification for the cleansing us from sin, that we may be fit for heaven. Let it be your constant serious

work to be cleansing yourselves, and purifying your hearts, Jam. 4:8. saith the apostle, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." If you would have God draw near to you, and if you would draw near to God, you must cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts; you must not only be free from sins of crimson guilt, that natural conscience will take fire at; but you must be cleansed from all inward affection to sin, if you will appear before God here; much more if you will appear before him above: 1 John 3:3. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." There cannot be a rational hope of heaven without purification: because the promise that doth secure heaven to the saints, hath always this condition with it, only those that are holy shall see God. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see Gad." There cannot be a well-grounded hope of heaven without purification. And because every day we are so apt to contract defilement, let us purify and cleanse ourselves every day by the application of the blood of Christ, and watch over ourselves, that not so much as a vain thought, or an irregular action be allowed by us. We must be always cleansing ourselves, John 13:4. it is said, "Our Saviour arose from supper and laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bason, and began to wash his disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter, and Peter said unto him, thou shalt never wash my feet; Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou shalt no pert with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head: Jesus saith unto him, he that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." These words are an allusion to the fashion of the country where they walked in sandals, and their feet were apt to contract soil; and when they came to any house this was part of their entertainment to wash their feet. The moral is this, he that is sanctified by the Spirit of God and purified, needs not such a change as one that is unconverted, but every day he contracts defilement, and therefore needs to wash himself every day with the blood of

Christ. We should use a strict care and regard to ourselves, for we contract defilement every day while we are in this world: that part of holiness called mortification is to be carried on continually, lest sins and lusts cleave to us. We should never cease carrying on this blessed work till it come to perfection, because it is a necessary preparation to our living with God above. There is no unclean thing shall ever enter into the New Jerusalem. We must therefore so labour to live, that when we come to die, "We may be found of God in peace, without spot, and blameless," without the least rebellious affection against him. This is that which will make death comfortable, and will cause us to triumph over it with the blessed apostle, 1 Cor. 15:55. "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If sin be pardoned and mortified, death hath lost its sting. Therefore I beseech you, let this be your constant work, to be purifying yourselves from all hypocrisy and all carnality, and all kinds and degrees of sin, and to attain to an unspotted holiness here.

2. To cleansing from sin, add the positive duty of perfecting holiness in the fear of God: every day be aspiring after a complete conformity to God, and obedience to him, and to his holy will. This is always in conjunction with the former. The crucifying of the body of sin, and the quickening and vigour of the new man are inseparable. For sin is crucified by the power of grace, and by the vigorous actings of it. So that we must labour that every grace (so far as is possible for us) may receive its consummate degree here; not only that it be in us in truth, but in a degree of eminency, and to exercise those graces for the glory of God. The holy apostle doth make this inference that I am now speaking of, when he had been speaking of the glory of the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. ult. "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labour is not in vain in the Lord." This abounding in the work of the Lord is according to the sphere and compass wherein we are placed. We must always be diligent, active and zealous in the service of God; we must neither abuse our talents,

nor neglect them, but be always improving them for the glory of God, and the good of our own souls, and the souls of others; and this, that we may be the more prepared for the eternal rest. And I would have you consider, that there is not the meanest christian, that is of the lowest rank, and of the smallest account in the world, but may abound in the work of the Lord according to these circumstances, and that place wherein he is, and may glorify God eminently. I remember it is the exhortation of the apostle, and it is worthy your notice, speaking concerning servants, Titus 2:9. "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering them again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Servants then were slaves, in the lowest degree of bondage, comparatively to what our servants are; yet they might by their good fidelity adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; they might glorify God eminently in their low estate, and so prepare themselves-for this heavenly rest. I may illustrate this by an instance or two. Suppose a statuary, one that is an excellent sculptor, be employed to carve a statue, whatsoever the materials be, he may use as much skill in carving upon an ordinary stone as upon the finest marble. So whatsoever thy condition is in the world, thou mayest glorify God in it, and bring praise to his name, and show as excellent graces as he that sits on the throne. For our glorifying of God hath respect to that place wherein we are set, it is with respect to those circumstances wherein we are. As our Saviour speaks concerning the poor widow that cast her "two mites" into the treasury, she gave more than those that threw in their costly gifts, yea, though they had cast in a talent; for she threw in and gave all that she had. It was esteemed more because of her zealous affection. Thus we may glorify God in a low estate. To give you another illustration. There are fruit trees of several kinds, and some fruits are more valuable than others; that tree that brings forth abundance of fruit according to its kind, is a valuable tree. As that which is laden with apples, though there be other trees which bring a more excellent fruit, yet this is an excellent tree in its kind. So a christian that doth adorn that place wherein God hath set him, brings honour to God by

diligence in his place, and prepares himself for the heavenly glory. There are two things that are proper for us to consider with respect to excelling in grace. 1. Hereby we shall make our title to heaven more clear, have a more joyful assurance of it. For let me tell you, a great light discovers itself to a weak eye. Where grace is in its radiancy and lustre, it discovers itself to the soul. Whereas many holy saints of God, who have the truth of grace, yet because it is in them so strong and powerful, have not the comfort of it. If you abound in grace, you shall have an abundant entrance into God's heavenly kingdom. One that hath true grace, his title to heaven is safe and certain, but not so comfortable as one that hath higher degrees of grace. Let me apply one expression of scripture to this purpose, Ephes. 1:12. "That we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ; in whom also that after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Suppose a man contract a bargain with you, and give a small earnest, except you be assured of his fidelity, you will be apt to fear he may leave it and lose his earnest, but if he give you a great earnest, he is kept from breaking his covenant and agreement with you. If God give you his Spirit, it is an inviolable earnest that you shall come to glory; for God will not lose the earnest of his sanctifying Spirit in the least degree. But the more the Spirit appears in its holy operations in the soul, we have a richer earnest, and a more blessed confirmation that we shall come to heaven. Therefore this labouring to excel in holiness, and aspiring and endeavouring to be eminent according to our places, gives us the most comfortable hope that we shall be for ever with God in heaven.

Let me give you one instance of this, and compare it with an instance in the Old Testament: we read of the apostle Paul, who always had a triumphant evidence of his being saved, he challenges heaven and earth, Rom. 8:38. "For I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord;" and in another place he tells us, "I know whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day;" and when he comes to be sacrificed, he saith, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Do you think this was the exclusive privilege of Paul as an apostle? No, for he takes in all believers as sharing with him in this privilege. The Spirit of God to a believer, doth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God; and this he doth by an illustration of those graces, which constitute him to be a son of God. We read that the apostle had a triumphant joy in the fruit of his admirable holiness and fidelity to God; saith he, "I know nothing by myself;" he neglected no part of his ministerial work, that he might thereby honour God; and from thence did spring that blessed hope that he should be with God in heaven for ever. Compare this instance of Paul with that of David, who was an inspired prophet, a man after God's own heart, a man of extraordinary revelations; but walking carelessly, he fell into presumptuous sins; O what depth of horror and perplexity was he sometimes in? "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, and mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long." Psal. 38:4, 6. And how doth he earnestly beg of God to restore the spirit of joy to him, Psal. 51:11, 12. "cast me not away from thy presence, take not thy Holy Spirit from me, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." So that a prophet, if he neglect to glorify God, may fall under such unquiet fears as may render his life a kind of death to him. A saint should labour to be always (as the apostle Paul was) aspiring after the perfection of holiness. Phil. 3:14.

3. Let us glorify God abundantly in our several places; for then we shall have a more ample rich reward, and the greater degree of glory above. There are some thrones in heaven which are higher than others, and brighter crowns, and more excellent degrees of glory;

therefore "he that sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows liberally, shall reap liberally." He that is abundant in the work of the Lord, the blessed rewarder will proportionally reward him in the future state.

II. I shall now proceed to the special rules.

1. Fix your choice upon this eternal rest as your portion. As we read of Moses, when he was to depart from the children of Israel, this was his last and most affectionate counsel to them, Deut. 30:19. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." So I say, choose this eternal rest as your supreme, good and happiness, without which you are undone for ever, and without which you had better never have been born, or been in the lower rank of creatures. But you will be ready to think that there are none but what will choose it. But pray consider what a choice it must be; it must be with all those conditions, and with all those difficulties, that attend this state, and are annexed to it. It is not choosing heaven and happiness abstractly, and only to have a desire to enjoy this blessed state, and to say, I will take this for my happiness; unless you consider the terms and conditions of it; now in short the terms are these: you must despise all things in comparison of it: you must suffer all things that are evil in the world, all that flesh and blood calls evil, if God by his providence call you to it, that you may attain it: and for the good things of the world, take life and all the endearments of it, and all the ornaments of life, riches, honours, pleasures, friends, and relations, these must be all hated, comparatively, when eternal life comes in competition with them; for our Saviour tells us, Luke 14:26. "if any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." It is true, it is not meant as if God commanded an absolute hatred of them; but there must be such a love and choice of heaven above these things, that whenever they come in competition, you must reject them as if you hated them: although there is a regular love to

them allowed, it is but in subordination to Christ, who is the supreme object of our affections. The stars are in the heavens in the day as well as in the night; but their light is suspended when the sun appears, they have no light as to our perception: so God allows us to have a natural love to our father, mother, &c. yet whenever they come in competition, all these affections must be suspended. You must love Christ and heaven above them all; though you must still retain a love to those comforts and mercies that God hath given unto you; yet you must hate and despise all in comparison of Christ; and as the apostle saith, "if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Whatsoever may be objected to you to divert you from following Christ and pursuing heaven, you must in the resolution and habit of your souls despise it, and prefer Christ and heaven before it. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Rev. 2:10. Be faithful in that covenant which God hath made with you in the gospel, whatsoever befall you; though it be the loss of life itself you must be willing to submit to it, that you may obtain heaven. When there is such a choice of heaven, it will have a blessed command and influence upon our whole lives. Now for your comfort consider these words of Christ, Luke 10:42. "but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." O if your choice of heaven be sincere, firm, and constant, heaven shall never be taken from you; if all the powers of darkness, and wicked men conspire together, they cannot take from you eternal life; they may take away your temporal life; but this shall bring you to that life that is eternal.

2. Exercise your thoughts frequently and seriously upon this eternal rest. The apostle you shall find, 2 Cor. 4:18. declares what it was that gave him courage; "while we look not 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." While we are here in this lower world, and our souls confined to flesh, we are not able to conceive of heaven, according to its excellency and glory; we are not able to form proper conceptions of it, such as are answerable to its greatness and worth. But God hath been pleased to

make such a discovery of heaven to us in the world, and in such fit and effective representations, that we may exercise our thoughts comfortably upon it. When Moses came from conversing with God on the mount, there was such a lustre on his face as dazzled the eyes of the Israelites; they were not able to see the face of heaven upon the earth, they could not bear it, and though he put on a veil, that they knew it was Moses. So the admiring amazing beauty of heaven we cannot see it unveiled; God hath therefore thrown a veil over it, and he hath through that veil discovered so much of the glory of heaven, that we know it is the most glorious state and the supreme happiness of the soul. Therefore we should entertain our souls with such representatives of heaven, as what the scripture makes, to set forth the joys of it. The scripture saith, "it is an eternal feast." It is said, we shall "sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God." It is an allusion to the manner of their entertainments. You know a feast is made for love and joy, and friendship. So this is an eternal feast, the souls of the blessed are always delighting themselves in God and one another. And then again, to represent the glory of heaven, the scripture expresseth it to you under the notion of a kingdom, which is the highest degree of earthly glory; and it is called an everlasting kingdom, and a crown of life; and all this to show us that it is the highest dignity that the reasonable nature is capable of. Then to show the riches of this kingdom, it is called the "incorruptible inheritance" that shall never fade; nay, to comprehend all together, the scripture tells us, "we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." We shall enjoy God in heaven, who is the infinite and ineffable fountain of all good. So that now take into your thoughts, as distinctly as you can, what the joy of heaven is, and what the riches and glory of it are. Then be diligent to serve and glorify God, and prepare for heaven. I know all christians are not fit for meditation, that being so exalted a duty, and heaven so sublime a subject. Yet still there may be an ascent of our thoughts towards it, according to the several representations.

By meditation and serious thoughts we taste and see the goodness of God; and we may enter into that rest, while we are here, by our

serious and frequent thoughts of it.

3. Keep up in your souls lively and earnest desires after it. It is the character the apostle gives of all christians, 2. Tim. 4:8. they love Christ's appearing: "Henceforth (saith the apostle Paul) is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." But you will say, the bitterness of death is not passed. How shall we come to heaven without dying. Let me tell you, the desires of heaven, in a saint, are superior to all his earthly desires. For this desire of heaven, is an overruling one. When Simeon, by an oracle, was told, that as soon as he should see Christ he should die, Luke 2:26. he did not delay his going to see Christ. It is said, "he came by the Spirit into the temple." His desires were drawn forth to see Christ; and how warmly did his desire beat for heaven, that as soon as he had seen him he might depart and be with God for ever. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And the apostle tells us, Rom; 8:21 "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth until now; and not only they, but we ourselves also which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies." They that have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, by experience know what a blessed thing it is to have the favour of God, and they are inwardly breathing and longing after the full enjoyment of him in heaven. Their adoption, that shall be declared with all solemnity and glory at the great day. "The redemption of their bodies;" that is, the final accomplishment of their redemption: they that have the firstfruits of the Spirit, they long after it.

4. Always preserve your hopes of heaven lively, and powerful in your souls. Hope is a grace that hath a most admirable influence upon the christian life. Faith and hope are twins, they prosper together. They are those two graces that are influential upon all other graces, and they will make a christian do any thing, or suffer any thing for God. It is the hope of heaven that always purifies us, that makes us with joy

encounter all the allurements and terrors we meet with in the cause of God. The scripture compares it to armour, and makes it one of the chief parts of the spiritual armour, the breastplate of hope and love. It is that which defends us against all the fiery darts of satan and wicked men. Indeed if we deface the seal of the Spirit, and blur our evidences, it will make us act in the service of God, just as a limb out of joint; that is, neither with strength nor comeliness. But if we act grace lively, it will give continual vigour to us in God's ways, and make us wait for the salvation of God. As we read of Jacob, when he was blessing his sons, he breaks out into a rapture, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." This hope will make us wait for salvation till God is pleased to give it. If I have hope, as an anchor, it will make me outride all storms, and cheerfully to endure all troubles for the obtaining of salvation.

5. and Lastly, If you would prepare for eternal life, O then be careful to keep the Lord's day holy. For the sabbath here is a short abridgment of our eternal rest: it is, in truth, an anticipation of it.

Heaven, I told you, is a sabbath rest, it is such a rest as implies the most noble, excellent, vital and joyful exercise of the soul in the entire service of God. And that person that accounts the sabbath-day honourable, and esteemeth it his delight, and says as David, "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than reign in the tents of wicked men:" he that looks upon this sacred time as his privilege, that spends this whole day in the service of God, either in the solemn assembly, and public society of God's people, or in his family, or in his closet, and most secret addresses to God, he is preparing for the eternal sabbath above. O what a sad indication of a carnal heart it is to dislike this holy day.

One that looks upon the Lord's day as a melancholy interruption of his carnal pleasures, and saith, "when will the sabbath be ended?" as those carnal wretches among the Jews, hath no affection for God and his service. But they that spend the Lord's day in heavenly exercises,

and with holy affections, and pass from one day to another, from hearing to prayer, and from prayer to holy conference, and can entertain their souls with God, and enjoy communion with him in these duties: it is a blessed evidence that they are prepared for the heavenly glory, and for the enjoyment of God in this eternal rest. The soul by the duties of this holy day, and the instruction it receives thereon, is made fit for an eternal communion with God above. What is heaven? Do not deceive yourselves; it is not such a rest as a carnal heart imagines. Heaven is the enjoyment of the divine presence, and consequently the joyful exercise of all our faculties upon God, with regard to his excellencies and perfections, our admiring of him, and loving him, and praising him, and magnifying him with the highest veneration, and with the most inflamed exercise of love, delight and joy, and all those holy affections which will be our work and blessedness in heaven: so much as you exercise of these, so much of heaven you have in you here. Therefore make the Lord's day your joy; and let every hour of this sacred time be dedicated to God. When the sabbath comes, welcome it with the most joyful affections, remembering that the Lord's day here, will prepare you for the eternal sabbath above: and if you be in the Spirit of the Lord upon the Lord's day here, you shall have the Spirit of the Lord to rule and govern you, till you come to the kingdom above, where you shall enjoy this eternal rest that remains to the people of God.

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