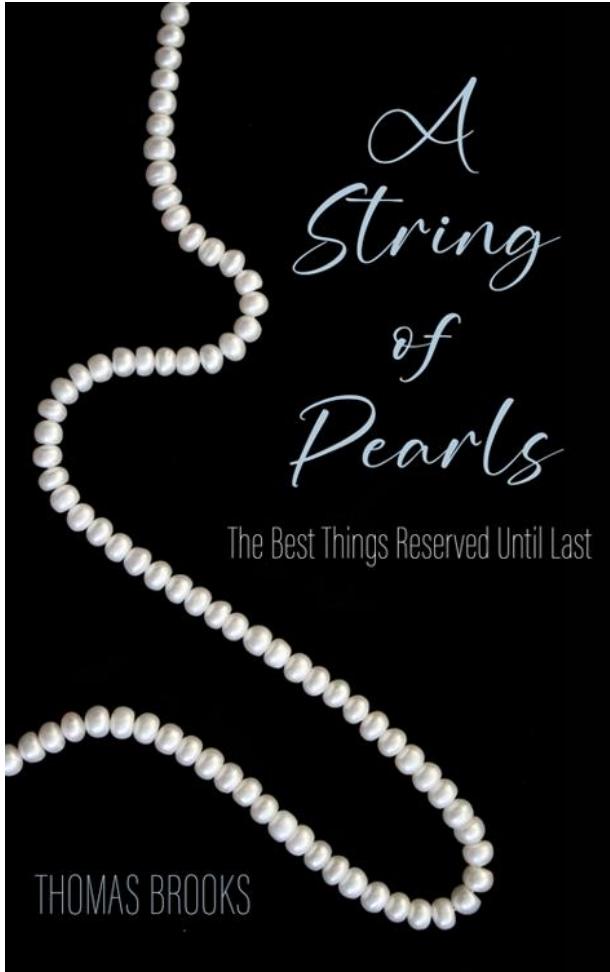


*A
String
of
Pearls*

The Best Things Reserved Until Last

THOMAS BROOKS



*A
String
of
Pearls*

The Best Things Reserved Until Last

THOMAS BROOKS

Copyright ©Monergism Books

A String of Pearls

The Best Things Reserved Until Last

by Thomas Brooks (1608 - 1680)

Table of Contents

[The Epistle Dedicatory](#)

[The Character of Mrs. Blake](#)

[The Best Things Reserved Until Last](#)

[The Best Rest is Reserved for Believers Until They Come to Heaven](#)

[The Best Knowledge of God is Reserved for Believers Until They Come to Heaven](#)

[The Best and Choicest Presence of God and Christ is Reserved Until Last](#)

[The Perfection of Grace is Reserved for Glory](#)

[The Best Society, the Best Company, is Reserved Until Last](#)

[The Glorifying of Our Bodies is Reserved Until Last](#)

[The Reasons Why God Reserves the Best Blessings for Believers Until They Come to Heaven](#)

The Epistle Dedicatory

"The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Psalm 112:6

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Psalm 116:15

To my honored and worthily-esteemed friends, Mr. Nicholas Blake, husband to the late virtuous Mrs. Mary Blake; and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Matthewes, parents to the late deceased gentlewoman; and to the rest of her relations. All grace and peace, all consolation and supportation from God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear Friends,

This little piece had been sooner in your hands, but that my being in the country, and some other important business that has lain hard upon my hands, has prevented it until now.

I have read of a certain painter, who, being to express the sorrow of a bereaved father, thought it best to present him with his face covered, that so he might have that grief to be imagined by them, which he found himself unable to set out to the full. I know I am not able to paint out your great grief and sorrow for the loss of such a wife, of such a child, of such a sister, etc., and I could wish that this piece,

which is brought forth to satisfy your importunity, may not make the wound to bleed afresh. However, if it does, thank yourselves, blame not me. "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." 2 Cor. 7:10

I heartily wish that all who are concerned in this sad loss, were more taken up in minding the happy exchange that she has made—than with your present loss. She has exchanged—earth for heaven, a wilderness for a paradise, a prison for a palace, a house made with hands for one eternal in the heavens! 2 Cor. 5:1-2. She has exchanged imperfection for perfection, sighing for singing, mourning for rejoicing, prayers for praises, the society of sinful mortals for the company of God, Christ, angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. 12:22-24; an imperfect transient enjoyment of God for a more clear, full, perfect, and permanent enjoyment of God. She has exchanged pain for ease, sickness for health, a bed of weakness for a bed of spices, a complete blessedness. She has exchanged her brass for silver, her pennies for gold, and her earthly contentments for heavenly enjoyments.

And as I desire that one of your eyes may be fixed upon her happiness—so I desire that the other of your eyes may be fixed upon Christ's fullness. Though your brook be dried up, yet Christ the fountain of light, life, love, grace, glory, comfort, joy, goodness, sweetness, and satisfaction is still at hand, and always full and flowing, yes, overflowing! John 1:16, Col. 1:19, Col. 2:3. As the worth and value of many pieces of silver is contracted in one piece of gold—so all the sweetness, all the goodness, all the excellencies that are in husbands, wives, children, friends, etc., are concentrated in Christ! Yes, all the whole volume of perfections which is spread through heaven and earth, is epitomized in Christ! Says Augustine, *one Christ*

will be to you instead of all things else, because in him are all good things to be found.

Dear friends! what wisdom, what knowledge, what love, what tenderness, what sweetness, what goodness did you observe and find in this deceased and now glorified saint—which is not eminently, which is not perfectly, to be enjoyed in Christ? and if so, why do not you bear up sweetly and cheerfully, and let the world know, and let friends see, that though you have lost her corporally, yet you enjoy her spiritually in Jesus? The apostle Paul was so much taken with Christ, that he was ever in his thoughts, always near his heart, and ever upon his tongue; he names him sixteen or seventeen times in one chapter, 1 Cor. 1. Now, oh that your hearts and thoughts were thus busied about Christ, and taken up with Christ, and with those treasures of wisdom, knowledge, grace, goodness, sweetness, etc., which are in him; this would very much allay your grief and sorrow, and keep your hearts quiet and silent before the Lord; this would be like that tree which made the bitter waters of Marah sweet, Exod. 15:23-25.

Plutarch, in the life of Phocion, tells us of a certain woman of Ionia, who showed the wife of Phocion all the rich jewels and precious stones she had; she answered her again, *All my riches and jewels is my husband Phocion.* So should Christians say, *Christ is our riches, our jewels, our treasure, our heaven, our crown, our glory, our all. He is all comforts to us, and all contentments to us, and all delights to us, and all relations to us. He is husband, wife, child, father, mother, brother, sister. He is all these; yes, he is more than all these to us,* 2 Cor. 6:10, Eph. 3:8, Cant. 5:10.

I have read of one who, walking in the fields by himself, suddenly fell into loud cries and weeping, and being asked by one who passed by

and overheard him, the cause of his lamentation. *I weep*, says he, *to think that the Lord Jesus should do so much for us men, and yet not one man of a thousand so much as minds him, or thinks of him.* But I hope better things of you; yes, I hope and desire that this present counsel will take hold of your hearts, and work as counsel works—when it is set home by the hand of heaven.

Again, friends, it is your wisdom and your glory to mind more your present work, your present duty—than your loss, than your present calamity. David's passion had gotten above his wisdom and discretion, when he said, "O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" 2 Sam. 18:33. Your present work is not to cry, *O my dear wife! O my precious child! O my loving sister!* but, O my soul, submit to God! justify God, lie down in the will of God; say *so be it* to God's amen. O my soul! think well of God, and speak well of God, and carry it well towards God, etc. This is your present work; make it but your work, and then, though "sorrow may abide for a night—yet joy will come in the morning," Psalm 30:5.

Again, Observe how other saints have behaved under such a dispensation as you are under—and do likewise. To that purpose read and compare these scriptures together: Gen. 23:1-4, 8; Ezek. 24:16-18; 2 Sam. 12:17-22; 1 Sam. 3:17-19; 2 Sam. 15:25-27; Job 1:13-22. It is a more excellent, a more blessed thing to be good at *imitating* the pious examples of others, than to be good at *praising* of them. Stories speak of some who could not sleep when they thought of the trophies of other worthies that went before them. The best and highest examples should be very quickening and provoking. Pious *examples* usually are more wakening than *precepts*; and they are more convincing and more encouraging; and the reason is, because we see in them, that the exercise of the

most difficult points of godliness is yet possible. Other saints' pious examples should be looking-glasses for us to dress ourselves by; and happy are those who make such an improvement of them. Oh, happy husband! oh, happy parents! oh, happy brethren and sisters! if you write after that blessed copy—that this glorified saint, wife, child, sister, has set before you; which that you may, I desire you seriously to dwell upon the following narrative.

One hint more, and then I am done. Augustine, in one of his epistles, relates—that the very same day wherein Jerome died, Augustine was in his study, and had got pen, ink, and paper, to write something of the glory of heaven to Jerome. Suddenly he saw a light breaking into his study, and a sweet smell that came unto him, and this voice he thought he heard, *O Augustine! what are you doing? Do think to put the sea into a little vessel? When the heavens shall cease from their continual motion, then shall you be able to understand what the glory of heaven is, and not before; except you come to partake of it, as I now do.*

A little before this glorified saint's translation from earth to heaven, I had thoughts and resolutions to write to her about this blessed state to which she was hastening, but was prevented. However, in the following sermon you will find something of that glorious state glimpsed out unto you, which now she is in possession of. Now, dear friends, above all gettings—get a saving interest in that glory that she is filled with, and keep up the sense of that interest in your own souls and consciences; and then you will be happy in life, and blessed in death, and assuredly meet her and know her, and forever enjoy her in perfect happiness and blessedness; which, that you may, is and shall be the constant desire and earnest prayer of

Your soul's servant,

Thomas Brooks.

The Character of Mrs Blake

A String of Pearls

Or, The Best Things Reserved until Last

Before I name my text, give me leave to speak a few words upon another text, namely, the glorified saint deceased, at whose funeral we are here met.

Mary Blake was one of those dear spiritual children that the Lord had given me, Isaiah 8:18; she was a precious seal of my ministry, she was my living epistle, 2 Cor. 3:1-2; my walking certificate, my letter testimonial, Philip. 4:1-2. In life she was my joy, and in the day of Christ she will be my crown, as Paul speaks, 1 Thes. 2:19-20, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For you are our glory and joy." Her application of those words of the apostle to me has been often a very great refreshing and comfort to my soul: "For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel," 1 Cor. 4:15.

The work of grace upon her heart was clear, powerful, and thorough, as all know who knew her inwardly. I would tire both myself and you, and frustrate the end of your meeting, which is to hear a sermon, should I give you an exact and particular account thereof: I shall therefore mention only a few things among many—for your imitation, satisfaction, and supportation under this sad dispensation.

She was a knowing woman in the things of Christ; and her knowledge was inward, experimental, growing, humbling, transforming, and practical, Proverbs 3:18. She knew Christ in the mystery—as well as in the history; in the spirit—as well as in the letter; experimentally—as well as notionally; she did not only *eat* of the tree of knowledge, but also *tasted* of the tree of life.

She was as sincere and plain a hearted Christian, I think, as anyone outside of heaven; for plain-heartedness she was a Jacob; for uprightness she was a Job. Sincerity is the shine, the luster, the beauty, the glory of all a Christian's graces, and in this she did excel. A sincere soul is like a crystal glass with a light in the midst of it, which gives light every way; and such a one was she. A sincere soul is like the violet, which grows low, and hides itself and its own sweetness, as much as may be, with its own leaves; and such a one was she. She had as many choice, visible characters of sincerity and uprightness upon her, as ever I read upon any Christian that I have had the happiness to be acquainted with. But I must not dwell on these things; I shall only say she was not like the actor in the comedy, who cried with his mouth, *O heaven!* but pointed with his finger to the earth. Such professors there are, but she was none of that type.

She was as rich in spiritual experiences as most that I have been acquainted with. Ah! how often has she warmed, gladdened, and quickened my spirit, by acquainting me with what the Lord has done for her precious soul. Experiences in religion are beyond notions and impressions. A sanctified heart is better than a silver tongue; and she found it so. Oh! the stories that she was able to tell of the love of God, the presence of Christ, the breathings of the Spirit, the exercise of grace, the sweetness of the word, the deceitfulness of sin, and the devices and methods of Satan, etc. And though she made use of her experiences, as crutches to *lean* on, yet she only made use of the

promises as a foundation to *build* on. As the star led the wise men to Christ, so her experiences led her to a higher and sweeter living upon Christ; her experiences were her sauce, but Christ was still her food.

She did drive a very great private trade towards heaven. She was much in secret duties, in closet communion with God, and this did very much enrich her and advance her in spiritual experiences, when she had once found the sweetness of enjoying Christ behind the door, Cant. 2:14, Mat. 6:5-6. Oh, how inflamedly, how abundantly was her soul carried forth in secret duties! She knew that Peter went up upon the house-top to pray, and that Christ was often alone, Acts 10:9. As secret meals make a fat body—so she found secret duties made a fat soul; and this made her much in that work. It was a witty and divine speech of Bernard, *That Christ, the soul's spouse, is bashful, neither willingly comes to his bride in the presence of a multitude; and is it not so with the bride in her actings towards her bridegroom, Christ?*

She was many times in the school of trial and temptation, which God made to her the school of instruction. The Lord did usually so help her to handle the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, that she commonly triumphed over Satan's temptations, and led captivity captive. Though that arrow-master, Satan, has shot often at her, yet her "bow still abode in strength, her hands and heart being made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Augustine gave thanks to God that *the heart and the temptation did not meet together*—and so has she many a time. She was good at withstanding the *beginnings* of a temptation, knowing that after-remedies often come too late.

She was a Christian all over. She was a Christian in profession, and a Christian in practice; a Christian in lip, and a Christian in life; a

Christian in word, and a Christian in work; and a Christian in power and spirit. She was not only for the *general* duties of Christianity—as hearing, praying, etc., but also for the *relative* duties of religion—as to be a good wife, a good mother, a good child, a good sister, etc. Most sincerity and holy ingenuity shines in the relative duties of religion; and in those she was excellent. She was also very conscientious and constant, yes, abundant in the general duties of religion, as hearing, praying, etc. She did duties, but dared not for a world trust to her duties—but to her Jesus; as the dove made use of her wings to fly to the ark—but trusted not in her wings—but in the ark. In duty, she had learned the holy art of living above duty; in the business of acceptance with God, and justification before God, and reconciliation to God, and salvation by God—she knew no duty but Jesus. She was as happy in denying *religious* self as she was resolute in denying of *sinful* self. (Duties trusted to will undo you. When trusted to, duties are but a smooth silken way to hell.)

She was, for patience and cheerfulness under her long lingering weakness, as exemplary as any that ever I was acquainted with, James 1:2-4; 5:10-11. If at any time she *groaned*, yet she blessed God, as she used to say, *that she did not grumble*. Oh how quiet, how like a lamb was she under all her trials! Oh how well would she speak of God! Oh how sweetly did she behave towards God! Oh how much was she taken up in justifying of God throughout her pining, wasting sicknesses!

Time and strength would fail me should I but tell you what I could concerning her faith, her love to God, to Christ, to his ways, to his people, whether poor or rich, weak or strong; and of her eminent humility, lowliness, and meekness. She was very high in spiritual worth, and as meek in heart; she was clothed with humility as with a

royal robe, and with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price," 1 Pet. 5:5, 3:4.

But I must hasten to my text, for I see time slides away.

If Ezekiel can commend Daniel, and match him with Noah and Job for his power in prayer; and Peter highly praise Paul; and if the ancient church had her public tables, wherein the people most noted for piety were recorded; nay, if Plato called Aristotle the intelligent reader; and Aristotle set up an altar in honor of Plato; then I hope you will not impute it to me as a transgression, that I have presented to you the shining virtues of this glorified saint for your imitation.

*What eyes you read with, reader, know I not,
Mine were not dry when I this story wrote.*

AN ELEGY

Upon the death of the virtuous, his dear and never-to-be-forgotten friend, Mrs. Mary Blake.

If that affection could but make a poet,
Could grief and sorrow help, sure I should do it;
Mary is dead, a woman whom truth and fame,
With virtue, ever shall embalm her name;
A Mary for love, a Mary for weeping,
A Mary for choice, a Mary for seeking.

With Mary she had chosen the better part;
With Mary she did lay Christ near'st her heart.
Such were her parts, her piety,
Her youth it was a full maturity.

Grave although young; who in her heart did prize
Grace, truth, and Christ her only sacrifice;
Gracious, pious, and sincere was she,
Courteous, without all court hypocrisy.

Christ was her study, his glory was her aim;
It was her heaven for to advance the same.
Within the holy treasury of her mind
Were the choice virtues of all womankind;
A knowing woman, and humble too,
Who joyed all Christians who had with her to do.

A praying woman and believing too,
Which did the praises of other saints renew:
A holy woman, and a harmless too.
In saying this, I give her but her due.
A lively Christian and thriving in grace;
Few towards heaven did ever hold her pace.

The word and ways of God were her delight,
And in the same she had a great insight.
A fixed woman, when others staggering were,
Which was the fruit of holy pains and care;
A tried Christian, whose trials were not small,
Yet faith and patience overcame them all;
She lived the sermons which on earth she heard,
And now receives the crown which was for her prepared;
A woman who had more than common worth;
I lack a tongue, enough to set it forth.

Her last precious breathings had respect
To nothing more than divine dialect;

Which she committed to her mourning friends,
In exhortations to their better ends.

Could prayers, tears, and sighs have kept her here,
She had not died, you need not to fear;
She lives, though dead, in the memory of those,
Who knew her life, and saw its holy close.

No golden letters half so long as we,
Shall keep her precious worth in memory;
No costly marble need on her be spent,
Her deathless worth is her own monument.

Now, shall I let you know what you have lost?
She was a temple of the Holy Ghost.
This we know, that though we lose her here,
Her soul does shine in a celestial sphere.
Mary is to the celestial Canaan gone,

Where as a star she shines in perfection.
Mary has chosen sure the better part,
Mary with angels sure does now partake.

But stay, needs she encomiums?
Reader, know, She joys above, while we here wail below.
But now, dear friends, let's mourn in hope and weep,
Believing this blessed saint, in Christ does sleep.

Hark, don't you hear her sweet delightful voice?
Saying, *Friends, weep not—but see that you rejoice*
For me, for now I am perfectly free,
From sorrow, sin, death, and mortality;
Surely you cannot doubt my happiness,

*Who have beheld my faith and steadfastness;
Oh then from sorrow see that now you cease,
To interrupt my joy and your own peace.*

Surely our loss to her was greatest gain,
For crowned in heaven she ever shall remain;
No sighs, no groans, now from her do come,
But everlasting joys are in their room.

She now without control, no question, sings
Eternal praises to the King of kings;
She now enjoys that ever blessed face,
In hopes whereof she has run a happy race:
She now has changed her crosses for a crown,
Her bed of weakness, for a royal throne.

Farewell! blessed saint, farewell! to you we'll haste,
For until we meet in heaven, we cannot rest.

—Thomas Brooks

A Word to the Reader—

Now, Reader, if you please to cast a look,
Or spend some spare time on this little book,
And in it anything that's good do view,
Then take it, for it belongs to you;
What's weak or worthless in it, that decline
And pass it by, I challenge that for mine.

The Best Things Reserved Until Last

"An inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fades not away, reserved in heaven for you." 1 Peter 1:4

I have chosen this text upon a double ground.

1. To make a diversion of immoderate sorrow and grief from my own spirit and yours, who are most nearly concerned in this sad loss. And,
2. Because it will afford us matter most suitable to the blessed state and condition of this glorified saint, at whose funeral we are here met.

In the inscription, verses 1 and 2, you have first a holy salutation, showing first by whom this epistle was written, namely, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ; secondly, to whom it was written. Now they are described two ways: first, by their outward condition, "*strangers*, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." There are divers opinions about these strangers—but the most common and received opinion among the learned is, that Peter wrote this epistle to the converted Jews, scattered through the provinces in Asia, who met with much opposition and affliction for the gospel's sake. Secondly, they are described by their spiritual and inward condition, which is set forth,

- (1.) By the fundamental cause of it, namely, *election* of God.
- (2.) By the final cause, namely, *sanctification* of the Spirit unto obedience.
- (3.) By the subservient cause, namely, *reconciliation*, conferred in obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the third verse you have, (1.) A very stately prelude, and such as can hardly be matched again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2.) You have regeneration or effectual calling described, and that

[1.] First, By the principal efficient cause thereof, which is, "God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

[2.] By the impulsive cause thereof, the mercy of God, which is described by the quantity of it, "abundant."

[3.] By the immediate effect thereof, a "lively hope," the singular cause whereof is showed to be the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 John 3:2-3. Now hope is called a lively hope,

[1.] Because it makes a man lively and active for God and goodness.

[2.] Because it cheers, comforts, and revives the soul. It brings, it breeds, it feeds, it preserves spiritual life in the soul. This lively hope is like Myrtilus' shield, which after the use he had of it in the field, having it with him at sea, and suffering shipwreck, it served him for a boat to waft him to shore, and so preserved his life. This lively hope is a shield ashore, and an anchor at sea.

[3.] It is called a lively hope, in opposition to the fading, withering, dying hopes of hypocrites, and profane people, "Whose hope is as a spider's web," "the crackling of thorns under a pot."

A Christian's hope is not like that of Pandora, which may fly out of the box, and bid the soul farewell; no, it is like the morning light: the least beam of it shall commence into a complete sunshine; it shall shine forth brighter and brighter until perfect day; but the

hypocrite's hope, the presumptuous sinner's hope is like a cloud, or the morning dew.

Now, in my text you have the object about which this "lively hope" is exercised; and that is, "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fades not away" [What these words import I shall show you when I open that doctrine which I intend to stand upon at this time], "reserved in heaven for you."

There are three heavens: the first is the airy heaven, where the fowls of heaven do fly; the second is where the stars of heaven are; the third is the heaven of the blessed, where God appears in eminency, and where Christ shines in glory; and this is the heaven the text speaks of.

The text will afford several points—but I shall only name one, which I intend to stand on at this time, and that is this,

DOCTRINE. God reserves the best and greatest favors and blessings for believers until they come to heaven.

The Best Rest is Reserved for Believers Until They Come to Heaven.

This life is full of trials, full of *troubles*, and full of *changes*. Sin within, and Satan and the world without, will keep a Christian from rest, until he comes to rest in the bosom of Christ. The life of a Christian is a race—and what rest have they that are still a-running

their race? The life of a Christian is a warfare—and what rest have they that are still engaged in a constant warfare? The life of a Christian is the life of a pilgrim—and what rest has a pilgrim, who is still a-traveling from place to place? A pilgrim is like Noah's dove, which could find no rest for the sole of her foot. The fears, the snares, the cares, the changes, etc., which attend believers in this world, are such that will keep them from taking up their rest here on earth. A Christian hears that word always sounding in his ears, "Arise, for this is not your resting-place, because it is polluted." Micah 2:10. A man may as well expect to find heaven in hell, as expect to find rest in this world!

It was the complaint of Ambrose, *What misery do we undergo in this life? What storms and tempests do we endure? with what troubles are we tossed? Who is spared?* Man's sorrows begin when his days begin, and his sorrows are multiplied as his days are multiplied; his whole life is but one continued grief; labor wears him, care tears him, fears toss him, losses vex him, dangers trouble him, crosses disquiet him, nothing pleases him. In the *day* he wishes—Oh, that it were night; and in the night—Oh, that it were day! Before he rises he sighs; before he washes he weeps; before he feeds he fears; under all his abundance he is in wants, and "in the midst of his sufficiency he is in straits," Job 20:22; his heart, as Gregory Nyssene speaks, *is not so much quieted in those things which it has, as it is tormented for those things which it has not.*

In a word, all the rest we have in this world, is but a very short nap—compared to that glorious rest which is reserved in heaven for us: Heb. 4:9, "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." There remains a rest to the people of God, or as the Greek has it, a sabbatism, a celestial rest, an eternal rest, a Sabbath that shall never have end. Rest is a jewel very desirable on earth—but we shall not

wear it in our bosoms until we come to heaven. Rest is beyond this world; and it is beyond this world that the fruit of rest is to be had.

I shall show you, observing brevity, the excellency of that rest which is reserved for believers in heaven. As,

(1.) First, *It is a superlative rest*; a rest that infinitely exceeds all earthly rest. All other rest is not to be named in the day wherein this rest is spoken of. Some have purchased rest, for a time, with silver and gold—but this is a rest that all the gold and silver in the world can never purchase. Over this rest is written—not the price of gold, but the price of blood, yes, the price of the best and noblest blood that ever ran in veins. That rest we have here on earth, must needs be a poor, low-priced rest, where the health of the body is preserved with much watchfulness; being preserved, is also lost; being lost, is recovered with much labor; and yet being recovered, is always in danger and doubtfulness, what will become of it. Our estate in this world is not a fixed estate; what then is our rest? Our very living is but a passing away; our lives are full of troubles, and they fill our souls full of inquietness.

After the Trojans had been tossing and wandering in the Mediterranean Sea, as soon as they espied Italy, they cried out with exulting joy, "Italy! Italy!" and so when saints, after all their tossings and restlessness in this world, shall come to heaven, then, and not until then, they will cry out, *Rest, rest, no rest to this rest!* But,

(2.) Secondly, The rest reserved in heaven for believers *is a universal rest*, Rev. 14:13, a rest from all sin and a rest from all sorrow; a rest from all afflictions and a rest from all temptations; a rest from all oppressions, and a rest from all vexations; a rest from all labor and pains, from all trouble and travail, from all aches, weaknesses, and diseases. There is no crying out, *O my bones! O my back! O my*

sides! O my head! O my heart! Our rest here in this world, is only in part and imperfect. Here on earth we have rest in one part and pain in another, quiet in one part and torment in another. Sometimes when the head is well, the heart is sick; and sometimes when there is peace in the conscience, there is pain in the bones. Here on earth many return us hatred for our love, and this hinders our rest. Here on earth we are apt to create cares and fears for ourselves, and this hinders our rest. Here on earth we are very apt to give offence, and as apt to take offence, though none be given—and this hinders our rest, 1 Cor. 10:32. Sometimes we have rest abroad and none at home; sometimes rest at home and none abroad, Job 7:13-16. Our rest here on earth is imperfect and incomplete—but our rest in heaven shall be most perfect and complete; there the inward and the outward man shall be both at rest, etc. But,

(3.) Thirdly, *It is an uninterrupted rest*; it is a rest which none can interrupt. Here on earth sometimes sin interrupts our rest. Sometimes temptations interrupt our rest. Sometimes divine withdrawals interrupt our rest. Sometimes the sudden changes and alterations which God makes in our conditions interrupt our rest. Sometimes the power, and sometimes the policy, and sometimes the cruelty of wicked men interrupts our rest. Sometimes the crossness of friends, sometimes the deceitfulness of friends, sometimes the loss of friends, and sometimes the death of friends interrupts our rest. One thing or another is still interrupting our rest!

Oh! but in heaven there shall be no sin, no devil, no sinner, no false friends; there shall be nothing, there shall not be the least thing that may interrupt a saint's rest; indeed, heaven could not be heaven, did it admit of anything that might interrupt a saint's rest. Heaven is above all winds and weather, storms and tempests, earthquakes and heartquakes. There is only that which is amiable and desirable; there

is nothing to cloud a Christian's joy, or to interrupt a Christian's rest. When once a soul is asleep in the bosom of Abraham, none can awake him, none can molest or disturb him. Here in heaven—is joy without sorrow, blessedness without misery, health without sickness, light without darkness, abundance without want, beauty without deformity, honor without disgrace, ease without labor, and peace without interruption or perturbation. Here shall be—eyes without tears, hearts without fears, and souls without sin. Here shall be no evil to molest the soul; here shall be all good to cheer the soul, and all happiness to satisfy the soul! What then can possibly interrupt the rest of the soul? But,

(4.) Fourthly, As it is an uninterrupted rest, so *it is a peculiar rest*; it is a rest peculiar to sons, to saints, to heirs, to beloved ones. Psalm 127:2, "So he gives his beloved rest," or as the Hebrew has it, *dearling, or dear beloved, quiet rest*, without care or sorrows. The Hebrew word denotes the more quietness and rest. This rest is a *crown* which God sets only upon the head of saints. This rest is a *gold chain* that he only puts about his children's necks. This rest is a *jewel* which he only hangs between his beloveds' breasts. This rest is a *flower* which he only sticks in his darlings' bosoms. This rest is a *tree of life* which is proper and peculiar to the inhabitants of that heavenly country. This rest is children's *bread*—and shall never be given to dogs.

Here on earth wicked men have their good things; their peace, their rest, their quiet, etc., their heaven; while the people of God are troubled and disquieted on every side. But the day is a-coming wherein the saints shall have rest, and sinners shall never more have a good day, never have an hour's rest more; their torments shall be endless and ceaseless.

The old world had their resting-time—but at last God's patience and justice, tired and abused, put an end to their rest, by washing and sweeping them to hell with a flood; and then Noah, and those righteous souls who were with him, had their time of rest and peace; and so shall it be with sinners and saints at last, etc. But,

(5.) Fifthly, The rest reserved for the saints in heaven, as it is a peculiar rest, so *it is a rest that is universally communicable to all the sons and daughters of God*. "And to you who are troubled, rest with us," says the apostle Paul; "rest with us," with us apostles, with us saints, and with all the family of heaven together, 2 Thess. 1:6-7. Here on earth some saints are at liberty, when others are in prison; here some sit under their own vines and drink the blood of the grape, while others have their blood poured out as water upon the ground, etc. But in heaven they shall all have rest together, the believing husband and the believing wife shall rest together; and believing parents and believing children shall rest together. Here on earth one has rest, when the other has not—but there they shall all rest together. There the painstaking preacher and the diligent hearer shall rest together; there the gracious master and the pious servant shall rest together, etc. Isaiah 57:2, "He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness; they shall rest in their beds," or as some read it, they shall rest in their bee-hives, expressing the Hebrew by the Latin; *cubile* signifies a bee-hive, as well as a couch or bed. Look, as the poor wearied bees do rest all together in their bee-hives, in their honey-houses—so all the saints shall rest together in heaven, which is their bee-hive, their honey-house; and oh what a happy rest will that be, when all the saints shall rest together! But,

(6.) Sixthly and lastly, *It is a permanent, a constant rest*. Of this rest there shall be no end. It is a rest that shall last as long as heaven

lasts; yes, as long as God himself shall continue. Time shall be no more, and this world shall be no more—but this rest shall remain forever! Rev. 10:6, 2 Pet. 3:10, *et seq.*

The rest of the people of God in this world is transient, it is inconstant. Now they have rest, and at another time they have none; now a calm, presently a storm; now all is in quiet, at another time all is in an uproar. Their rest in this world is like a morning cloud and the early dew, which is soon dried up by the beams of the sun, Hosea 6:4. Since God has cast man out of paradise, out of his first rest—he can find but little rest in this world. Sometimes the *unfitness* of the creature troubles him. Sometimes the *fickleness* of the creature vexes him. Sometimes the *treachery* of the creature enrages him. And sometimes the *lack* of the creature distracts him. When in his heart he says, *Now I shall have rest, now I shall be quiet*, then troubles and changes come—so that his whole life is rather *a dreaming of rest* than an *enjoying* of rest. Oh! but in heaven the rest of the saints shall have no end; there shall be nothing that can put an end to their rest, there shall be everything that may conduce to the perpetuating of their rest. Heaven would be but a poor base thing—did it not afford a perpetual rest!

The Best Knowledge of God is Reserved for Believers Until They Come to Heaven.

I readily grant that even in this world the saints do know the Lord, inwardly, spiritually, powerfully, feelingly, experimentally, transformingly, practically; but yet, notwithstanding all this, the best

knowledge of God is reserved for heaven, which I shall evidence by an induction of particulars, thus:

(1.) First, *they shall have the clearest knowledge and revelation of God in heaven.* Here on earth our visions of God are not clear; and this makes many a child of light to sit and sigh in darkness, Lam. 3:44. God veils himself, he covers himself with a cloud. Man, when he is silent concerning God, seems to be something—but when he begins to speak of God, it plainly appears that he is nothing.

Simonides being asked by Hiero, the tyrant, what God was, asked a day to deliberate about an answer; but the more he sought into the nature of God, the more difficult he found it to express; therefore, the next day after being questioned, he asked two days, the third day he asked four, and so from that time forth doubled the number; and being asked why he did so, he answered, *that the more he studied, the less he was able to define what God was, so incomprehensible is his nature.*

Our visions of God here on earth are dark and obscure. Augustine, asking the question, what God is? gives in this answer: *Surely it is he, who, when he is spoken of cannot be spoken of; who, when he is considered of cannot be considered of; who, when he is compared to anything cannot be compared; and when he is defined, grows greater by defining of him.* It is observable, that it was not the Lord which the prophet Ezekiel saw, it was only a vision, Ezek. 1:28. In the vision it was not the glory of the Lord which he saw—but the likeness of it; nay, it was not the likeness of it—but the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord, which made him to fall on his face, as not being able to behold it. Sin has so weakened, dazzled, and darkened the eye of our souls—that we cannot bear the sight of the

glory of the Lord, nor the likeness of it, no! nor the appearance of the likeness, of it.

But when believers come to heaven, then they shall have a more clear vision and sight of God: 1 Cor. 13:12, "Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows me now." Now we see God obscurely, as in a poor mirror—but then we shall see him distinctly, clearly, immediately; we shall then apprehend him clearly, though, even then, we cannot comprehend him fully. Some sense those words, *just as God knows me now*, thus: Look, as God knows me after a manner agreeable to his infinite excellency, so shall I know God according to my capacity, not obscurely—but perfectly, as it were, face to face; and this is the greatest height of blessedness and happiness.

Then, all veils shall be taken off, and we shall have a clear prospect of God's excellency and glory, of his blessedness and fullness, of his loveliness and sweetness. All masks, clouds, and curtains, shall be drawn forever, that saints may clearly see the breadth, length, depth, and height of divine love, and that they may clearly see into the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of Christ's incarnation, the mystery of man's redemption, the mystery of providences, the mystery of prophecies; and all those mysteries which relate to the nature, substances, offices, orders, and excellencies of the angels, those princes of glory, who still keep their standings in the court of heaven; and all those mysteries that concern the nature, immortality, spirituality, excellency, and activity of our own souls; beside a world of other mysteries which respect the decrees and counsels of God, the creation of the world, the fall of Adam, and the fall of angels.

Now the most knowing men in the world are much in the dark about these things; but when we come to heaven, we shall have a close and a clear sight and knowledge of them. Then we shall know—as we are known; we shall see God face to face. Oh blessed sight! to behold the King of angels, the Holy of holies, the God of heaven, the Ruler of the earth, the Father of the living! Oh blessed vision and contemplation, wherein we shall see God in himself, God in us, and ourselves in God! But,

(2.) Secondly, As in heaven they shall have the clearest knowledge of God, so in heaven *they shall have the fullest knowledge of God*. Here on earth our knowledge of God is weak, as well as dark—but in heaven it shall be full and complete. "Here we know but in part; but there we shall know as we are known," 1 Cor. 13:12. As the apostle speaks, here on earth we are able to take in but little of God. Either sin or Satan, or else fears, doubts, and scruples, or else the pleasures or profits, the comforts or contentments of this world—do so defile the soul, and so fill the soul, that it is able to take in but very little of God. "How little a portion," says Job, "is heard of him!" Job 26:14. It is but a portion, a *little* portion, that we can conceive of him. The Hebrew is a *little bit*, nay, it is said, a little piece of a word, or *particulam alicujus*, a little piece of something, that we do hear of him.

"I have many things to say unto you," says Christ, "but you cannot bear them now," John 16:12. Man is a poor, low, weak creature, and is not able to bear any great or full discoveries of God. As weak shoulders cannot bear heavy burdens, nor weak stomachs digest strong meats; no more were they able to bear the revelation of many high, spiritual, precious, and glorious truths—which Christ was willing to discover to them. Those who have weak eyes, or who have a defect in their eyes, cannot discern things aright. Now we have all

weak eyes, we have all one defect or another in our eye, which hinders us from a full sight and knowledge of God, and of his excellency and glory.

Oh! but in heaven, we shall have a full and perfect knowledge of God; there shall be no sore eyes, no clouds, no mists to hinder us from a full sight of the Sun of righteousness. In heaven, our understandings shall be full of the knowledge of God, our minds full of the wisdom of God, our wills full of the righteousness and holiness of God, and our affections full of the love and delights of God.

Here on earth we have but weak and shallow apprehensions of God—but there, as Bernard speaks sweetly, *God will fill the soul with light of wisdom, the heart with righteousness, and the mind with perfect tranquility.*

If a man did dwell within the body of the sun, surely he would be full of light; if a man did dwell in the midst of a fountain, surely he would be filled with that fountain; so when the saints come to heaven, they shall dwell as it were in the body of the Sun of righteousness; and therefore they cannot be but full of light; they shall dwell in the midst of the fountain of life; and therefore they shall surely be full of the fountain. But,

(3.) Thirdly, *The sight and knowledge that we shall have of God in heaven, will be immediate,* 1 Cor. 13:12. Here on earth our knowledge of God is mediate; here on earth we see him—but it is either through the mirror of his word, or the mirror of his works. Sometimes through the mirror of his word God shows himself; sometimes through the mirror of prayer God gives some representation of himself to his people; sometimes through the mirror of the Lord's supper he reveals some rays and beams of his

glory. All the sight and knowledge that we have of God in this world is through some mirror or other. Now there is a vast difference between seeing an object directly, immediately, and in its own proper colors—and beholding it through a mirror. The sight of an object through a mirror is very weak and unsatisfying. One direct view of the Lord, one immediate sight of God, will infinitely transcend all those sights and views that we have had in this world, either through the mirror of his word, or the mirror of his works, either through the mirror of ordinances, or the mirror of the promises, or the mirror of providences, Mat. 5:8.

One real direct sight of a friend or relation, does more cheer, quiet, and satisfy us, than a thousand representations of them in pictures. In heaven we shall see God face to face, without the interposition of men or means; and this direct and immediate sight of God, is that which makes heaven to be heaven to the saints. All the glory of heaven would be but a poor low thing in the eye of a saint, had he not a direct and immediate sight of God there. In heaven all mediums shall be removed, all mirrors shall be broken, and the glorified saint shall behold God with open face; all curtains being forever withdrawn from between God and the soul. The redeemed in heaven are like the holy angels, who are still beholding the face of God, Mat. 18:10. As God is still a-looking upon them as the jewels of his crown, so they are still crying and looking upon God as their heaven, yes, as their great all, and that by a direct and immediate act of their souls. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, The sight and knowledge that they shall have of God in heaven, *shall be permanent and constant*. While on earth, saints have a happy sight of God, and at another time they have lost it; this hour they have a precious sight of God in the mount, and the next hour they have lost this sight. "Behold, he who should comfort

my soul stands afar off," Lam. 1:16; and "he has covered himself with a cloud, that our prayers cannot pass through," Lam. 3:44. Our visions of God here on earth are transient and vanishing. The visions, the glimpses of majesty and glory which Moses and Peter saw in the mount, were not permanent but transient; their sun was quickly clouded, and both of them soon after were found walking in the dark; and therefore well says Augustine, *Happiness may be obtained here—but here on earth we cannot have permanent happiness.*

Oh but in heaven, our sight of God, our knowledge of God shall be permanent, it shall be lasting; there shall be no sin, no cloud, no mist, no curtain, to hinder us from a constant sight and vision of God; there we shall see God clearly, fully, eternally! The spouse's question, "Did you see him whom my soul loves?" Cant. 3:3, shall never be heard in heaven, because God shall be always in their eye, and still upon their hearts; nor Job's complaint, "But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him. But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold." Job 23:8-10. Heaven would not be heaven, were not God always present with the soul. Did not the soul live in a constant sight and apprehension of God—all the glory of heaven could not make a heaven to a glorified soul.

**The Best and Choicest Presence of God
and Christ is Reserved Until Last.**

(1.) In heaven saints shall have *the greatest and the fullest presence of God*. No man in this world has so complete and full a presence of God but he may have a fuller one; but in heaven the presence of God shall be so full and complete, as that nothing can be added to it to make it more complete. Sometimes sin, sometimes Satan, sometimes the world, sometimes resting in duties, sometimes the weakness of our graces--hinder us from enjoying a full presence of God here on earth; but in heaven there shall be nothing to interpose between God and us; there shall be nothing to hinder us from enjoying a full and complete presence of God. It is this full presence of God, which is the heaven of heaven, the glory of all our glory. An imperfect and incomplete presence of God in heaven would darken all the glory of that state. It is the full and perfect presence of God in heaven, which is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory; and this you shall have. But,

(2.) They shall have *a soul-satisfying presence of God in heaven*. They shall be so satisfied with the presence of God in heaven, that they shall say, *We have enough, we have all, because we enjoy that presence which is virtually all, which is eminently all, which is all light, all life, all love, all heaven, all happiness, all comforts, all contentments, etc.* Psalm 17:15, "As for me, I will behold your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness."

Though the spiritual and gracious presence of God with the saints in this world does much *cheer* and *comfort* them—yet it does not *satisfy* them. They are still crying out, *More of this blessed presence! oh more of this presence! Lord, less money will serve, so we may but have more of your presence! less of the creature will serve, so we may have but more of your presence!* Psalm 42:1-2, Psalm 63:1-3. As the king of Sodom said unto Abraham, "Give me the

people, and take the goods to yourself," Gen. 14:21, so say gracious souls, *Give us more and more of the presence of God—and let the men of the world take the world and divide it among themselves.*

Divine presence is very inflaming; a soul who has but tasted the sweetness of it cannot but long for more of it; as those who had tasted of the grapes of Canaan longed to be in Canaan; and as the Gauls, who, when they had tasted of the sweet wine which was made of the grapes that grew in Italy, they were very eager after Italy, crying out, "O Italy! Italy!" So precious souls that have experienced the sweetness of divine presence, they cannot be satisfied with a little of it—but in every prayer this is the language of their souls—*Lord! more of your presence!* and in every sermon they hear—*Lord! let us have more of your presence!* and in every sacrament they receive—*Lord! give to us more of your presence!*

Nay, this gracious presence of God, which they enjoy here on earth makes them very earnest in their desires and longings after a celestial, a glorious presence of God and Christ in heaven--which presence alone can satisfy their souls. Look! as the espoused maid longs for the marriage day; the apprentice for his freedom; the captive for his ransom; the traveler for his inn; and the mariner for his haven--so do souls that are under the power and sweet of God's gracious presence long to enjoy his glorious presence in heaven, which alone can fill and satisfy their immortal souls.

So says Bernard, *As what I have, if offered to you, pleases not you without myself, so, O Lord; the good things we have from you, though they refresh us—yet they satisfy us not without yourself Lord! I am willing to die, to have a further discovery of yourself.*

And so says Augustine, *You have made us, O Lord, for yourself, and our hearts are unquiet until they come unto you.*

And so when Modestus, the emperor's lieutenant, threatened to kill the pious Basil, he answered, *If that be all, I fear not; yes, your master cannot more pleasure me than in sending me unto my heavenly Father, to whom I now live, and to whom I desire to hasten.*

And says another, *Let all the devils in hell beset me round, let fasting macerate my body, let sorrows oppress my mind, let pains consume my flesh, or heat scorch me, or cold freeze me; let all these, and whatever can come, happen unto me--just so that I may enjoy my Savior.*

Augustine wishing that he might have seen three things, Rome flourishing, Paul preaching, and Christ conversing with men upon the earth; Bede comes after, and correcting this last wish, says, *Yes—but let me see the King in his beauty, Christ in his heavenly kingdom;* by all which you see that it is not a spiritual presence—but the glorious presence of God and Christ in heaven, which can satisfy the souls of the saints. It was a great mercy for Christ to be with Paul on earth—but it was a greater mercy, and a more satisfying mercy, for Paul to be with Christ in heaven, Philip. 1:23. They enjoy much, who enjoy the presence of God on earth—but they enjoy more who enjoy the presence of God in heaven; and no presence below this presence can satisfy a believing soul. But,

(3.) Thirdly, As they shall enjoy a satisfying presence of God in heaven, so they shall enjoy *a constant, a permanent presence of God in heaven.* Here on earth God comes and goes—but in heaven the King of glory will be always present: 1 Thes. 4:17-18, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be *ever* with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." It is the

constant presence of God in heaven, that makes a heaven of comfort to blessed souls. Should this sun ever set, should this presence ever fail--heaven would be as dark as hell, yes, heaven would be another hell.

Here on earth, Jonah complains that he was cast out of God's presence, and the church complains, that he who should comfort her soul, stands afar off. No saint enjoys the gracious presence of God at all times alike. Those who enjoy most of this presence may say of it, as Jacob spoke of Laban's countenance, *I see*, said he, *your Father's countenance is not towards me as before*, Gen. 31:5; so may they say, *Oh we see, Oh we feel, that the presence of God is not with us as before! Oh what a warming, what a cheering, what a quickening, what an enlivening, what a comforting, what a melting, what an encouraging, what an assisting presence of God we once had! Oh but it is not so now with us! we who used always to be upon Christ's knee, or in his arms--are now at a distance from him; he who used to lie day and night as a bundle of myrrh between our breasts--has now covered himself with a cloud, Cant. 1:13. Oh we cannot see his face, we cannot hear his voice, as in the days of old! etc.*

But now in heaven, saints shall enjoy a constant presence of God; there shall not be one moment in all eternity, wherein they shall not enjoy the glorious presence of God. Indeed, it is this constant presence of God in heaven, which puts a glory upon all the saints' glory. Heaven, without this constant presence of God, would be but as a court without a king, or as the sky without the sun. And thus you see that the best and choicest presence of God and Christ is reserved for heaven!

The Perfection of Grace is Reserved for Glory

Though our graces are our best jewels—yet they are now imperfect, and do not give out their full luster; they are like the moon, which when it shines brightest, has a dark spot: 1 Cor. 13:9-10, "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "Here we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isaiah 64:6. Oh the stains, the spots, the blots, the blemishes, which attend our choicest graces and services! Our best personal righteousness is stained with much unrighteousness. Perfection of grace and holiness is reserved for heaven, Eph. 5:25-27; Jude 24; Eph. 4:13. In the work of conversion, God lays the foundation of grace in the souls of his people—but the putting on the top-stone is reserved for heaven. Grace here on earth is but a king in the *cradle*—but in heaven it will be a king upon its *throne*.

For the making this truth more fully out, I will only instance in the joy of the saints, and that thus:

[1.] First, *The joy of the saints in heaven shall be pure joy*. Here on earth—our joy is mixed with sorrow, our rejoicing with trembling. Psalm 2:11: Mat. 28:8, "The women departed from the sepulcher with *fear and great joy*." This composition of two contrary passions is frequently found in the best hearts. Here on earth the best have sorrow with their joy, water with their wine, vinegar with their oil, pain with their ease, winter with their summer, and autumn with their spring, etc. But in heaven, they shall have joy without sorrow, light without darkness, sweetness without bitterness, summer without winter, health without sickness, honor without disgrace,

glory without shame, and life without death. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away." Revelation 21:4 But,

[2.] Secondly, As they shall have in heaven pure joy, so they shall have in heaven *fullness of joy*. Here on earth all joy is at an ebb—but in heaven is the flood of joy, there is fullness of joy: Psalm 16:11, "In his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." Here shall be joy above joy, joy surmounting all joy. Here shall be such great joys, as no geometrician can measure; so many joys, as no arithmetician can number; and so wonderful, as no rhetorician can utter, had he the tongue of men and angels. Here shall be joy within you, and joy without you, and joy above you, and joy beneath you, and joy about you. Joy shall spread itself over all the members of your bodies, and over all the faculties of your souls. In heaven, your knowledge shall be full, your love full, your visions of God full, your communion with God full, your enjoyment of God full, and your conformity to God full, and from thence will arise fullness of joy.

If all the earth were paper, and all the plants of the earth were pens, and all the sea were ink, and if every man, woman, and child, had the pen of a ready writer--yet they would not be able to express the thousandth part of those joys which saints shall have in heaven. All the **joy** which we have here in this world is but pensiveness, compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven. All the pleasure which we have here in this world is but heaviness, compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven. All the **sweetness** which we have here in this world is but bitterness, compared to that joy which we shall have in heaven. "No eye has

seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9. But,

[3.] Thirdly, The joy of the saints in heaven shall be *a lasting joy, an uninterrupted joy*. Here on earth their joy is quickly turned into sorrow, their singing into sighing, their dancing into mourning. Our joy here on earth is like the farmer's joy in harvest, which is soon over, and then we must sow again in tears, before we can reap in joy. David's joy was soon interrupted: "When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken." But when you hid your face, I was dismayed." Psalm 30:6-7. Now David had the oil of joy and gladness, and by and by the spirit of heaviness and sadness: "Restore to me the joy of your salvation," Psalm 51:12. Jacob had much joy at the return of his sons with grain from Egypt; but this joy was soon interrupted by his parting with his dear Benjamin.

I might show you this truth in other instances, as in Abraham, Job, and other saints. Surely there is no believer but who finds that sometimes sin interrupts his joy, and sometimes Satan disturbs his joy, and sometimes afflictions and sometimes desertions eclipse his joy; sometimes the cares of the world, and sometimes the snares of the world, and sometimes the fears of the world, mar his joy. Sometimes great crosses, sometimes hard losses, and sometimes unexpected changes--turn a Christian's harping into mourning, and his organ into the voice of those who weep. Some worm or other is always a-gnawing at the very root of our joy--like the worm which made Johan's gourd to wither.

Some say of Rhodes, that there is not one day in the year in which the sun shines not clearly on them. Surely there is hardly one day in the year, yes, I had almost said one hour in the day, wherein something or other does not fall in to interrupt a Christian's joy.

But now in heaven the joy of the saints shall be constant. Nothing shall come in to disturb or to interrupt their joy. Psalm 16:11, "In your presence is fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forever more." Mark, for quality--there are pleasures; for quantity--fullness; for dignity--at God's right hand; for duration--for evermore. And millions of years multiplied by millions, make not up one minute to this eternity of joy which the saints shall have in heaven! In heaven there shall be no sin to take away your joy, nor any devil to take away your joy, nor any man to take away your joy! John 16:22, "Your joy no man takes from you."

The joy of the saints in heaven is never ebbing—but always flowing to all contentment. The joys of heaven never fade, never wither, never die, nor are they ever lessened or interrupted. The joy of the saints in heaven is a constant joy, an everlasting joy, in the root and in the cause, and in the matter of it and in the objects of it. Their joy lasts forever whose objects remains forever. Isaiah 35:10, "And the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and *everlasting joys* upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall fly away."

In this world not only the joy of hypocrites and the joy of profane people—but also the joy of the upright, is oftentimes "as the crackling of thorns under a pot," or as the blaze of a brush faggot, now all in a flame, and as suddenly out again; or as the least *ephemeron*, which dies on the day it is born. But the joy of believers in heaven shall be like the fire on the altar, which never went out. When Caesar was sad, he used to say to himself, *Remember--you are Caesar!* So when your hearts are sad and sorrowful, oh! then think of these everlasting joys which you shall have in heaven. But I must hasten.

The Best Society, the Best Company, is Reserved Until Last.

It is reserved until believers come to heaven: Heb. 12:22-24, "You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to thousands of angels in joyful assembly. You have come to the assembly of God's firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God himself, who is the judge of all people. And you have come to the spirits of the redeemed in heaven who have now been made perfect. You have come to Jesus, the one who mediates the new covenant between God and people, and to the sprinkled blood, which graciously forgives instead of crying out for vengeance as the blood of Abel did."

Here we shall be citizens of heaven, fellows of angels, co-heirs with Christ, citizens with saints, and of the household of God. Oh blessed sight, to behold the King of angels, the holy of holies, the God of heaven, the Ruler of the earth, the Father of the living! *Woe to me, says one, who am not where the holy saints are; for their life is out of all gun-shot and danger of death, their knowledge without error, their love without offence, and their joy without any annoyance.*

The dignity and diversity of the inhabitants of heaven does much set forth the glory of heaven. This earth, this world, is full of sinners—but heaven is full of saints; this world is full of men—but heaven is full of angels; this world is full of friends and enemies—but in heaven there shall be only friends and sons. Here on earth the nobility and majesty of the guest casts a great deal of honor and splendor upon

the royal palace where they meet. No company so noble, so sweet, so desirable, so delightful, so comfortable, so suitable as this.

[1.] Here all shall be of one mind, of one judgment. In heaven there shall be no discord, no wrangling, no quarreling, no dividing. Here all shall think the same things, and speak the same things, and do the same things. Now, Turks and pagans can agree, and bears and lions, wolves and tigers, can agree; nay, a legion of devils can better agree in one body, than a handful of saints can agree in one city, in one nation, etc. There was a *temple of Concord* among the heathen; and yet how rare is it to find a temple of concord among those who are the temple of the Holy Spirit? While there was a contest among the birds about a rose found in the way, a mischievous owl came in the night and carried the flower away; you know how to apply it.

But in heaven there shall be no arguments, no contests, no debates, no disputes—but as the curtains of the tabernacle were all looped together, so all the saints in heaven shall be all looped together in one mind, in one judgment, and in one way.

[2.] All the saints in heaven shall be of a sweet golden disposition. Grace in a harsh unhewn nature, is like a diamond set in iron. Here on earth the different dispositions of saints does much hinder that sweetness of communion which otherwise would be among them. Here on earth some are of a sour disposition, or of a cross and rugged temper—but in heaven all saints shall be of a sweet, a soft, a silken disposition; which will exceedingly sweeten that royal communion. Here on earth, grace in a man of a harsh disposition is like a brass ring upon a leprous finger; and grace in a man of a sweet disposition is like a gold ring upon an alabaster hand. Now in heaven

all the saints shall be of a golden disposition, yes, of a God-like disposition, which is the sweetest, the noblest, the choicest. But,

[3.] In heaven the saints shall have a constant enjoyment of one another. As they shall ever be with the Lord, so they shall ever be one with another. Here on earth they meet and part—but in heaven they shall meet and never part. Now it is their life to meet and their death to part; now it is their heaven to meet, and their hell to part. But in heaven they shall be always in one another's eye, and in one another's arms. 1 Thes. 4:17-18.

Themistocles, having a piece of ground to sell, appointed the crier to proclaim, that whoever would buy it, would have a good neighbor. The saints in heaven shall be always sure of good neighborhood, they shall never lack good company. In this world Abraham and Lot must live asunder—but there they shall always live together. Diogenes of old searched for an honest man with a candle, because of the scarcity of them; but heaven shall be always full of such saints, as shall shine as so many stars, yes, as so many suns in glory.

[4.] The saints shall have a real, a personal, a particular knowledge of one another in heaven. Here on earth we know but a few saints—but in heaven we shall know all; there shall be no stranger in heaven. Now this truth I shall make good by some arguments brought to hand, and by the addition of others. Take them thus—

(1.) *Adam, when he was in his innocency, knew Eve to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, as soon as he saw her, though he had never seen her before, Gen. 2:23.* Now certainly our knowledge in heaven shall be more ample, full, and perfect—than ever Adam's was in innocency. Therefore without all question, the saints shall know one another in heaven. Luther, the night before he died, discoursing

with his Christian friends, the question was put, Whether the saints should know one another in heaven? Luther held the affirmative, and this was one of the reasons he gave to prove it, that Adam knew Eve as soon as ever he saw her, and that not by discourse—but by divine revelation, and so shall all the saints know one another in heaven. But,

(2.) The disciples, Peter, James, and John, being in the mount at Christ's transfiguration, though they had but a taste, a glimpse of the glory of heaven—yet they knew Moses and Elijah, though they were dead many hundred years before, Mat. 17:1-4. Now if the disciples, in an unglorified condition, knew Moses and Elijah, then certainly when saints shall be in a full glorified condition, they shall know them and all the rest of that royal family. Here they knew Moses from Elijah, and Elijah from Moses, whom they never saw before; and therefore we need not doubt but in that state of blessedness, wherein God shall be all in all, and wherein we shall know as we are known—we shall have a particular and personal knowledge of one another.

Chrysostom says, that in heaven we shall point out the saints, and say, Lo, yonder is Peter, and that is Paul; lo, yonder is Abraham, the great believer, and yonder is Jacob, who as a prince prevailed with God; lo, yonder is Moses, who was the meekest man in all the world, and there is Job, who was the patientest man in all the world; lo, there is Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, and there is Jeremiah, who was once in the dungeon; lo, there is Jonah, who was once in the whale's belly, and there is Daniel, who was once in the lions' den; lo, yonder is John the beloved disciple, who used to lie in the bosom of Christ; and there is Mary, who has chosen the better part. But,

(3.) *The saints shall rise with the same bodies that now they lay down in the grave; and if so, then doubtless they shall know one another in heaven:* the husband the wife, the wife the husband; the father the child, and the child the father; the pastor his people, and the people their pastor; the master his servant, and the servant his master. Now that the saints shall rise with the very same individual body is clear: "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he will stand upon the earth at last. And after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God! I will see him for myself. Yes, I will see him with my own eyes. I am overwhelmed at the thought!" Job 19:25-27. Job did fully believe that the same physical body, would rise again.

Paul says, "*This* corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," 1 Cor. 15:53. The apostle did, as it were, lay his hand upon his own body; and then says he, this corruptible body, and not another, this mortal, and not another, shall be raised when the trumpet sounds. It cannot stand with the unspotted justice and holiness of God, that one body should sow—and another body should reap, which never sowed; that one body should labor, toil, sweat, suffer—and another body which has done none of this should carry the reward.

Tertullian says, that the same body will rise again, for the resurrection is not of another body—but of the same that dies; not a new creation—but a raising up; the self-same body shall certainly rise again, else were it a raising up of a new, rather than a raising again of the old. It cannot stand with equity and right, that one body should sin and another body should suffer. No righteous judge will allow a victorious person to die, and another who never fought to have the crown of his deservings. It is but justice that those very eyes which have dropped many a tear before God—should be wiped by God. I

say those very eyes, and not another pair of new-made eyes. It is but justice that that very tongue which has blessed God, should be blessed by God. It is but justice that those very hands which have been much in doing for Christ, and those very lips which have been much in praising of Christ, and those very backs which have been laded with many heavy burdens for Christ, and those very feet which have been in the stocks for Christ, and which have run in the ways of Christ—should at last be raised and crowned by Christ.

This truth you may see clear in the glorious resurrection of Christ from the dead; that very same body which was wounded, crucified, and slain—that very same body did rise again. Christ could very easily, if he had pleased, in three days, nay, in three hours, ay, in three moments, have cured his wounds—but he would not; to confirm his disciples, and to show that he had the very same body which was wounded and crucified for their sins, for their sakes. Therefore he bids Thomas to reach his finger, and behold his hands, and to reach his hand to thrust it into his side, John 20:27; Luke 24:36-47; whereby Christ made it evident, that that very same body of his which was wounded, crucified, and buried—was raised, and not another; and therefore as in the head the same body which died rose again, so shall it be with all his members in the great day of the resurrection. Now seeing that we shall rise again with the very same individual or physical bodies which we lay down in the grave, we need not question but that we shall know one another in heaven. But,

(4.) That knowledge which may most increase the joy and comfort of the saints, shall certainly be in heaven—but that is a perfect personal knowledge of each other; therefore there shall be a particular personal knowledge of one another in heaven; the husband shall know the wife, the wife the husband, the father the child, and the child the father, etc.

I have read a story of Augustine, how that a widow grieving for the loss of her husband, to comfort her, he told her that it was but a short time that they were parted, and that of all people, she would enjoy her husband most in heaven; nay, says he, you shall not only know your husband—but all the elect shall know you, and you shall know all them. The personal knowledge of the saints on earth, does exceedingly increase our joy and comfort; it makes this wilderness to be a paradise. "Those who fear you will be glad when they see me," says the Psalmist, Psalm 119:74. Yes Seneca, the heathen, saw so much excellency that morality put upon a man, that he says, that the very looks of a good man delight me.

Ah! how often are the saints delighted, warmed, and gladdened by hearing well of other saints, whose faces they have never seen! and when God gives them the honor to see their faces, and to enjoy their presence, oh how does this advance their joy, and increase their comfort. What a heaven does this make on this side heaven to their souls! Oh, then, what tongue can express, what heart can conceive, what pen can describe, the unspeakable joy and comfort which will be raised in the hearts of the saints—upon that perfect, particular, personal knowledge that the saints shall have one of another in heaven? Heaven would be but an uncomfortable place, if the saints there should be strangers one to another. The faces, the words, the ways, the works of strangers, are very little pleasing and delightful to us here on earth; what would they then be in heaven? But,

(5.) *The saints, in the day of account, shall know those wicked men, who shall be indicted, arraigned, condemned, and judged by Jesus Christ.* This great day will be a declaration of the just judgment of God. In this great day, every wicked work, and every wicked worker, shall be brought to light; and indeed it would be but in vain to bring evil works to light, if the evil worker is not also brought to the light.

In this great day the saints shall see and know Cain in his person, they shall be able to point at him, and say, Yonder stands that bloody Cain who slew his brother Abel, because he was more righteous than he. And there stands Pharaoh, the great oppressor of God's Israel, who stood it out against heaven itself; and look, there stands bloody Saul, who lost his crown, his kingdom, his soul, his all, by disobedience; and there is Haman, who was feasted with the king one day, and made a feast for crows the next; lo, there stands Pilate, who condemned Christ; and there is Judas who betrayed Christ. In this great day that word shall be made good, *every man shall appear to account for the works that he has done in his body*, 2 Cor. 5:10; so that both wicked works and wicked workers shall plainly appear before our Lord Jesus and all his saints, who with him shall judge the world. Now certainly, if the saints shall know the wicked in that great day, they shall then much more know one another; when they shall all sit as fellow judges round about Jesus Christ the righteous judge, to pass a righteous sentence upon all unrighteous souls. But,

(6.) *Christ tells the Jews that they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God.* All the saints shall have communion with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God; they shall have communion with them, not only as godly men—but as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The phrase of *seeing* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, does doubtless import thus much, that they shall be known personally and distinctly from all other people in the kingdom of heaven. Saints in heaven shall be able to point at Abraham, and say, There is Abraham, who was the great pattern for believing; and there is Isaac, who was a sweet pattern for meditating; and there is Jacob, who had the honor and happiness of prevailing with God. The saints' happiness in heaven shall be greatly increased by mutual communion, and by their personal knowledge of one another in that blessed state. But,

(7.) Lastly, *In heaven the saints shall know as they are known*, 1 Cor. 13:12, Exod. 33:12. Now God knows all the saints, personally, particularly, corporally, yes, he knows them all by name; and so doubtless all the saints in heaven shall know one another personally, and by name—else how shall they know as they are known? Here in this world we know one another many times only by report, or by writing, or by face—but in heaven we shall know one another by name. As God knows us now—so we shall know one another in heaven; and this is none of the least parts of glory, that we shall know one another in glory; yes, that we shall know one another personally, and by name; the serious consideration of which may much support us, and comfort us under the sad losses of our friends and relations in the Lord.

The Glorifying of Our Bodies is Reserved Until Last.

I shall a little hint unto you the glory and blessedness of the bodies of the saints when they shall all meet in heaven. I shall not focus upon the privative blessedness of glorified bodies, which consists in their freedom from all defects, deformities, diseases, and distempers which here on earth they are subject to. Here on earth our bodies stand in need of clothes to cover them, food to feed them, sleep to refresh them, medicine to cure them, air to breath them, and houses to shelter them—from all which glorified bodies shall be free, Rev. 7:16-17. But I shall only speak of the **positive** blessings and heavenly endowments which glorified bodies shall be invested with. As,

(1.) They shall be like the glorious body of Christ. Philip. 3:21, "He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same mighty power that he will use to conquer everything, everywhere." Our bodies shall be as endearing and lovely, as bright and glorious—as the body of Christ is. Chrysostom says, that the bodies of the saints shall be seven times brighter than the sun. Certainly saints shall be as handsome-bodied and as lovely-featured as Christ is. Though their bodies are sown in dishonor—yet they shall be raised in glory, 1 Cor 15:43. If Stephen's face did shine as if it had been the face of an angel, that is, bright and glorious, Acts 6:15; and if there were such a luster and glory upon Moses' face, that the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, and he forced to put a veil upon it until he had done speaking with them, Exod. 34:29-36; I say, if there were such a glory upon the face of these two mortals, Oh then! how will the faces and bodies of the saints glitter and shine when their bodies shall be made conformable to the glorious body of Jesus Christ! "Then the godly will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom!" Matthew 13:43.

Certainly, as the light and glory of the sun does far exceed the light of the least twinkling star—so much and more shall the glory of the saint's bodies excel that glory and splendor which was upon the faces of Moses and Stephen. The bodies of the saints in heaven shall be surpassingly lovely, well-favored, beautiful, and amiable. Plutarch, in the life of Demetrius, says, *That he was so fair of face and countenance, as no painter was able to draw him.* I am sure that I am not presently able to paint out the beauty and glory which shall be upon the bodies of the saints in that day of glory, wherein the saints shall shine as so many suns. But,

(2.) Their bodies shall be spiritual. 1 Cor. 15:44, "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." Their bodies shall be

spiritual, not in regard of substance—but state and condition. *Spiritual* in the text is not opposed to *visible*—but to *natural*; for their bodies, though in a sense they are spiritual—yet they shall be as visible as the glorious body of Christ. When I say their bodies shall be spiritual, you must not think that I mean that their bodies shall be turned into spirits. Oh no! for they shall keep their bodily dimensions, and be true bodies still. Look! as in the restoration of old and broken vessels, the matter is the same, only the color is fresher and brighter, and the fashion newer and better—so in the day of glory, our bodies shall be the same for substance that now they are; they shall retain the same flesh, blood, and bones, and the same figure and members, that now is—only they shall be overlaid or clothed with spiritual and heavenly qualities and prerogatives; their bodies shall be glorious, of a due and lovely proportion, of an exquisite feature and stature, of a lively color, of cheerful aspect, and full of beauty and glory, splendor and favor!

1. Now the bodies of the saints shall be spiritual, first, in respect of their full, perfect, and perpetual freedom from all heats, colds, hungerings, thirstings, sickness, weakness, wants. Here on earth one cries out, Oh my back, my back! another, Oh my belly, my belly! with the prophet, Hab. 3:16; another, Oh my head, my head! with the Shunamite's son, 2 Kings 4:19; another, Oh my son, my son! as David for Absalom, 2 Sam. 18:33; another, Oh my father, my father! with Elisha, 2 Kings 2:12.

Everyone here on earth has some ailment or other, some infirmity or other, some grief or other—which fills his eyes with tears and his heart with sorrow. But when these natural bodies, these animal or carnal bodies, shall be made glorious, then they shall be fully and perpetually freed from all manner of miseries and calamities; they shall be as the angels, not subject to any sickness, weakness, or

infirmities: Rev. 7:16-17, "Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Rev. 21:4, "God will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever." In this respect their bodies may be said to be spiritual.

2. But, secondly, they may be said to be spiritual in respect of their spiritual agility and nimbleness. Now, our bodies are lethargic, dull, and heavy in their motion: and by this the soul is many times hindered in its lively operations; for when the soul would mount up on high, and busy herself about eternal objects, the body, like a lump of lead, keeps it down. But now, in this glorious state, the body shall put off all lethargy, dullness, and heaviness, and be exceeding agile, light, and swift in motion, far beyond the swiftest bird which flies, Isaiah 40:31; 1 Thes. 4:17.

I know not by what to set forth the agility of glorified bodies; a swift runner, a bird, a torrent—are too short to set forth their agility. Luther says that a glorified body shall move quicker than a thought. And Augustine says that the body will presently be here and there, wherever the soul would have it.

Certainly the speed and motion of glorified bodies will be extraordinary and incredible. A glorified saint desiring to be in such or such a place a thousand miles off or more, he will be there in such an incredible short time, that one calls it imperceptible, hardly to be discerned: in which respect their bodies may be said to be spiritual.

3. But, thirdly and lastly, they may be said to be spiritual, because of that perfect, full, absolute, and complete subjection that they shall

delightfully and perpetually yield to the Spirit of God. Now they often vex and grieve, affront and fight against the Spirit of God. The members of our bodies, as well as the faculties of our souls, do often make war upon the Spirit of grace, as the apostle fully shows in that Romans 6. "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other," Gal. 5:17. Now the body says to the soul, "Be not over-righteous; neither make yourself over-wise: why should you destroy yourself?" Eccles. 7:16. The body is often apt to say to the soul, *You are over-righteous, O soul! You argue and dispute against this sin and that pleasurable way, and this comfort and that enjoyment, more than is necessary.* And the soul seems to answer, ver. 17, *"Be not over-much wicked, neither be foolish—why should you die before your time?"*

But now in heaven the bodies of the saints shall be fully, perfectly, and delightfully—under the command, conduct, and guidance of the soul; and therefore may truly be said to be spiritual. As the spirit serving the flesh may not unfitly be called carnal—so the body obedient to the soul may rightly be termed spiritual. Glorified bodies are spiritual, not in their essence—but in condition and quality, as being fully and perpetually under the government of the Spirit.

Now on earth, the tongue grieves the Spirit, and now the deaf ear is turned to the voice of the Spirit, and now the **eye** is roving, when it should be reading the things of the Spirit; and now the feet are wandering when they should be walking in the ways of the Spirit; and now the hand is idle which should be diligent in the work of the Spirit, Eph. 4:29-31, Isaiah 63:10.

Oh! but when in heaven—the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hands, the feet—shall be all brought into an angelical, willing, and delightful

obedience to the Spirit; upon which account glorified bodies may truly be termed spiritual. But,

(3.) Their bodies shall be immortal—they shall be incorruptable. 1 Cor. 15:42, 54. Here on earth, these carnal bodies of ours, by reason of their earthly and dreggish composition, are subject to mortality and corruption. Indeed man is so poor a piece, that he no sooner begins to live—but he begins to die; his whole life is but a lingering death. Death every hour lies at the door. This *sergeant, death*, constantly attends all men, in all places, companies, changes, and conditions. Petrarch tells of one, who being invited to dinner the next day, answered, *I have not had a tomorrow for this many years.*

Many dangers, many deaths, every hour surround these lives of ours. Here, says one, *we enter into the world; we follow one another in the world; we depart all out of the world.* Oh! but in heaven we shall have immortal bodies! Luke 20:36, "They will never die again. In these respects they are like angels." By the power, presence, and goodness of God—their bodies shall be so perfumed and embalmed, that they shall never corrupt, nor be subject to mortality. Manna, by a divine power, was kept many hundred years in the golden pot without putrefying or corrupting, and so shall the glorified bodies of the saints be preserved and kept pure and immortal.

The immortality of glorified bodies shall far excel that of Adam's in paradise, for they shall be free from all possibility of dying; for they shall be perfectly and perpetually freed from all corruptible and corrupting elements. Glorified bodies shall have no *seeds of corruption* in them, nor any corruptive, harmful, malignant, or afflictive passion attending them. Adam in his noble estate was in a possibility of dying—but the saints in their glorified condition are

above all possibility of dying. This is a happiness which Adam could not reach to, in his state of integrity. This great blessing lies upon all who shall come to glory.

It is reported of the Duke of Bouillon and his company, that when they went to Jerusalem, as soon as they saw the high turrets they gave a mighty shout, which even made the earth ring, crying out, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" So when the saints shall all meet in the heavenly Jerusalem, oh how will they make even heaven to ring again, crying out, *Immortality! immortality! immortality!*

And thus, I suppose, I have clearly and fully made good that great truth, namely—that the best and greatest things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven.

The Reasons Why God Reserves the Best Blessings for Believers Until They Come to Heaven.

Reason 1. Because it is his good will and pleasure to reserve the best things for his people until last. Luke 12:32, "Fear not, *little* flock—for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." As it is God's good pleasure to give you a kingdom, so it is his pleasure not to give you the kingdom until last, 2 Tim. 4:7-8. Our heavenly Father does now give a kingdom of **grace**, and will at last also give a kingdom of **glory**—to those who walk uprightly, Psalm 84:11. But,

Reason 2. That he may keep the hearts of his people in a longing and in a waiting frame, for the enjoyment of those great and glorious things that he has reserved for them until last. Heb. 13:14, "Here on earth we have no continuing city—but we seek one to come." The greater and better the things are which are laid up for us—the more we should long and wait for the happy enjoyment of them. Abraham waited long for a son, and Hannah waited long for a child, and Joseph waited long for his advancement, and David waited long for the crown, the kingdom; and they had all a most happy outcome.

The longer we wait, the better we shall speed; as that emperor's son said, the longer the cooks are preparing the meat—the better will be the feast; meaning, the longer he waited for the empire—the greater it would be. The longer we wait for happiness, the more at last we shall have of happiness. The great things of eternity are worth nothing, if they are not worth a longing and a waiting for. But,

Reason 3. God has reserved the best and greatest things for his people until last—and that because else they were above all men in the world the most miserable. 1 Cor 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Usually none outside of hell—are so much afflicted, tempted, oppressed, scorned, despised, and neglected—as they are. Here on earth they have their hell—they have need of a heaven to come. Here on earth they are clothed with shame—they had need hereafter to be crowned with honor, or else they would be the unhappiest men in all the world. Here on earth the life of a believer is filled with many and multiplied miseries—with miseries of body, with miseries of mind. Multiplied miseries attend him, at bed and board, at home and abroad. Every condition is full—and every relation is full—of miseries and calamities! Therefore one says

well, *How can this life be loved, which is so full of loathsome bitterness? Yes, how can it be called a life, which brings forth so many deaths? Yet he is a fool, says one, who looks upon a godly man under trouble and sorrow, and thinks him to be unhappy; because he sees only what he suffers, and does not see what is reserved for him in heaven.* If the best things were not reserved for believers until last, they would have the saddest portion of all men, namely—a hell here on earth, and a hell hereafter! And so the ungodly would have but one hell, and saints two—which would be blasphemy to affirm. But,

Reason 4. God reserves the best things for his people until last, for the greater terror and horror, conviction and confusion of wicked and ungodly people, who now revile them, and judge them to be the unhappiest men in all the world. Oh! but when the Lord shall in the sight of all the world gloriously own them, and put royal robes upon their backs, and golden crowns upon their heads—then, Oh! what shame, what covering of the face, what terror, what trembling—will possess the hearts of wicked men! The great honor and glory which God will put upon his people at last, will be to wicked men what the handwriting upon the wall was to Belshazzar, "His face turned pale with fear. Such terror gripped him that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way beneath him!" Dan. 5:1-8. Oh! it will make their countenance to change, their thoughts to be terrified, the joints of their loins to be loosed, and their knees dashed one against another!

Now that word shall be eminently made good: "The godly will see these things and be glad, while the wicked are stricken silent!" Psalm 107:42. Oh! what trouble of mind, what horror of conscience, what distraction and vexation, what terror and torment, what weeping and wailing, what crying and roaring, what wringing of hands, what

tearing of hair, what dashing of knees, what gnashing of teeth—will there be among the wicked, when they shall see the saints in all their splendor, dignity, and glory! "When they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God—and they themselves shut out forever!" Luke 13:28.

Then shall the wicked lamentingly say, Lo! these are the men whom we counted fools, madmen, and miserable. Oh but now we see that we were deceived and deluded! Oh that we had never despised them! Oh that we had never reproached them! Oh that we had never trampled upon them! Oh that we had been one with them! Oh that we had imitated them! Oh that we had walked as they, and done as they, that so we might now have been as happy as they! Oh but this cannot be! Oh this may not be! Oh this shall never be! Oh that we had never been born! Oh that now we might be unborn! Oh that we might be turned into a bird, a beast, a toad, a stone! Oh that we were anything but what we are! Oh that we were nothing! Oh that now our immortal souls were mortal! Oh that we might so die, that we may not eternally exist! But it is now too late. Oh we see that there is a reward for the righteous! and we see, that by all the contempt which we have cast upon these glorious shining saints, whose splendor and glory does now darken the very glory of the sun, Dan. 12:3; we have but treasured up wrath against the day of wrath, Romans 2:4-7; we have but added fuel to those burning coals, to those everlasting flames, in which we must now lie forever, Psalm 140:10. "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life." Matthew 25:46. "And they cried to the mountains and the rocks—Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Revelation 6:16.

Reason 5. The Lord has reserved the best things for his people until they come to heaven, that so he may save his

honor and secure his glory. Would it make for the honor and glory of God, to put his children, his servants, upon doing hard things, and upon suffering great things—and at last to put them off with nothing? Surely it would not! And therefore the Lord, to save the honor of his great name, has reserved the best wine until last—the best and choicest favors for his people until they come to heaven, John 2:10. The sweetest honey lies at the bottom. I cannot see how God would save his glory, if he would put his children always upon sowing—and never allow them to reap, 2 Cor. 9:6-7; that they should still be sowing in tears—if at last they would not reap in joy, Psalm 126:4-6. Men who love but their names and honor in the world, will not be served for nothing, and will God? Will God, who is infinitely more tender of his name and honor, than any created being can be of theirs? Isaiah 42:8, 48:11.

I have read of Alphonsus, a king of Spain, who when a knight falling into poverty and being arrested for debt, there was a petition to the king to support him, *Ay*, said the King, *since he had spent his estate for me, it is reason why he shall be provided for by me.* Men of honor will provide for those who spend themselves in their service; and will not God? Will not God do as much, yes more, for those who spend themselves in his service? Surely he will! Heb. 11:16. "They were looking for a better place, a heavenly homeland. That is why God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a heavenly city for them!" As if he had said, Had not God prepared for them a city, had he not made some blessed provision for them—who left so much for him, who did so much for him, and who suffered such great and bitter things for him—they might well have complained that they had but a bad bargain of it, and that God was a hard master; so God would have been ashamed. Had not God made such happy and blessed provision for those who had run through so many dangers and deaths for his sake, had he not provided and laid

up for them, according to his promise, and suitable to his greatness and goodness, his dignity and glory, it would have put God to the blush, to speak after the manner of men.

I have read concerning Dionysius of Sicily, that being extremely delighted with a minstrel who sang well, he promised to give him a great reward; and that raised the imagination of the man, and made him play better. But when the music was done, and the man waited for his reward, the king dismissed him empty, telling him that he should carry away as much of the promised reward as himself did of the music, and that he had paid him sufficiently with the pleasure of the promise, for the pleasure of his song. But it will not stand with the honor of the King of kings to put off his servants so poorly, whose prayers, praises, and tears, have been most sweet and delightful music to him? No, he will act like himself at last—and that his children know. It encouraged a martyr at the stake—that he was going to a place where he should ever be a-receiving wages, and do no more work. But,

Reason 6. That he may make his children temptation-proof, he has reserved for them the best things until they come to heaven. The great things which God has reserved for believers in heaven, was that which made those worthies, of whom this world was not worthy, temptation-proof. The pleasures, the treasures, the dignities and glories which are reserved for believers in heaven—make them bravely and nobly to resist all those temptations which they meet with from a tempting world or a tempting devil.

Augustine blessed God—that his heart and the temptation did not meet together. By the precious things that are reserved for believers in heaven—God keeps their hearts and temptations asunder. When Basil was tempted with money and preferment, says he, *Give me*

money that may last forever, and glory that may eternally flourish! Satan made a bow of Job's wife, of his rib, as Chrysostom speaks, and shot a temptation by her at Job, thinking to have shot him to the heart, "Curse God and die!" But Job's sincerity and integrity, and his hopes of immortality and glory, were a breastplate which made him temptation-proof. Ah Christians! do not you daily find, that the glorious things reserved for you in heaven—do mightily arm you against all the temptations which you meet with on earth? I know you do. But,

Reason 7. God has reserved the best things for his people, until they come to heaven, because they are not in this mortal and frail condition able to bear, they are not able to take in the glory that is reserved for them. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" 2 Cor. 4:17. Glory is such a great, such an exceeding, such an excessive, such an eternal weight—that no mortal is able to bear it. We must have better and larger hearts, and we must have stronger and broader backs—before we shall be capable of bearing that excellent, exceeding, and excelling weight of glory, which is reserved in heaven for us! Nay, glory is such a weight, that when the saints shall enter into it—if then the Lord should not put his everlasting arms under them and bear them up by his almighty power—it would be impossible they should be able to bear it themselves!

In this our frail mortal state, we are not able to bear the appearance, the presence, the glory of one angel—Ah! how much less then are we able to bear the weight of all that glory which is reserved for us, and of which I have given you some glimpses in what I have already said. But,

Reason 8. The Lord has reserved the best things for his people until they come to heaven, *because while they are in this world they have not come to full age.* Here on earth saints are in their infancy—but when they come to heaven, then they come to their full age, and then they shall have the inheritance by the Father of mercies, freely and fully settled upon them. Those in their childhood are under tutors and governors—but when they come to full age, then is the inheritance settled upon them. So here on earth, it is not for us in our infancy, to mount into the clouds, to pierce this fullness of light, to break into this bottomless depth of glory, or to dwell in that unapproachable brightness. This is reserved until we come to full age.

And thus I have given you the reasons why God has reserved the best and greatest things for his people until they come to heaven.

We shall now come to the use and application of this point to our own souls, remembering that *close application is the very life and soul of teaching.* And as a man does not attain to health by the mere reading and knowing Hippocrates remedies—but by the practical application of them to remove the disease; so no man will attain to true happiness by hearing, reading, or commending what I have spoke or written—but by a close application and bringing home of all to his own soul. The opening of a point is the drawing of the bow; but the application of the point is the hitting of the mark, the bulls-eye; and therefore,

(1.) If God has reserved the best things for believers until last, then by the rule of contraries—the worst things are reserved for unbelievers until last. Here on earth wicked men have their heaven, hereafter they shall have their hell. The time of this life is the day of their joy and triumph; and when this short day

is ended, then everlasting lamentations, mournings, and woes follow. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'" Luke 16:22-25

Ah sinners! sinners! that day is hastening upon you, wherein you shall have punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without support, pain without pleasure, and torments without end! Psalm 11:6, "On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot." Psalm 140:10, "Let burning coals fall upon them; may they be thrown into the fire, into miry pits, never to rise."

Ah, sinners! sinners! what a dishonor would it be to God, to Christ, to angels, to saints, to heaven—if such wretches as you are should be admitted into that royal palace, that heavenly paradise above!

Ah! your portion is below, and you are already adjudged to those torments which are endless, easeless, and remediless, where the worm never dies, and the fire never goes out, Rev. 14:11. The day is coming upon you, sinners, when all your sweet shall be turned into bitter; all your glory into shame; all your plenty into scarcity; all your joys into sorrows; all your recreations into vexations; and all your momentary comforts into everlasting torments!

Now you reign as kings, you look big, you speak proudly, you behave arrogantly, you walk contemptuously; but there is an after-reckoning

a-coming which will appall you—and torture you forever!

The time of this life is your summer; but there is a winter a-coming upon you, which shall never have end. God could not be just if your worst were not yet to come; neither could he be just if the saints' best were not yet to come. The time of this life is the saints' hell, and the sinners' heaven; but the next life will be the saints' heaven, and the sinners' hell. But,

(2.) If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—*patiently wait for the enjoyment of those great things that are reserved for you in heaven.* Men will wait, and wait long, for some outward good; and will not you for the best and greatest good? Are there not many things which speak out the greatness of that glory that is reserved for you? as the price that Christ has paid for it, and the great and glorious things by which it is shadowed out to us? as Canaan, Jerusalem, paradise; and the dignity of the inhabitants, there being none admitted under the degree of a king; and the great and glorious pledge of the Spirit; and the great care, cost, and charge that God has been at to prepare and fit souls for the enjoyment of it. What do all these things speak out—but that the glory which is reserved for believers is great glory; and is it not then worth a waiting for? *Let not Satan's slaves wait more patiently for a few ounces of gold, than you do for the kingdom of heaven!*

Again, as the things reserved for you in heaven are great, and therefore wait, so *they are certain and sure*; and therefore wait. Oh patiently wait for the enjoyment of them! Heb. 6:16-19. When the beggar at the door is sure of succeeding, he will wait patiently, he will wait unweariedly. The glorious things reserved in heaven for you, they are made sure and certain to you by word, by covenant, by oath, by blood, by the pledge, by the first-fruits, and by Christ's taking

possession of them in your place, in your stead, Eph. 2:6, John 14:1-4; therefore patiently wait for the enjoyment of them.

O Christians! it is but a very short time which God has proposed to be between grace—and glory; between our title to the crown—and our wearing the crown; between our right to the heavenly inheritance—and our possession of the heavenly inheritance. Ah, Christians! bear up bravely, bear up sweetly, bear up patiently—for it will be but a little, little, little while, before he who shall come will come, and will not tarry, Heb. 10:35-37. And when he does come, he will not come empty-handed; no, when he comes, he brings his reward with him, Rev. 22:12; when he comes, he will reward you for every prayer that you have made, and for every sermon that you have heard, and for every tear that you have shed, and for every hour that you have patiently waited; and therefore wait patiently until the promised crown be set upon your head. But,

(3.) If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—oh then, *let no believer envy nor be troubled at the outward prosperity and felicity of the men of the world.* What is darkness compared to light, chaff to wheat, dross to gold, gall to honey, pebbles to pearls, earth to heaven? No more is all the glory and felicity that wicked men have in this poor world—compared to those great and glorious things that saints have in reversion; and therefore, O believer, let not wicked men's prosperity be your calamity!

It is the justice of envy to kill and torment the envious. Envy—it tortures the affections, it vexes the mind, it inflames the blood, it corrupts the heart, it wastes the spirits; and so it becomes man's tormentor and man's executioner at once. Take heed, Christians, take heed of an envious eye, for that usually looks upon other men's

enjoyments through a multiplying glass, and so makes them appear greater and bigger than they are; and this increases torment, this often makes a hell.

It is reported of Panormitanus, that a question being asked before king Frederick, what was good for the eye-sight, and the physicians answering some one thing, some another, Sannizarius answered, that envy was very good; at which the company smiling, he gave this reason for it, because that envy makes all things appear bigger than they are.

Ah, Christians! envy is a serpent, a devil—which should be abhorred and shunned more than hell itself. O Christian! with what heart can you envy wicked men's prosperity and worldly felicity—if you do but look up to your own glory, and seriously consider of their sad reckoning and future calamity? Dives was one day rustling in his purple robes, riches, and worldly glory—and the next day he was rolling and roaring in the flames of hellish misery; and how soon this may be the portion of those you envy, who can tell? and therefore rather pity them than envy them. None need more prayer and pity than those who have neither skill nor will to pity themselves, to pray for themselves; and such are wicked men under their outward prosperity and worldly glory, Job 21:7-20. But,

(4.) If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—oh then *let all believers be contented, though they have but small portions in this world!* He who is an heir to a great estate, though in his childhood he is kept poor—yet this comforts and contents him, that though things are now poor with him, it will be but a little while before the inheritance is settled upon him, and this makes him bear up sweetly and contentedly under all his needs and straits, Philip. 4:12-14, 1 Tim. 6:6-8. Ah,

Christians! Christians! though for the present your needs may be many, and God may cut you short in many desirable enjoyments—yet it will not be long before the crown, the inheritance, be fully settled upon you, and then you shall never know more what need means; therefore be content with your present condition, with your present portion, though it be ever so little, ever so lowly. Heb. 13:5, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have." At this time the Hebrews had been plundered of all their goods, and goodly things, chapter 10:34, and so had nothing left—yet they must be content with present things. When they had changed their raiment for rags, their silver for brass, their plenty for scarcity, their houses for holes and caves, and dens—yet then they must be contented with present things.

When men cannot bring their means to their minds, then they must bring their minds to their means, and, when this is done, then a little will serve the turn. A man needs very little of this world's goods to carry him through his pilgrimage, until he comes to his home, until he comes to heaven. A little will satisfy the demands of nature, less will satisfy grace, though nothing will satisfy a man's lusts! "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well-fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need." Philippians 4:11-12

I have read of one Didymus, a godly preacher, who was blind; Alexander, a godly man, being with him, asked him whether he was not much troubled and afflicted for lack of his sight? Oh yes! said Didymus, the lack of my sight is a very great grief and affliction to me; whereupon Alexander chid him, saying, Has God given you the

excellency of an angel, of an apostle, and are you troubled for the lack of that which rats, and mice, and brute beasts have?

And so Augustine, upon the 12th Psalm, brings in God rebuking a discontented Christian thus: *Have I promised you these earthly things? what! were you made a Christian that you should flourish here in this world?* So may I say to Christians who are discontented, disquieted, and disturbed about the lack of this or that worldly comfort: Why are you troubled about the lack of this or that worldly enjoyment? you who have a saving interest in God, an interest in the covenant, a right to Christ, a title to heaven! You who have so much in hand and more in hope; you who have so much in expectation and so much in reversion—why do you sit sighing for the lack of this outward comfort, and complaining for the lack of that outward contentment, considering what great and glorious things are reserved in heaven for you?

It was said of the great Duke of Guise, that though he was poor, as to his present possessions—yet he was the richest man in France in bills, bonds, and obligations; because he had engaged all the noblemen in France unto himself by advancing of them. A Christian, though a Lazarus at Dives's door; yet, in respect of his propriety in God and his interest in the covenant, he is the richest and the happiest man in all the world; and why then should he not be content. Well! remember, Christian, that the shortest way to riches and all worldly contentments is by their contempt. It is great riches, it is the best riches—not to desire riches; and God usually gives him most—who covets least.

God often gives the most—to those who seek the least. Solomon begs a wise heart, and God gives him that, and abundance of gold and

silver and honor, and what not, into the bargain. The best way to have much, is to be contented with a little.

I have read of Dionysius, how he took away from one of his nobles almost his whole estate, and seeing him nevertheless continue as cheerful and well contented as ever, he gave him that again, and as much more. This is a common thing with God, as Job and many thousands can witness; the best way to have a pound is to be contented with a penny, the best way to have hundreds is to be contented with pounds, and the best way to have thousands is to be contented with hundreds. Ah! you unquiet and discontented Christian, can you read over that saying of Cato, a heathen, and not blush? *I have neither house, nor plate, nor garments of value in my hands. What I have, I can use. What I do not have—I am content to be without; some blame me, because I lack things, and I blame them, because they are discontent.* How many thousand Christians in these knowing and professing days might this heathen put to the blush! O Christians! Christians! let the remembrance of the crown, the kingdom, the treasures, pleasures, and glories—which are reserved in heaven for you, make you bear up sweetly and contentedly under all your outward needs in this world. But,

(5.) If the best and greatest things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—then make not a judgment of the saints' condition by their present state. If you do, you will "condemn the generation of the just." What though they are now in rags—it will not be long before they are clothed in their royal robes! What though they are now abased—it will not be long before they shall in the sight of all the world be highly advanced! What though they are now under many needs—it will not be long before they shall be filled with all fullness! What though they are now under many trials and afflictions—yet it will not be long before all

tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, and their sighing turned into singing, "and everlasting joys shall be upon their heads!"

Therefore do not judge of their condition by their present state. If you will needs be judging, then look that you judge righteous judgment, John 7:24; then look more at the latter end of a Christian than the beginning. Remember the patience of Job, James 5:11, and consider what end the Lord made with him. Look not upon Lazarus lying at Dives's door—but lying in Abraham's bosom. Look not to the beginning of Joseph, who was so far from his dream, that the sun and moon should reverence him, that for two years he was cast where he could neither see sun nor moon—but behold him at last made ruler over all Egypt, and reigning eighty years like a king, Gen. 37:9, 41:40-46. Look not upon David, as there was but a step between him and death, nor as he was envied by Saul, and hated by his courtiers—but behold him seated in his royal throne, where he reigned forty years gloriously, and died in his bed of honor, and his son Solomon, and his nobles about him.

When Israel was dismissed out of Egypt, it was with gold and earrings, Exod. 11; and when the Jews were dismissed out of Babylon, it was with great gifts, jewels, and all necessary utensils, Ezra 1. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; the end of that man is peace," Psalm 37:37. Whatever the needs, the straits, the troubles, the trials of the saints are in this world—yet their end shall be peace, their end shall be glorious; the best things are reserved for them until last! Therefore do not, oh do not judge of their condition by their present state—but rather judge of them by their future condition, by that glory which is reserved for them in heaven. But,

(6.) If the greatest and choicest things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—then *let believers*

keep up in their own souls a lively, hopeful expectation of enjoying these great and glorious things which are laid up for them. The keeping up of those hopes will be the keeping up of your hearts. The keeping up of these hopes will be the bettering of your hearts. The keeping up of these hopes will make every bitter sweet, and every sweet more sweet. The keeping up of these hopes will make you bear much for God, and do much for God.

When Alexander went upon a hopeful expedition, he gave away his gold; and when he was asked what he kept for himself, he answered, *The hope of greater and better things.*

Ah! Christians, there is no work so high and noble, there is no work so hard and difficult, there is no work so low and contemptible—but the hopes of the great things reserved in heaven for you will put you upon it.

Galen speaks of a fish called *uranoscopus*, which has but one eye, and that is so placed that it is always looking upwards towards heaven; and so should a Christian's eye of hope be always fixed on God, on promises, on heaven, on the inheritance of the saints in light, and on all those precious and glorious things which are laid up for them in that royal palace where Christ is all in all.

A devout pilgrim traveling to Jerusalem, and by the way visiting many brave cities, with their rare monuments, and meeting with many friendly entertainments, would often say, I must not stay here—this is not Jerusalem, this is not Jerusalem; so says a Christian in the midst of all his worldly delights, comforts, and entertainments—oh these are not the delights, the comforts, the contentments which my soul looks for, which my soul expects and hopes to enjoy. I look and hope for choicer delights, for sweeter comforts, for more satisfying contentments, and for more durable riches. "All these

people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:13, 16

Ah, saints! ah, souls! Shall the great heirs of this world live upon their hopes, and keep up their hopes—that their inheritances shall in time be settled respectively upon them? And will not you, will not you live upon your hopes, and keep up your hopes of enjoying all the treasures, pleasures, and glories which are reserved in heaven for you? A Christian's motto always is, or always should be, *I hope for better things; I hope for better things than any the world can give to me, or than any that Satan can take from me.* A Christian is always rich in hope, though he has not always a penny in hand. But,

(7.) If there be such great and glorious things reserved for you in heaven—then *do nothing unworthy of your dignity, nor of that glory which is laid up for you.* Your calling is high, your honor is great, your happiness is matchless; you have so much in promises, so much in expectation, and so much in reversion, as cannot be conceived, as cannot be expressed! Therefore, do not stoop to sin, nor bow down to Satan, nor comply with the world!

When Alexander was urged to race with some people of inferior rank, he refused, saying, *It was not fit for Alexander to run in a race with any but princes and nobles.* Ah, Christians! are you not more nobly born? are you not better bred? have you not more royal hopes than to stoop to lust—or to do as the men of the world do?

Antigonus, being invited to dinner where a notable harlot was to be present, asked counsel of Menedemus, his tutor, what he should do,

and how he should behave himself? His tutor bade him *remember that he was a prince*, that he was the son of a king, and this would preserve him. Ah! Christians! nothing will preserve you from being base, like the remembrance of your present dignity, and of that future glory which is laid up for you.

Ah, Christians! you are kings elected, you are heirs-apparent of a crown, of a glorious crown, of a weighty crown, of an incorruptible crown, of an everlasting crown of glory! Oh why then should you be crowning yourselves with rosebuds? why then should you take up in the low enjoyments and poor contentments of this world?

It was a noble speech of that heathen Themistocles, who, noticing something which seemed to be a pearl, scorned to stoop for it—but bade another stoop, saying, *You stoop for this pearl, for you are not Themistocles*. Oh let the men of the world stoop and take up the world, oh let those whose practice speaks them out to be of the world, and to be worshipers of that golden calf—the world—let these dance about it, bow down to it, and take up in it; but let the heirs of heaven divinely scorn to bow down to earth, or to take up in it, or to be much taken with it. It was a good saying of Seneca, *I am too great, and born to greater things—than that I should be as a slave to my body*.

Ah, Christians! you are too great, and born to greater things—than that you should be slaves to your bodies, or slaves to your lusts, or slaves to the world! Can you seriously consider of the great things which are reserved in heaven for you, and not set your *feet* upon those things that the men of the world set their *hearts* upon? Can you look up to your future glory, and not blush to be taken with the glory of this world?

Alexander the Great said to one of his captains who was named Alexander, *Remember the name of Alexander, and see that you do nothing unworthy of the name of Alexander.* So say I, Remember, O Christian your name; remember your dignity and glory, and see that you do nothing unworthy of the one or the other. But,

(8.) If the best and greatest things are reserved for the saints until they come to heaven—then *let them desire and long to be possessed of those blessed things which are reserved in heaven for them.* Oh, how do the heirs of this world long to have their estates in their own hands! how do they long to have their inheritances settled upon them! some of them wishing their relations dead, who stand between them and their inheritances. And others, of a little better nature, wishing them in the bosom of Abraham, that they might come to inherit, and that they might suck the sweet, and take up their rest, in their worldly inheritances. And shall not the saints desire and long to be in a full and happy possession of that crown, of that inheritance, of those jewels which are reserved in heaven for them? O Christians! how is it, why is it, that your heavenly Jerusalem, your mansions above, your glorious treasures, are not taken by storm, in respect of your earnest wishes and burning desires after them?

The primitive Christians did so hunger and thirst, look and long, wish and desire after this heavenly kingdom, this glorious inheritance, that the Roman State had a jealousy of them—as if they had impacted their kingdom and their worldly glory. But where is that spirit now to be found? Most men live now as if there were no heaven, or else as if heaven were not worth a seeking, worth a desiring; as if heaven were a poor, despised, contemptible thing.

But ah, Christians! you have learned better; and therefore be much in desiring and longing to get into that glorious city, where streets, walls, and gates are all gold, yes, where pearl is but as mire and dirt, and where are all pleasures, all treasures, all delights, all comforts, all contentments—and that forever. This word "forever" is a bottomless depth, a conception without end; it is a word which sweetens all the glory above, and that indeed makes heaven to be heaven. I can hardly call him a Christian, who does not long after spiritual realities, and after the great things that are reserved in heaven for the saints. But,

(9.) If the best and greatest things are reserved for the saints until they come to heaven—then, *Oh let not the men of the world envy the saints, while they are here in this wilderness.*

Ah! sinners, sinners, the people of God have but little in hand; though they have much in hope; they have but little in the bag whatever they may have in the bank; they have but little in the cistern whatever they may have in the fountain; they have but little in possession whatever they may have in reversion; and therefore do not envy them, James 2:5. Who but monsters will envy the child in his cradle—though he be an heir to a great estate, inasmuch as it is out of his hand, and he is not in the possession of it? and yet such monsters this world affords, who are filled with envy against Christ's precious ones, though their estates are out of their hands.

Old Jacob speaking of his son Joseph, says, that "the archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him," Gen. 49:23; and Jerome, expounding the words, notes, that here envy is brought in with bow and arrows shooting at that which is immaculate, and where there is no spot to be a mark for it! or else, as an archer sets up

some white thing to be the mark at which he shoots, so it is the whiteness of some good thing or other, against which envy shoots. Such is the wrath, the rage, the hatred, the envy of wicked men against the saints, that they will still be envying of them upon one score or another. Such was Saul's envy to David, that David chooses rather to live under king Achish, an enemy, than to live under Saul's envy; nay, such was Saul's envy against David, that when David played on his harp, to cure him of the evil spirit which haunted him, that he threw his spear at him to destroy him, choosing rather to be tormented with an evil spirit, than that David should live. And such was Cain's envy to Abel, that though he had but one brother, nay, though there was but one brother in all the world—yet enraged envy will wash her hands in that brother's blood!

Chrysologus notes of the rich glutton, who would have Lazarus to be sent to him—that being still cruel and envious towards Lazarus, he would have him to be sent to hell from the bosom of Abraham, to the bottomless gulf from the highest throne of glory, to the gnashing and grinding of torments from the holy rest of the blessed. The truth is, **envy** sticks so close to the heart of wicked men, that *courtesies to others* provoke it; *love and respect to others* swell it; and *an eminency in gifts and graces in others* enrages it. No man of worth has ever escaped envy. Envy is like certain flies called *cantharides*, which eat on the fairest crops, and most beautiful flowers. *Neither my accusers, nor my crimes, says Socrates, can kill me—but envy only, which has, and does, and will destroy the worthiest that ever were.* And therefore, Socrates wishes that envious men had more eyes and more ears than others—that so they might be tormented more than others, by beholding others' happiness.

Well! sinners, if, notwithstanding all that has been said, you will still be envious against those gracious souls who have but little in hand,

though they have much in hope; if you will be envious against those who stand between you and wrath, between you and hell; if you will be envious against those to whom, as instruments, you are indebted for all the mercies, comforts, and contentments, which you enjoy in this world, then know, that your envy will torture you, your envy will slay you, your envy will prepare the hottest, darkest, and lowest place in hell for you! But,

(10.) If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven, then *let not any outward losses trouble you, nor deject you.* What is your loss of a house made with hands—compared to one eternal in the heavens? What is your loss of rags—compared to the royal robes above? What is your loss of earth—compared to the gain of heaven? What is your loss of husband, wife, child, friends—compared to the enjoyment of God, Christ, angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? 2 Cor. 5:1; Rev. 6:11, Rev. 7:9, 13, 14.

When Paulinus Nolanus' city was taken from him by the barbarians, he prayed thus to God: *Lord! let me not be troubled at the loss of my gold, silver, honor, etc.; for you are all, and much more than all of these, unto me.*

When Demetrius asked Stilpo what loss he had sustained when his wife, his children, and country were all burned, he answered, that he had lost nothing, counting that only his own which none could take from him, namely, his virtues. What an unlovely, what an inappropriate, thing would it be to see a rich heir, upon the loss of a ribbon out of his hat—to stand sighing and grieving, vexing and lamenting! Or to see a prince, upon the burning up of his stables and outhouses—to stand wringing his hands and beating his breasts, and

to cry out, *Undone, undone!* when his royal palace is safe, his crown safe, his treasures safe!

As unlovely, yes, a more unlovely and inappropriate thing, it is to see a saint upon the account of losing wife, child, friend, etc., to cry out, *Undone, undone! no sorrow to my sorrow! no loss to my loss!* when his GREAT ALL is safe—when his crown, his heaven, his happiness, his blessedness, is safe. But,

(11.) If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—then *let believers live cheerfully and walk comfortably up and down in this world.* [Psalm 33:1; Isaiah 41:16; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:7; Philip. 3:1, 4:4.] Ah! how cheerfully and merrily do many great heirs live! Though for the present, things go hard with them—the hopes of a good inheritance makes them sing care and sorrow away. It is not for the honor of Christ, nor for the glory of the gospel—to see the heirs of heaven look so sadly and walk so mournfully and dejectedly—as if there were no heaven, or as if there was nothing laid up for them in heaven. It does not befit the sons of glory, with Rachel, to be so much weeping, as to refuse to be comforted, Neh. 8:10. Do you not remember, O Christian, that the joy of the Lord is your strength—your *doing* strength, your *bearing* strength, your *prevailing* strength. What! have you forgotten that "the joy of the Lord is your strength" to live—and your strength to die? If not, why with Cain do you walk up and down with a dejected countenance, with a cast-down countenance?

A beautiful face is at all times pleasing to the eye—but then especially when there is joy manifested in the countenance. Joy in the face puts a new beauty upon a person, and makes that which before was beautiful to be exceedingly beautiful. Joy puts a new luster upon

beauty; so does joy put a luster and a beauty upon a Christian; and upon all his words, his ways, his works. It was this which made the faces of several martyrs to shine as if they had been the faces of angels. One observes of Chispina, that she was cheerful when she was apprehended, and joyful when she was led to the judge, and merry when she was sent into prison; likewise when she was bound, when she was brought forth, when she was lifted up in a cage, when she was heard, when she was condemned. In all these things she rejoiced!

When Caesar was sad, he used to say to himself, *remember—you are Caesar*. Ah, Christians! when you are sad and dejected, think of your dignity and glory; think of all those precious and glorious things that are reserved in heaven for you.

It does not befit Christians, who have so much in reversion, to be like Angelastus, who never laughed in all his life but once; nor like Anaxagoras, who was never seen to laugh or smile from the day of his birth to the day of his death. Christians, I desire to leave that serious and solemn word upon your hearts: Deut. 28:47-48, "Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity; therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the Lord sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you." Sad souls! it will be your wisdom to make this scripture your daily companion, and to ponder it seriously in your hearts, as Mary did the saying of the angel.

God takes it so unkindly at his people's hands—that they are sad and sighing, lamenting and mourning—when they should be a-rejoicing and delighting themselves in the Lord for the abundance of his mercies—that he threatens to pursue them with all sorts of miseries

and calamities to the very death. A sad, dejected spirit—opens many foul mouths which God would have stopped; and saddens many precious souls whom God would have gladdened; and discourages many weak Christians and young beginners whom God would have encouraged and animated! Therefore we need not wonder if God should deal so sadly and severely with such sad souls, who make little of saddening many at once, namely, God, Christ, the Spirit, and many precious ones, "of whom this world is not worthy."

Surely there is infinitely more in the great and glorious things which are reserved for believers in heaven, to gladden and rejoice them—than there can be in all the troubles and trials, afflictions and temptations, which they meet with in this world, to sadden, grieve, and deject them. Ah, Christians! the great and glorious things which are reserved in heaven for you, will afford you such an exuberancy of joy—as no good can match—and as no evil can overmatch! Witness the joy of the martyrs, both ancient and modern. *Oh how my heart leaps for joy, says one martyr, that I am so near the entering into eternal bliss!*

(12.) If the best and greatest things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—then *let not believers be unwilling to die; yes, let them rather court death, and when it comes, sweetly welcome it!* 1 Cor. 5:1-2, 7, Philip. 1:21. There is no way to paradise—but by this flaming sword. There is no way to those heavenly treasures—but through this dark entry. There is no way to life, immortality, and glory—but by death. There is no coming to a clear, full, and constant fruition of God—but by dying.

Augustine upon those words, Exod. 33:20-21, "You cannot see my face and live," makes this short but sweet reply, "*Then, Lord, let me die, that I may see your face!*" "*Shall I die ever?*" says one. "*Yes;*

why then, Lord, if ever, why not now, why not now!" So Andrew, saluting the cross on which he was crucified, cried out, *Take me from men, and restore me to my Master!* Likewise, Lawrence Sanders, when he was come to the stake at which he was to be burnt, kissed it, saying, *"Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life!"* [Likewise Moses, Jacob, and old Simeon, Cowper, Nazianzen, Faninus, Cyprian, young Lord Harrington, and others, etc.]

Ah, Christians! can you read over those instances, and not blush, and not be troubled that these worthies should be so ready and so willing to die, that they might come to a happy fruition of those glorious things that were reserved in heaven for them—while you are unwilling to die; while your desires are rather, with Peter, to build tabernacles here, than to be in a full fruition of God, and in a happy possession of your heavenly mansions! Mat. 17:4, John 14:2-3.

Ah, Christians, Christians! how justly may that father be angry with his child who is unwilling to come home; and that husband be angry with his wife who is unwilling to ride to him in a rainy day, or to cross the seas to enjoy him? And is not this your case? is not this your case? I know it is. Well, Christians! let me a little expostulate the case with you, that if it be possible I may work your hearts into a willingness to die, yes, to desire death, to long for death—so that you may come to a full fruition of all that is reserved in heaven for you!

Twenty Motives for Christians to be Willing to Die

Ah, Christians, Christians! how justly may that father be angry with his child who is unwilling to come home; and that husband be angry with his wife who is unwilling to ride to him in a rainy day, or to cross the seas to enjoy him? And is not this your case? is not this your case? I know it is. Well, Christians! let me a little expostulate the case with you, that if it be possible I may work your hearts into a willingness to die, yes, to desire death, to long for death—so that you may come to a full fruition of all that is reserved in heaven for you! And that I may, I beseech you, Christians, tell me,

[1.] ***Tell me, O Christian—can death dissolve that glorious UNION which is between you and Christ?*** No! Romans 8:35-39. Why, why then are you unwilling to die—as long as in death your union with Christ holds good? As in death Saul and Jonathan were not parted, 2 Sam. 1:23, so in death a believer and Christ are not parted—but more closely and firmly united. That is not death—but life, which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life—but death, that separates the living man from Christ. As it is impossible for the leaven that is in the dough to be separated from the dough after it is once mixed, for it turns the nature of the dough into itself; so it is impossible, either in life or death, for the saints ever to be separated from Christ; for Christ, in respect of union, is in the saints as closely as the leaven is in the very dough, so incorporated one into another as if Christ and they were one lump, John 17:20-21; John 15:1-6. But,

[2.] For I shall but touch upon things, tell me, O Christian, who are unwilling to die, ***Whether death can dissolve or untie that marriage-knot that by the Spirit on Christ's side, and by faith on your part—is knit between Christ and your soul?*** No! Death cannot untie that knot, Hosea 2:19-20. Why, why then, O Christian, are you unwilling to die, as long as the marriage-

knot holds fast between Christ and your soul? Mat. 25:1-2; Romans 7:1-4. I readily grant that death dissolves that marriage-knot which is knit between man and wife; but neither death nor devil can ever dissolve the marriage-knot that is knit between Christ and the believing soul! Sin cannot dissolve that marriage-knot that is knit between Christ and a believer; and if sin cannot, then certainly death, which came in by sin, cannot. Though sin can do more than death—yet sin cannot make null and void that glorious marriage which is between Christ and the soul; therefore a Christian should not be unwilling to die. Jer. 3:1-5, 12-14, compared. But,

[3.] ***Tell me, O Christian—can death, O Christian, dissolve that glorious covenant that God has taken you into?*** No! Death can never dissolve that covenant: Jer. 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts—that they shall not depart from me." Though Abraham is dead—yet God is Abraham's God still, Mat. 22:30-32. By covenant, and by virtue of this everlasting covenant, Abraham shall be raised and glorified. Oh then, why should you be afraid of death? why should you be unwilling to die?

When David was upon his dying bed, he drew his strongest consolation out of this well of salvation—the covenant: 2 Sam. 23:5, "Is it not true my house is with God? For He has established an everlasting covenant with me, ordered and secured in every detail. Will He not bring about my whole salvation and my every desire?" Dear hearts! the covenant remains firm and good between you and the Lord, both in life and in death; and therefore there is no reason why you should be unwilling to die.

There are three things which are impossible for God to do, namely—to die, to lie, or deny himself, or that gracious covenant that he has made with his people; and therefore death should be more desirable than terrible to gracious souls. But,

[4.] ***Tell me, O Christian—can death dissolve that love which is between the Lord and your soul?*** Psalm 116:15; Deut. 7:7-8. No, death cannot! For his love is not founded upon any worth or excellency **in** me, nor upon any work or service done **by** me. God's love is free—he loves because he will love. All motives to love are taken out of that bosom which is love and sweetness itself. His love is everlasting, it is like himself; Jer. 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you;" John 13:1, "Whom he loved, he loved to the end." "In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but I will have compassion on you with everlasting love, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is like the days of Noah to Me: when I swore that the waters of Noah would never flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. Though the mountains move and the hills shake, My love will not be removed from you and My covenant of peace will not be shaken, says your compassionate Lord." Isaiah 54:8-10

The love of Jesus Christ was to Lazarus when dead (John 11:11), "Our friend Lazarus sleeps." By all which it is most evident that death cannot dissolve that precious love which is between the Lord and his children. Oh! why then are they afraid to die? Why then do not they long to die—that they may be in the everlasting arms of divine love! The love of the Lord is everlasting; it is a love which never dies, which never decays, nor waxes cold. It is like the stone *asbestos*, of which Solinus writes, that being once hot, it can never be cooled again.

Death is nothing but a bringing of a loving Christ and loving souls together! Why, then, should not the saints rather desire it, than fear it or be dismayed at it? But,

[5.] ***Can death, O you believing soul, dissolve those gracious grants, or those grants of grace which the Lord has pledged to you?*** Such as the grant of reconciliation, the grant of acceptance, the grant of justification, the grant of adoption, the grant of remission, etc. No! death cannot dissolve any of these gracious grants. Romans 11:29, "for God's gracious gifts and calling are irrevocable." Why then, O Christian, are you unwilling to die? Indeed, were it in the power of death to make void any of those noble and gracious grants which God has pledged to you, you might be afraid and unwilling to die; but that being a work too great, and too hard for death to accomplish—why should you not, in a holy triumphing way, say with the apostle, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 15:55-57.

A Christian, upon the account of what is laid up for him, may and ought divinely to out-brave death, as this precious saint did: a little before she breathed out her last into the bosom of Christ, she called for a candle; Come, says she, and see death; and this she spoke smilingly, out-braving death in a holy sense. Being free both from the pains of death, and from the fear of death, she knew him in whom she had believed, 2 Tim. 1:12. She knew right well that death could not dissolve those gracious grants which God had pledged to her; and therefore when she came to it, *she made no more of it to die—than we do to dine!* But,

[6.] ***Tell me, Christians, did not Christ come to deliver you from the fear of death?*** Yes! He did come into the world, and did take our nature upon him—that he might deliver us from the fear of death, Heb. 2:14-15. Why, then, should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, has not Christ disarmed death of all its hurting power—and taken away its sting, that it cannot harm you? Yes, he has! 1 Cor. 15:55-57. Why then should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, souls, will not Christ be with you in that hour? Will he not stand by you, though others should desert you? Yes! we have it from his own word, that he will be present with us, and that he will neither, living nor dying, leave us, nor forsake us, Psalm 23:4, Heb. 13:5-6. Why then should you be unwilling to die? Tell me, O trembling Christians, shall death be any more to you than a change? a change of place, a change of company, a change of employment, a change of enjoyment? Certainly! Death to us will be but a change; yes, the happiest change that ever we met with, Job 14:14, John 11:26, 1 Thes. 4:14. Why then should you be unwilling to die, seeing that to die is nothing but to change earth for heaven, rags for robes, crosses for crowns, and prisons for thrones, etc.? Said Cyprian, *Let him fear death—who is opposed to go to Christ!*

But tell me once more, Christians, has not Jesus Christ, by his lying in the grave, sanctified the grave, and perfumed and sweetened the grave? Has he not, by his blood and death, purchased for you a soft and easy bed in the grave? Yes! We believe he has done all this for us. Oh why then should you be unwilling to die?

Once more, tell me, Christians, will not Jesus Christ raise you out of the grave after you have taken a short nap? Will he not cause you to hear his voice? Will he not call you out of that sleeping-chamber, the grave, and bring you to immortality and glory? Yes! We believe he will, John 6:39-40, 1 Cor 15, 1 Thes. 4:14-18. Oh why then should you

be unwilling to die? Oh why should you not, upon all these accounts, long for it—and whenever it comes, readily and willingly, cheerfully and sweetly, embrace it? O Christians, Christians! let but your hopes and your hearts be more fixed upon the things that are reserved in heaven for you—and then you will neither fear death, nor feel it when it comes! But,

[7.] ***Death will perfectly cure you of all physical and spiritual diseases at once!*** Such as the aching head and the unbelieving heart; the ulcerous body and the polluted soul. Now your bodies are full of ails, full of aches, full of diseases, full of illnesses and distempers—so that your wisest physicians know not what to say to you, nor what to do with you, nor how to cure you. It is often with your bodies—"from the sole of the feet, even to the crown of the head, was full of wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores," Isaiah 1:6.

But now death will perfectly cure you of all! Death will do that for you, which you could not do for yourselves! Death will do that for you, which all your friends could not do for you! Death will do that for you, which the ablest and wisest physicians could not do for you. It will cure you of every ache, of every ailment, etc.

At Stratford-Bow, in Queen Mary's days, there was burnt a lame man and a blind man at one stake. The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort, for death, said he, will cure us both—you of your blindness, and I of my lameness!

Ah, Christians! death will cure you of all your infirmities, of all your distempers; and why, then, should you be unwilling to die? Maecenas, the heathen, said that he had rather live with many diseases than die; but I hope better things of you, for whom Christ has died.

And as death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul-distempers also! Death is not the death of the man—but the death of his sin! Sin was the midwife which brought death into the world—and death shall be the grave to bury sin.

What is death but the burial of vices?—Ambrose. Death shall do that for a Christian—which all his *duties* could never do—which all his *graces* could never do—which all his *experiences* could never do—which all *ordinances* could never do. It shall at once free him fully, perfectly, and perpetually from all sin—yes, from all possibility of ever sinning again!

The Persians had a certain day in the year in which they used to kill all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day as that will the day of death be to their sins who are savingly interested in the Savior. When Samson died—the Philistines also died together with him. Just so, when a believer dies—his sins die with him. Death came in by sin, and sin goes out by death. As the worm kills the fruit which bred it—so death kills sin which bred it, Heb. 12:23, Romans 6:7, 1 Cor. 15:26.

And why, then, should Christians be afraid of death, or unwilling to die, seeing death gives them ease from infirmities and weaknesses, from all aches and pains, griefs and gripings, distempers and diseases, both of body and soul?

Homer reports of his Achilles, that he had rather be a servant to a poor country clown here in this world, than to be a king to all the souls departed. The truth is, that most heathens have preferred the meanest life on earth above all the hopes they had of a better life; but I hope better things of you, Christians; and that upon this very ground, that death will certainly and perfectly cure you of all bodily and soul distempers at once! But,

[8.] ***Is not your dying day—an inevitable day?*** Why, yes, yes! Why, then, should you be afraid to die? Why should you be unwilling to die, seeing that your dying day is a day which cannot be put off? The daily spectacles of mortality which we see before our eyes clearly evince this truth—that all must die. [Eccles. 2:16; Zech. 1:5; Heb. 9:27; Gen. 3:19; Romans 6:23.] It is a statute-law in heaven that all must die. All men and women are made up of dust, and by the law of heaven they must return to dust. All have sinned, and therefore all must die. The core of that apple which Adam ate sticks in the throats of all his children, and will at length choke them all one by one!

Masius says that when Noah went into the ark, he took the bones of Adam with him, and that when he came out of the ark, he divided them among his sons, giving the head, as the chief part, unto his first-born, and therein as it were saying unto them, *Let not this delivery from the flood make you secure; behold your first parent, and the beginning of mankind; you must all, and all who come from you, go unto the dust to him.* What day is there that passes over our heads wherein the Lord does not, by others' mortality, preach many sermons of mortality to us? Therefore why should we be unwilling to pay that debt that all owe, and that all must pay, and that so many daily pay before our eyes? But,

[9.] ***A believer's dying day is his best day.*** Ambrose speaks of some who lamented men's births and celebrated their deaths. Why then should he be unwilling to die? Eccles. 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." In respect of profit, pleasure, peace, safety, company, glory—a believer's last day is his best day. Why then should a believer be unwilling to die? But,

[10.] ***A believer's dying day is his resting day.*** It is his resting day from sin, from sorrow, from affliction, from temptation, from desertion, from dissension, from vexation, from persecution, and from all bodily labor. [Rev. 14:13, 21:4; Job 3:13-16; Isaiah 57:1-2.] And therefore why should a believer be unwilling to die, seeing that for him to die is no more but to rest? But of this rest I have spoken largely before; and therefore a touch may be enough in this place. But,

[11.] ***The saints' dying day is their reaping day.*** Now they shall reap the fruit of all the *prayers* that ever they have made, and of all the *sermons* that ever they have heard, and of all the *tears* that ever they have shed, and of all the *sighs* and *groans* that ever they have fetched, and of all the good *words* that ever they have spoke, and of all the good *works* that ever they have done, and of all the great things that ever they have *suffered*. Yes, now they shall reap the fruit of many good services, which themselves had forgot, 2 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7-9. "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?" Mat. 25:34-41. They had done many good works and forgot them—but Christ records them, remembers them, and rewards them.

Some Christians have bad memories. But our Lord Jesus, as he has a soft and tender heart, so he has an iron memory; he remembers not only the best and greatest services—but also the least and lowest services which have been done by his people; and he remembers them to reward them. A bit of bread, a cup of cold water, shall not pass without a reward.

Christians, however Christ may seem to forget your labor of love, and to take no notice, or but little, of many good services that you have done for him, his name, his gospel, his people—yet when you die, when you come to heaven, you shall then reap a plentiful, a glorious crop, as the fruit of that good seed, that for a time has seemed to be buried and lost, Proverbs 11:25; Psalm 126:5. When mortality shall put on immortality, you shall then find that bread which long before was cast upon the waters, Eccles. 11:1-6. Therefore be not, O Christian, afraid to die! Be not, O Christian, unwilling to die—for your dying day will be your reaping day. But,

[12.] ***Your dying-day, O believer! will be your triumphing day!*** John 11:26. Now you shall gloriously triumph over sin, Satan, the world, your own base heart, yes, and over death itself!

I readily grant, that if you *consider believers as in union with Christ*, as he was a public person, they have then already triumphed over principalities and powers; what Christ did in his greatest transaction, he did as a public person, representing all his chosen ones; he suffered as a public person, representing all his elect; he died as a public person, representing all his precious ones; he rose, he ascended, and now he sits in heaven as a public person, representing all his children: Eph. 2:6, "And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Christ has taken up his children's rooms in heaven aforehand; Christ has already taken possession of heaven in their names, in their steads, they do now sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. [Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:14-15; a plain allusion to the Roman triumphs; 1 John 2:13-4; Romans 8:37; 1 John 4:4-5.] And so when Jesus Christ spoiled "principalities and powers, and triumphed openly over them on the cross," he did this as a public person, representing all his children who triumphed in his triumph over all the powers of darkness; and

therefore, in this sense, believers have already triumphed. Yes, and I readily grant, that believers, even in this life, by virtue of their union and communion with Christ, and by virtue of his gracious presence, influence, and assistance—they do always triumph, as the apostle speaks: 2 Cor. 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ."

Believers now are more than *conquerors*, they are triumphers over the world, the flesh, and the devil. *Christ so routed Satan upon the cross*, says Ignatius, *that he never since either hears or sees the cross—but he falls a-shaking and trembling*. Believers, by holding forth to Satan the cross of Christ in the arms of faith, and by their laying hold on his cross and pleading his cross, they do easily, they do frequently overcome him and triumph over him.

But notwithstanding all this, ah! how often does the best of saints find the world, the flesh, and the devil triumphing sadly over them? Now a Christian triumphs over Satan, Romans 7:14-25; by and by Christ withdraws—and then Satan triumphs over over the believer. Now the believer leads captivity captive; at another time the believer is led captive. This day a saint gets the topmost of Satan, and beats him quite out of the field; the next day Satan draws forth and falls on with new forces, with new arguments, with fresh strength, and then puts a Christian to a retreat, ay, too often to a rout. In many a battle a Christian is whipped, and much ado he has to come off with his life.

Oh but now death brings a Christian to a full, perfect, complete, absolute, and perpetual triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now a Christian shall forever have the necks of these enemies under his feet; now these enemies shall be forever disarmed, so that they shall never be able to make resistance more, they shall never strike stroke more, they shall never affront a believer more, they

shall never lead a believer captive more, etc. Oh why then should believers be afraid to die, be unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is their triumphing day? [The Romans in all their battles, used to lose at first, to win at last; it is so with Christians.] But,

[13.] ***As a believer's dying-day is his triumphing-day, so a believer's dying-day is his Marriage-day.*** Hosea 2:19-20. In this life we are only betrothed to Christ; in the life to come we shall be married to Christ. Here on earth Christ and the believer are near—but death will bring Christ and the believer nearer. Here on earth Christ and the believer have agreed between them, only the marriage-knot must be tied in heaven, the marriage-supper must be kept in heaven, Rev. 19:5-10. And, therefore, several of the martyrs on their suffering-days, on their dying-days, they have invited several to their marriage, as they have phrased it, knowing right well, that their dying-days would be their marriage-days to Christ! The very thoughts of which has so raised and cheered, so warmed and inflamed their hearts, that they have made nothing of death, that they have outbraved death, that they have, to the great joy of their friends, and to the amazement and astonishment of their enemies, more resolutely, friendly, and sweetly embraced death, than they have their nearest and dearest relations! But in the

(14.) ***A Christian's dying day is his transplanting-day.*** Death transplants a believer from earth to heaven; from misery to glory, Job 14:14. Death to a saint is nothing but the taking of a sweet flower out of this wilderness—and planting of it in the garden of paradise! It is nothing but a taking of a lily from among thorns—and planting of it among those sweet roses of heaven which God delights to wear always in his bosom. Death is nothing but the taking off of a believer fully from the stock of the first Adam—and the planting of him perfectly and perpetually into that glorious stock, the second Adam,

the Lord Jesus, who is blessed forever. Death is nothing but the taking off the believer from a more barren soil—and planting of him in a more fruitful soil. Here on earth some Christians bring forth thirty, others sixty, and others a hundred-fold, Mat. 13:8, 23; but heaven is so fruitful a soil, that there are none there but such as abound in the fruits of righteousness and holiness—but such as bring forth a thousand-fold, yes, many thousand-fold! Here on earth our hearts are like the isle of Patmos, which brings forth but little fruit; but when they shall by death be transplanted to heaven, they shall be like the tree in Alcinous's garden, which had always blossoms, buds, and ripe fruits, one under another.

In the island of St. Thomas, on the back side of Africa, in the midst of it is a hill, and over that a continual cloud, wherewith the whole island is watered and made fruitful. Such a cloud will Jesus Christ be to all those precious souls that shall be transplanted from earth to heaven.

Oh! why, then, should believers be unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is but a transplanting day of their souls from earth to heaven—from a wilderness to a paradise? But in the

[15.] **As a believer's dying day is the day of his transplantation, so his dying day is *the day of his coronation*.** Here on earth believers are kings elected—but when they die, they are kings crowned; now they have a crown in reversion—but then they have a crown in possession; now they have a crown in hope—but then they shall have a crown in hand, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10. Death will at last bring the soul—to a crown without thorns, to a crown without mixture, to a righteous crown, to a glorious crown, to an everlasting crown. Though a crown be the top of royalty, and though beyond it the thoughts and wishes of mortal men extend not

—yet most may say of their earthly crowns as that king said of his: *O crown! more noble than happy!* But death will set such a crown upon a believer's head as shall always flourish, and as shall make him happy to all eternity. Here on earth the believer, as his Savior before him, is crowned with thorns—but death will turn that crown of thorns into a crown of pure gold! Psalm 132:18, Psalm 21:3.

Upon a triumph, the Emperor Severus' soldiers, for the greater pomp, were to put crowns on their heads—but there was one Christian among them who wore this crown on his arm; and it being demanded why he did so, he answered, it does not befit a Christian to wear his crown in this life. The truth is, a Christian's crown never sits so fast, nor never so well befits him, as when it is put on by the hand of death. Here on earth most princes' crowns are the fruits of unrighteousness—but death will at last put upon the believer a crown of righteousness, or a righteous crown, 2 Tim. 4:7-8; and so it is called, not only because it is purchased by the righteousness of Christ—but also to difference it from those unrighteous crowns, or crowns of unrighteousness, which the princes of this world put upon their own heads. Earthly crowns are corruptible—but death will put on the heads of believers, an incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9:25.

Worldly crowns are *fading* and *withering*. Though king William the Conqueror was crowned three times every year during his reign—at three different places, namely, Gloucester, Winchester, and Westminster—yet how soon did his crown fade and wither? But death will put such a crown upon the believer's head as shall never fade nor wither, 1 Pet. 5:4.

Worldly crowns are *tottering* and *shaking*; and all their power and policy cannot make them sit fast on both sides. But death will put upon the heads of believers—an immortal crown, an unmoveable

crown, an everlasting crown, an eternal crown, a crown that none can shake, that none can take, that none can conquer or overcome! 2 Cor. 4:14-18, Rev. 2:10.

Oh, why then should Christians be afraid to die, or unwilling to die, seeing that their dying day is but their coronation day? Who would be unwilling to ride to a crown through a dirty lane or a rainy day? But,

[16.] ***A gracious soul shall never die until his work is finished, and he prepared to die.*** And why then should he be unwilling to die when his work is done, and he prepared to go home? When God has no more work for you to do in this world, why then should you be unwilling to die, to go home? Until your work which God has planned out for you in this world is finished, no power nor policy shall ever be able to cut off the thread of your lives; in despite of all the world, and all the powers of hell, you shall do that work, be it more or less, which God has appointed you to do in this world. The life of Christ was very often in danger, both among pretended friends and professed foes—but yet he still escapes all the snares which they had laid for him, and all the pits which they have dug for him, and that upon this very ground—that his time was not yet come, his hour was not yet come. John 7:30, "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." John 8:20, "But he was not arrested, because his time had not yet come."

God often bridles wicked men's malice and fury invisibly. God can and will secure his people from the rage and malice of their enemies by a secret and invisible hand of providence, until they have finished the work that he has set them about in this world. *David* was surrounded with enemies on all hands—but yet, in spite of them all, he keeps up until his work was done: Acts 13:36, "David, after

serving his own generation in God's plan, fell asleep." Though many thrust sore at him—yet he did not fall asleep, he did not die until he had served his generation.

Bonds and afflictions waited on *Paul* in every city, Acts 20:23; so in that 2 Cor. 11:23-28, "I have been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes (the Lord commanded that the number of strokes should not exceed forty, Deut. 25:3, and therefore the Jews, that they might not transgress that law, gave one less). Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm." Acts 16:23, 14:17. And yet notwithstanding all these hazards, hardships, dangers, deaths—Paul lives, and bravely bears up until his work was done, his course finished: 2 Tim. 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

And so in Rev. 11:7—the beast which ascended out of the bottomless pit, and made war against the two witnesses, could not overcome them, nor kill them—until they had finished their testimony. Christians shall live to finish their testimony, and to do all that work that God has cut out for them to do, in spite of all the beasts in the world, in spite of hell or antichrist!

It was so with *Ambrose*; a certain witch sent her minions to kill him—but they returned answer, that God had hedged him in, as he did Job, so that they could not touch him. Another came with a sword to his bedside to have killed him; but he could not stir his hand, until repenting, he was by the prayer of Ambrose restored to the use of his hands again. No means, no attempts, could cut him off until his work was done.

So for *Luther*, a poor friar, to stand so stoutly against the pope—this was a great miracle; but that he should prevail against the pope as he did, this was a greater; and that after all he should die in his bed, notwithstanding all the enemies he had, and the many designs they had to have destroyed him, this was the greatest of all; and yet for all that the pope or the devil his father could do, Luther; when he had finished his testimony, dies in his bed. Oh! why then should any Christian be unwilling to die, seeing he shall not die until his work is done, until his testimony be finished?

And as a believer shall not die until his work be done—so he shall not die until he be prepared to die. A believer is always habitually prepared to die; ay, even then when he is not actually prepared; yet then he is habitually prepared to die, for he has not his ark to build, nor his lamp to trim, nor his oil to buy, nor his pardon to seal, nor his peace to make, nor his graces to get, nor his interest in Christ to seek, nor divine favor to secure, nor a righteousness to look after, etc. That promise is full of honey and sweetness that you have in Job 5:26, "You will live to a good old age. You will not be harvested until the proper time!" The farmer does not bring his corn into his barn until it is fully ripe, no more will God take his children out of this world until they are fit for another world; he will not transplant them from earth until they are fit, until they are prepared for heaven.

It is with Christians as it is with the fruits of the earth—some are ripe sooner, some later. But God will gather none until they are ripe for glory. Some souls, like some fruits, are ripe early; other Christians, like other fruit, are a longer time a-ripening; and so God gathers his fruit in as they ripen, some sooner, some later—but none until they are in a measure ripe for heaven. And why, then, should Christians be unwilling to die, seeing they shall not die until they are prepared to die? I do not say they shall not die until they think they are *fit* to die, or until they say they are prepared to die; for they may be graciously prepared and sweetly fitted to die, and yet may judge otherwise, by reason of Satan's sleights, or some spiritual distemper that may hang upon them, or from a natural fear of death, and some great unwillingness to die; but they shall not die until they are either actually or habitually prepared to die, until they are ripe for glory; and therefore be not, oh be not, Christians, unwilling to die. But,

[17.] ***When a righteous mans dies, he shall leave a sweet savor behind him, his name shall live when he is dead.*** Heb. 11. Are not the names of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and other saints, a sweet savor to this very day? We know there is no sweet savor compared to that which they have left behind them: Psalm 112:6, "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." Proverbs 10:7, "The memory of the just is blessed:" the Septuagint thus translates it, "The memory of the just is with praises." Many are the praises which endure on the name of the just when their bodies are in the dust; no scent so sweet as that which the just man leaves behind him: Eccles. 7:1, "A good name is better than precious ointment." He does not say a great name, a name arising from outward greatness—but a good name, a name arising from inward goodness, and manifested by outward holiness; that is the name which is better than precious ointment. Ointment

only reaches the nostrils—but a good name reaches to the cheering and the warming of the heart.

The Chaldee reads this verse thus: *better is the good name which the just shall obtain in this world, than the ointment of anointing which was poured upon the heads of the kings and priests.* Though a believer may not leave great sums of money behind him—yet he shall leave a good name behind him, which answers to all, nay, which outweighs all the riches, gallantry, and glory of this world! The heathen Plautus hit it right who said, *If I may but keep a good name, I have wealth enough.* It is a greater mercy to leave a good name behind us than to leave the riches of a kingdom, yes, of a world, behind us. But,

[18.] ***Death is nothing but the believer's entrance into glory!*** Death is the gate of life, it is the gate of paradise; it is the midwife to bring eternity to birth. When Jacob saw the chariots which were to bring him to Joseph, his spirit revived, Gen. 45:27. Ah, Christian! death is that chariot that will bring you not only to a sight of Jacob and Joseph—but also to a blessed sight of God, Christ, angels and the spirits of just men made perfect! Heb. 12:23-24.

Here on earth we meet with many inlets to sin, to sorrow, to affliction, to temptation; but death, of all inlets, is the most happy inlet; it lets the soul into a full fruition of God, to the perfection of grace, and to the heights of glory! Why, then, should a gracious soul be unwilling to die? But I must hasten to a close.

[19.] *Was Jesus Christ so willing to leave heaven, his Father's bosom, his crown, his dignity, his glory, his royal attendance—to come into this world to suffer the saddest and the heaviest things that ever were thought of, that ever were heard of, for your sins, for your sake? And will you be unwilling to die, and to go to him who*

has suffered so much, who has paid so much, who has prepared so much, for you? One of the fathers longed to die—that he might see that head that was crowned with thorns. Ah, Christian, Christian! why do you not rather reason thus with your own soul: Did Christ die for me, that I might live with him? I will not therefore desire to live long from him. All men go willingly to see him whom they love, and shall I be unwilling to die, that I may see him whom my soul loves? Oh, I will not! Oh, I dare not! Oh, I may not! Others venture through many dangers and many deaths to see their friends and relations. And why then should not you, O Christian! be willing to venture through death to the Lord of life, to him who is your crown, your comfort, your head, your husband, your heaven, your all? etc. But, in the last place,

[20.] ***Consider, O believer! that you always stand before God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ—who is called the Lord our righteousness, and who is made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, Jer. 23:6; Cor. 1:30. While you **live** you stand before God, not in the righteousness of your duties, nor in your gracious dispositions, which are but weak and imperfect—but in the pure, perfect, matchless, and spotless righteousness of Jesus Christ. And when you **die** you appear before God in the same glorious righteousness, so that you may appear before God's unspotted justice and holiness with the greatest boldness and comfort that is imaginable, upon the account of that righteousness with which you are clothed!***

Psalm 45:13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (there is her inward glory; grace makes the soul glorious within); "her clothing is of wrought gold." Some read it *enameled with gold*; such as precious stones were set in, which were exceeding splendid and glorious, and which shadowed forth the glorious righteousness of our Lord Jesus,

Exod. 28:11, 14; 39:1-5, etc. This clothing of wrought gold is the glorious righteousness of our Lord Jesus. Now, in life and in death, the believer stands before God in the glorious golden robes of Christ's righteousness; and hence it is that believers are said to be all beauteous, and to be without spot or wrinkle, and to be complete in Christ, and to be without fault before the throne of God; [Cant. 4:7; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10; Rev. 14:4-5.] And why then should a believer be unwilling to die and appear before God? By reason of this clothing of wrought gold, you stand spotless, blameless, and faultless before God! This golden clothing, this glorious righteousness of Christ, is as truly and really the believer's, and as fully and completely the believer's, as if it were his very own. Ah! no clothing to this.

The costly cloak of Alcisthenes, which Dionysius sold to the Carthaginians for a great sum, was indeed a mean and beggarly rag, compared to this embroidered mantle which Christ puts upon all believers. And therefore a Christian, both living and dying, should say with the psalmist, "I will make mention of your righteousness, of your righteousness alone," Psalm 71:15-16, 19. Let them be afraid to die, let them be unwilling to die—who must appear before God in their sins, and in their own righteousness, which at best is but as filthy rags, Isaiah 64:6. But as for you, O Christian, who shall always appear before God in clothing of wrought gold—be not afraid of death, be not unwilling to die—but rather desire it, rather long for it! 1 Cor. 15:55-57, because you are clothed with such righteousness as will bear you up sweetly in it, as will carry you bravely through it, and as will make you triumph over it.

Christ's righteousness is a Christian's white raiment, in which he stands pure before God, Rev. 3:18, and Rev. 19:7-8, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted

that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the linen is the righteousness of saints." By the fine, clean, white linen which is here called the righteousness, or, as the Greek has it, the righteousnesses of saints; most understand the glorious righteousness of Christ. [Some say—imputed and imparted righteousness.] Righteousness is an Hebraism, noting that most perfect absolute righteousness which we have in Christ. White is a natural color, it is a color of purity, ornament, and honor. It was the clothing in times past, of nobles.

Now in this pure, clean, white linen all the saints are clothed, and so presented to God by Jesus Christ; and why then should they be unwilling to die? Here is not a speck, not a spot, to be found upon this white linen, which is the righteousness of saints, which should make saints rather to pursue after death, than to fly from it, or to be unwilling to welcome it when it comes.

I am not ignorant that this unwillingness to die most usually springs from those low and dark apprehensions men have of God, and from weakness of faith, and from coldness of love, and from laying the creatures too near our hearts, and from our little communion with God, and our rare meditations on paradise, and from our not treasuring up a stock of promises, and a stock of experiences, etc. I have also considered what a dishonor to God, a reproach to Christ, a grief to the Spirit, a scandal to religion, a blot to profession, a mischief to sinners, and a wrong to saints—it is, for Christians to be unwilling to die, or to be afraid of death, which has occasioned me to muster up these twenty considerations to encourage you to be willing to die; and if these will not prevail with you, I profess I do not know what will.

OBJECTION. I would be willing to die, if I had but assurance: but that is the jewel I lack; and therefore I am unwilling to die.

(1.) First, I answer, *It may be you have assurance, though not such a measure of assurance, such a full assurance, as you desire.* A perfect, complete, absolute, and full assurance is very desirable on earth—but I think few attain to it until they come to heaven. This sparkling diamond, *full assurance*, God hangs in few saints' bosoms until they come to glory. But,

(2.) Secondly, I answer, *The least grace, if true, is sufficient to salvation*, Mat. 5:3, 10; and therefore the sense of the least grace, or of the least measure of grace, should be sufficient to assurance of salvation. But,

(3.) Thirdly, *The time of death is one of the most usual seasons wherein God gives his children the sweetest and fullest assurance of his love, of their interest in him, and of their right to glory.* When there was but a step, a stride, between Stephen and death—then he saw heaven open, and Christ standing at the right hand of his Father, Acts 7:55-60.

Mr. Glover, though he had been long under clouds and much darkness—yet when he came near the fire, he cried out to his friend, *He is come, He is come!* meaning the Lord, in the sweet and glorious discoveries of his love and favor to him; and so he died, with a heart full of joy and assurance.

I could here give you diverse examples, of a later date, of many precious Christians who have lived close with God many years, and have been much in seeking of assurance, and the Lord has held them off until a few years before their death—and then he has filled their

souls so full of the sense of his love, and the assurance of their everlasting welfare, that they have died under the power of their joys.

Assurance is a free gift of God, and God loves to give his gifts to his children when they may most cheer them, and be of greatest use and service to them; and when is that—but at the day of death? And therefore Christians should not be unwilling to die for lack of assurance, because that is a special season wherein God usually gives assurance to his children. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, *You may die and go to heaven without assurance*. This truth, with several others of the like import, that may further satisfy such as are unwilling to die, I have made good in that treatise of mine called "Heaven on Earth," and to that I refer the reader for further satisfaction, if what is said does not satisfy.

The next inference, then, that I shall make, and so hasten to a close, is this: *If the best things are reserved for believers—then let not Christians mourn immoderately*. 1 Thes. 4:13-14. Oh! be not over-much afflicted and grieved for the death of husband, wife, child, sister, friend, who dies in the Lord; for they are but gone to take possession of those great and glorious things which are reserved in heaven for them. This deceased saint is now gone to her home, to her *heaven*, to her *God* who has loved her, to her *Christ* who has died for her, and to her *crown* which was prepared for her. Abraham mourned moderately for his dear deceased Sarah, Gen. 23:2; and that not because she was old and over-worn—but because death to her was but an inlet into glory! Death did but bring her to a happy fruition of all those glorious things which God has laid up for those who love him.

Death, which seems to dispossess a Christian of all, puts him into a possession of all; of all joys, of all comforts, of all delights, of all

contentments, of all happiness, of all blessedness! Why then should our sorrow, our tears overflow the banks of moderation? Sorrow is good for nothing but for sin. *Now that the child is dead, therefore should I fast and weep?* said David. Grief preceding evil, if it be used for a remedy, cannot be too much; but that which follows an evil past, cannot be too little.

When Ezekiel lost his wife, the delight of his eyes, he must not weep, Ezek. 24:15-17. When Mary the mother of Jesus stood by the cross of her only dear Son, she wept not, as Ambrose says, John 19:25-27. We may say of our deceased friend, as the Jews of their father Jacob, *he is not dead*; or as our Savior of Lazarus, "*He is not dead—but sleeps,*" John 11:11; and the maid, "*Why trouble yourselves? they are not dead—but sleep.*" To die, in the prophet Isaiah's phrase, is but to lie down in our beds, Isaiah 43:17; Isaiah 57:1-2. So Asa the king's coffin is called a bed, 2 Chron. 16:14. "And when your days shall be fulfilled," says Nathan to David, "and you shall sleep with your fathers;" or, as the original has it, "and you shall lie down with your fathers," 2 Sam. 7:12.

Death is nothing but a sleeping with our fathers, or a lying down in the bed with our fathers and friends, who have lain down before us. And, therefore, when a friend, a wife, a child dies, and leaves this world, we are to bid them but *good night*, as the primitive Christians used to do, in sure and certain hope to meet them in the morning of the resurrection.

The ancients were accustomed to call the days of their death *natalia*, not dying days but birth-days. It has been the custom, says Haymo, when a child of God departed this life, to call it not the day of his death—but the day of his nativity. The Jews to this day stick not to call their graves—the houses or places of the living.

The Jews' ancient custom was, as they went with the corpse to the grave, for everyone to pluck up the grass—as if to say that they were not sorry for the death of their friends and relations, as men without hope—for they, like the grass, were but cropped off, and would spring up again in due season. [The Persian kings would have no mournings, nor mourning apparel worn in their presence.] Ah, friends! if you will needs mourn, then mourn for yourselves, mourn for your sins, mourn for the barrenness and baseness of your own hearts; but do not mourn, at least excessively, for the death of any Christian friend or relation, seeing that death gives them a quiet and full possession of all that glory and happiness which is reserved in heaven for them!

The next use is cause of comfort and consolation to all the people of God. If it be so that the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven—then this may serve to comfort the people of God, and that,

(1.) First, against *their poor, low, and base condition in this world*. Ah! poor Christians, what though you have little in hand—yet you have much in hope; though you have little in possession—yet you have much in reversion. He who has but little in present possession—yet if he has a fair estate in reversion, he comforts himself, and solaces himself in the thoughts of it—that there will come a day when he shall live like a king, when he shall live bravely and sweetly; and this makes him sing care and sorrow away. Why Christians, this is your actual condition! You have a fine, a glorious estate in reversion, though you have but little in possession; and therefore bear up bravely and live comfortably, James 2:5; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Psalm 16:6.

Christ, who was the heir of all—yet he lived poor and died poor, Mat. 8:20. As he was born in another man's house, so he was buried in

another man's tomb. When Christ died he made no will; he had no fine lands; only his coat was left, and that the soldiers parted among them. If your outward condition is conformable to his, there is no reason why you should be discouraged, for you have a rich and royal revenue that will shortly come into your hand, and then you shall never again know poverty or distress. And for your comfort, know, that though men despise you for your poverty—yet the Lord does highly prize you. It was a good saying of Basil, *God pleases himself, beholding a hidden pearl in a despised and disrespected body.*

The truth is, Christians, if there were any real happiness in the things of this life, you would have them—but it is not in all the wealth and pomp of this world—to make up a happiness to you. Therefore, as the enjoyment of them should not swell the rich, so the lack of them should not trouble the poor. The angels and saints departed in heaven are happy, and yet they have neither silver nor gold; they are blessed and yet they have none of the mirthful things of this life, they have none of the gallantry and pomp of this world. You have now your worst while on earth—your best days are to come! It will not be long before you shall have your portion in hand; therefore live sweetly and walk comfortably up and down this world. But,

(2.) Secondly, If the best things are reserved for believers until they come to heaven, then *this may serve to comfort them against all outward abasements from the malignant world.* What though you are counted as the scum, the dirt, the filth, the scraping, the offscouring of the world—by men who know not, who see not, who believe not what great and glorious things are reserved in heaven for you? Yet at last you shall be advanced to that dignity, and be made partakers of that felicity and glory, which shall work amazement and astonishment in those that now despise you and vilify you!

Those that now count you their *troublers*, shall be troubled with a witness, when they shall see you with crowns upon your heads and the royal robes of glory upon your backs, and two-edged swords in your hands, to execute the vengeance written, Psalm 149:4-9. Men who know their future greatness, are not troubled at reproaches; they think themselves above reproaches; they can divinely scorn scorns and despise contempts. Ah, Christians! how can you seriously consider of your future greatness, happiness, and glory—and not bear up sweetly and comfortably against all the contempt that you may meet with in this world?

And thus I have done with this subject, which of one sermon is multiplied into several, by a good hand of heaven upon me. I shall follow this poor piece with my weak prayers, that it may be a mercy to hearers, readers, and writer.

MONERGISM BOOKS

A String of Peals by Thomas Brooks, Copyright © 2020

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By downloading this eBook, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions April 2020 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068