

The Glorious State of the Saints in Heaven.

by John Gill

The Bible teaches that there is a future state of happiness after death, where good men will be happy and wicked men will be miserable.

Scripture: Psalm 84:11, John 14:2-3, Romans 8:30, 2 Corinthians 5:1, Philippians 1:23, 2 Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 12:28, 1 Peter 1:4, 1 John 2:25, Revelation 21:18-21

Topics: "Assurance of Salvation", "Heaven"

Description

John Gill preaches about the glorious state of the saints in heaven, emphasizing the reality and certainty of this ultimate glory that begins at death and culminates in the resurrection. He describes heaven as a place of eternal joy, peace, and communion with God, where believers will be free from sin and suffering, and will enjoy a perfect relationship with Christ and fellow saints. Gill highlights that this glory is promised by God, prepared for the faithful, and is the inheritance of those who have received His grace. He encourages listeners to seek this grace and live in a manner worthy of their calling, as the assurance of their future glory is rooted in their faith in Christ.

Transcript

THE GLORIOUS STATE OF

THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

A Sermon,

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in

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PSALM 84:11

The Lord will give Grace and Glory.

The only word in this passage I shall insist upon, is Glory; by which I understand the glorious and happy state of the saints after death, the fruit of divine grace, freely given them of the Lord. I have in some former discourses, on such occasions as this, treated of the latter-day-glory in the several branches of it, and of

what shall go before it, and be done in it, and also of the faith which such things require, and of the sure and certain performance of them; and now I shall treat of the ultimate glory of the saints in heaven; which will commence upon their departure out of this world, and be consummated in the morning of the resurrection from the dead; and this I shall endeavour to do in the following method: I.

I shall attempt to prove the reality and certainty of such an happy state. II. Describe it, as I am able, according to the scriptural account of it. III. Point out the persons that shall enjoy it. IV. Prove that there will be a glorious and happy state enjoyed by good men after death, or in another world. First, This will admit of some sort of proof, from the light of nature and reason; not that the kind or nature of such happiness is discoverable or demonstrable by it; but future happiness in general, or some general notion of it, may be come at thereby; which may be concluded, From the natural desire after happiness that is in mankind; and this desire of it is universal; there is not one man born into the world, if he lives to years of discretion and understanding, and has the exercise of his reason, but is desirous of happiness, and is eager in his pursuit of it, in some way or another, and yet does not find it in this life.

All created beings and excellencies say, It is not in me; as is found by the most diligent enquiry after it: it is not in worldly wealth and riches; it is not in the gratification of sensual lusts and pleasures; it is not in the honours of this world, in popular applause, fame and credit; it is not in natural wisdom and knowledge; not in all the endowments of the mind, or accomplishments of the body; no, not in any thing in the whole compass of the creation. Now either this desire of happiness is planted in human nature in vain, which is not reasonable to suppose; or else there must be a future state of happiness, in which some, at least, of the individuals of human nature, even good men, will have this desire fully satisfied; which will be when, and not before, they awake in the divine likeness.

It may be argued from the unequal distribution of things in this life, which makes the providences of God very intricate and perplexed; and to appear attended with such difficulties as we are not able to solve, without the supposition of a future state. It is easy to observe, that wicked men oftentimes prosper in this world, and increase in riches; abound in an affluence of good things; are not afflicted as other men, but spend their days in plenty, and go down to the grave in peace: when, on the other hand, many are the afflictions of the righteous; good men are often afflicted in their persons, distressed in their circumstances, or labour under the oppression and tyranny of the wicked.

Now there is no accounting for these things in a rational manner, without supposing a future state, in which good men will be happy, and wicked men miserable; or the one be comforted, and the other tormented: it is only this consideration that can make the present state of things sit easy on a rational mind or on the mind of a good man, and reconcile him to it. It may be observed, that a general notion of happiness after death has obtained among the wiser sort of heathens, who have only been guided by the light of nature; especially among such who have given in to the belief of the immortality of the soul.

Hades, or the state and place of the dead, with them were twofold; the one they called Tartarus, the same with hell; a place of torments, where the wicked, after death, having been judged by the proper judges, and sentence passed upon them, were wafted over the Stygian lake in old Charon's boat, commonly called the ferry-man of hell. The other they call the Elysian fields, the island of the blessed, the scat of the immortal ones, the place where the souls of good men go after death; which fields and island they place in a temperate air and climate; where are no blustering storms, nipping frosts, and fleecy snows, but all calm, quiet, warm, and comfortable: where are cooling shades, refreshing bowers fanned with soft and gentle zephyrs; where are grassy plains, flowery meads, and fruitful fields abounding with all the delights of

nature, with pure flowing fountains and purling streams; where the blessed inhabitants are regaled with ambrosia and nectar, and where they spend their happy hours in feasting, dancing, mirth, and music.

These things I observe, not to shew that the heathens had any true notion of the nature of future happiness; far from it; but only that the belief of it in general did obtain among them: and this also serves to shew what poor things the light of nature, and the religion of nature are, which some men would bring us back again unto. But blessed be God for a divine revelation; for a more sure word of prophecy; for the gospel, which brings life and immortality to light (2 Pet. 1:19; 2 Tim. 1:10); sets the state of an immortal life after death in the truest light, as well as shows us the way unto it.

Wherefore, Secondly, The clear and full proof of the saints future state of glory and happiness is to be fetched from the scriptures of truth, and may be strongly concluded, From the promise of God concerning it. The divine promises to godliness and godly men reach not only to this life, but to that which is to come (1 Tim. 4:8); yea, the promise of eternal life is the principle one; the apostle John speaks of it, as if it was the only one, because the chief: this is the promise he hath promised us, even eternal life (1 John 2:25); and is that indeed in which all the rest center and terminate.

It was made very early, before the world began, and by that God which cannot lie (Titus 1:2), and therefore may be depended upon as sure and certain: blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, by various afflictions in this life, he shall, after death receive the crown of life, even life eternal, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (Jam. 1:12). This glory is not only promised, but prepared; it consists of things unseen and unheard of by men, and not to be conceived of by them in the present state, and which are prepared (1 Cor. 2:9) by the Lord for all true lovers of him.

And this preparation of happiness was very early made; it is a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:34); in the counsels and purposes of God, which are unfrustrable, and can never be made void; nor can it, nor will it be given to any other than to those for whom it is prepared (Matt. 20:23) by the Father of Christ, and these shall certainly enjoy it. Not only this glory is promised and prepared, but there are vessels of mercy afore, and as early prepared for this glory (Rom. 9:23) in the destination and appointment of God; there are some who are ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48), and these, as they certainly believe in Christ in time, so they shall most assuredly enjoy that life in eternity to which they are ordained; the means as well as end being fixed and sure: for God has chosen them from the beginning; not from the beginning of the gospel being preached unto them, nor from the beginning of their conversion, but from the beginning of time, even from all eternity; through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, as means of salvation and eternal life; even to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13, 14); which he is entered into, is possessed of, and has in his hands to give unto his people, and which will partly consist in beholding his glory: and these things are firm and sure; predestination and glorification are links in the same chain, and cannot be broken and parted; whom he did predestinate--them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

The covenant of grace includes and ensures a future state of glory and happiness, as well as all the blessings of grace for the present; otherwise it would not be ordered in all things as it is, even in all things convenient for our spiritual and eternal welfare; nor be all our salvation, since that comprehends the whole of bliss and happiness, here and hereafter; nor all our desire (2 Sam. 23:5), which certainly extends to another world. We call this covenant a covenant of grace, because it springs from the grace of God, is founded on it, and is tilled with it: the scriptures call it the covenant of peace, because of an article in it respecting peace and reconciliation by Christ; and for the same reason it is called the covenant of life

(Mal.2:5), as well as peace, because of the article of eternal life which is settled in it; the form in which the substance of it runs, is, I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 32:38); and as this form of speaking in it, proves the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body, for which last our Lord produces it, so likewise a future state of glory and happiness; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:31, 32).

The suretyship-engagements and performances of Christ give us abundant reason to believe a future state of bliss and glory: he became a surety for his people in the covenant of grace, not only to bring them to the participation of the blessings of grace in time, but to bring them to eternal glory; not only to bring them to himself by faith, and into his church and fold here below, but to set them before his Father's face in heaven; as Judah became surety for Benjamin to bring him and set him before his father Jacob, or bear the blame for ever (Gen. 43:9): wherefore, in consequence of this engagement he has looked upon himself under obligation to do every thing in order to bring them into this state: he came into this world in our nature to remove all the remoras, obstructions, and difficulties that lay in the way to it, and to open the way for enjoyment of it; he came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10); a more abundant, and a more excellent life than Adam had in innocence, or the angels in heaven; a life of glory with himself: and accordingly he, will bring all the many sons to glory, as the great captain of salvation; and present them to his Father, saying, Behold I, and The children whom God hath given me (Heb. 2:10, 13).

This we may be further assured of from the actual entrance of Christ into glory after his sufferings and death, which were necessary by the appointment and promise of God; and into which he entered, not as a single person only, or for himself alone, but as a common person, public head and representative of all his people; he entered into heaven as the fore-runner of them, and took possession of it in their name, and appears now in the presence of God (Heb.6:20; 9:24) for them, representing them all; insomuch that they are said to be already made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6); from which it may be most certainly concluded, that they will sit there in their own persons hereafter.

The preparations of Christ, and his prayers for the future glory of his people, furnish out an argument not inconsiderable, proving the reality and certainty of it: in my Father's house, says Christ, are many mansions (John 14:2, 3), of peace, joy, bliss, and happiness; if it were not so, I would have told you; which is a strong and invincible proof of the truth we are treating of: I go to prepare a place for you; meaning in the other world, in his Father's house; which, though a kingdom prepared from eternity in the will, purpose, and design of God, yet required another and fresh preparation by the personal presence and powerful intercession of Christ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, as he certainly would and did; I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also; of which no doubt is to be made: and his prayers and intercessions are for the same thing; of which we have an instance and example in his intercessory prayer here on earth; Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory (John 17:24), and his prayers always were, and ever will be heard.

In effectual vocation, the people of God are called to this glory: hence the apostle Paul exhorted Timothy to lay hold on eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12); to look for it, expect it, and believe that he should enjoy it; adding this as a reason or argument, whereunto thou art also called; and so is every one that is effectually called by the grace of God; and therefore are under obligation to walk worthy of him who hath called them to his kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12): and they may be assured, that the God of all grace, who hath called them unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 5:10), will bring them to the enjoyment of it: for he is

faithful who has called them, who also will do it; whom he called--them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30); between effectual vocation, and eternal glory, is an inseparable connection.

Not only the grace of the Spirit of God in regeneration and conversion, which is the saints meetness for glory, and evidence of it, proves a future state of bliss and glory, since it is a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life (John 4:14); but the Spirit himself is given them as an earnest of it, even he is the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, and by him they are sealed unto the day of redemption (2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), and as sure as they have received the earnest, they shall enjoy the inheritance, or be possessed of eternal life.

The desires of the saints after the heavenly glory and their assurance of it, which at least some of them have in this life, and at the hour of death, have no small weight in them for the confirmation of this truth. Often do they desire, with the apostle Paul, to depart out of this world, and be with Christ, which is far better (Phil. 1:23); far better for them and most eligible by them; they choose rather to be absent from the body, that they might be present with Lord (2 Cor. 5:5, 8), and what strong assurance have some of them had of their future happiness? as the patriarchs of old, who died in faith (Heb. 11:13), not only of the Messiah's coming, and of the blessings of grace by him, but of their belonging to that city whose builder and maker is God, the apostle there is speaking of: so says David, Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory (Ps. 73:24); and the apostle Paul speaks not only for himself, and in the name of ministers of the word, his brethren, but in the behalf of all the saints; we know, that after death, we have an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1): and how many precious saints, martyrs, and confessors of Jesus, with others, when they have been about to leave this world, have cried, Glory, Glory, Glory, as having sight of it, and fully assured of their going to it?

Now though this, with an infidel world, may be reckoned dream and enthusiasm; yet, along with the evidence before given, will leave no room for a truly gracious soul to doubt of such a state. And agreeable to all this, according to divine revelation, it appears to be matter of fact, that good men as they depart from hence are immediately with Christ; that those that die in him are from thenceforth blessed, from the moment of their death, and rest from their labours, and their works follow them (Phil. 1:23); that angels stand around their dying beds waiting to do their office; and as soon as the soul is separated from the body, escort it through the regions of the air to heavenly bliss; so Lazarus, when he died, was at once carried by angels into Abraham's bosom; and the penitent thief that suffered on the cross was that day with Christ in paradise (Luke 16:22; 23:43).

But I go on, To describe this glorious state. This I confess is a task fitter for an angel than a man, or for a glorified saint in heaven than for a poor, frail, mortal, sinful creature on earth. However, I shall make an attempt, though it be but a feeble one, under the direction and guidance, and with the assistance of the sacred scriptures; and which I shall endeavor to do, First, By observing those images by which the heavenly glory is represented; images which are taken from things the most grand and striking, of the greatest worth, value, and esteem among men.

It is represented by an house; but such an one as is not to be found any where on earth, a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1); it is not of this building, or of man's; it is built by him that built all things; it is an house whose builder and maker is God, and not man: there have been many men that have been famous for their skill in architecture, and many fine buildings have been erected by them, which have perpetuated their memory to many ages; such as the temple built by Solomon, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and repaired by Herod; concerning which the disciples said to Christ,

Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here (Mark 13:1)!

But, alas, what were those buildings to this we are speaking of! they were the holy places made with hands, which were the figures of the true; this the true holy places themselves, not made with hands (Heb.9:23); not with the hands of men, but with the hands of God; not an erection of men's works, but the effect of divine grace, the pure, free-grace-gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord: this house is in the heavens, and is opposed to the earthly house of our tabernacle; to these houses of clay which have their foundation in the dust; and it is called our house which is from heaven (2 Cor. 5:2), being entirely of an heavenly kind and nature, and it is eternal: some men build their houses here on earth in such manner, that they fancy they will continue for ever, to all generations (Ps. 49:11), but these, either through length of time, fall to decay, or are demolished by an enemy, or consumed by fire, or tumbled down by an earthquake; but this heavenly house always abides, and all the apartments in it are everlasting habitations (Luke16:9): to which may be added, that this is Christ's Father's house, in which are many mansions (John 14:2); not only which he has built, but in which he dwells, and where he will have all his children; and it is our Father's house as well as Christ's, which makes it still more endearing: and a roomy one it is; there are many mansions, dwelling-places of rest, peace and joy in it; many, for the many ordained to eternal life; for the many justified by the obedience of Christ; for the many for whom his blood was shed for the remission of sins; for the many sons he brings to glory; yea, here is room enough for the innumerable company, chosen, redeemed, and called out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation.

It is called an inheritance. This enlarges the idea: for though, with some an inheritance may be but a single house, a mean cottage, a small pittance yet with others, it is an assemblage of wealth and riches: it consists of many houses, farms, estates, and possessions, of gold and silver, jewels and precious stones. Heaven is often spoken of as an inheritance, in allusion to the land of Canaan, which was distributed by lot for an inheritance to the children of Israel: hence, says the apostle, in whom, speaking of Christ, we have obtained an inheritance, or a lot (Eph. 1:11); an inheritance by lot; not that it is a casual thing, since it follows, being predestinated according to the good purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; but because every saint has his lot, part, and portion in it; for it is an inheritance of the saints in light, and among all them which are sanctified (Col. 1:12; Acts 20:32).

There are many things in which Canaan, and the heavenly glory agree, I have not time to attend to now; only would observe, that the Israelites were brought into the possession of their inheritance, not by Moses, but by Joshua; so the saints are brought to heaven, not by the works of the law, or their obedience to that, but by Jesus, the great captain of their salvation. Heaven is also called an inheritance, in allusion to inheritances among men, which are not acquired by labour and diligence, nor purchased with money, but bequeathed by relations and friends, and are transmitted from father to son.

So the heavenly glory is not obtained by the works of men, though they naturally think they must do some good thing to inherit eternal life; nor is it to be purchased; if a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would utterly be contemned: it is bequeathed, to saints by their heavenly Father, whose good pleasure it is to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32); and this he gives by will, by testament, and which comes to them by, upon, and through the death of the testator Jesus Christ.

And it solely belongs to children, if children, then heirs (Rom. 8:17); not to servants, nor to the ministering spirits, who minister for them who shall be, or rather who are heirs of salvation, or shall inherit it (Heb. 1:14); much less to the children of the bondwoman, or to strangers; only to those who are predestinated to the adoption of children, or are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. This is an

inheritance which is incorruptible, whereas all earthly inheritances are corruptible things; but this cannot be corrupted by any thing, by sin, or any thing else, and none but incorruptible persons shall enjoy it; it is undefiled, and will ever remain so, and none that defileth, or is defiled, shall ever possess it; it fadeth not away, nor the glory of it, as earthly inheritances through length of time do; it is reserved in the heavens, safe and secure, for all the heirs of it and they are kept by the power of God for it (1 Pet. 1:4); it is an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15) out of the possession of which the right heirs will never be ejected.

The glory of the saints in heaven is expressed by a city, which still more enlarges the idea of it; a city whose builder and maker is God, and so infinitely beyond any thing of this kind on earth; a city which has foundations (Heb.11:10), more than one, the everlasting love of God, the unalterable covenant of grace, and the rock of ages, Jesus Christ; so that it stands firm and immovable, and cannot be shaken and thrown down, as sonic cities of late have been by earthquakes: here no city is continuing, but in length of time falls to ruin; but this always abides : the glory of it. cannot be expressed and described by men; the description of the city of the new Jerusalem seems to be hyperbolic, and to exceed belief; the figures by which it is set forth are bold and strong; as that its wall is of jasper, its foundations precious stones, its gates of pearl, and the streets thereof of pure gold, transparent as glass (Rev.21:18-21); and yet as bold and strong as these figures are, they fall short of setting forth the true and real grandeur of it.

The heavenly state is signified by a kingdom; which carries the idea of it higher still, and gives a more exalted notion of it. Saints are kings, not titular and nominal ones; they have a kingdom now which cannot be moved, and which lies in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Heb. 12:28; Rom. 14:170; and they are heirs of another, a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; a kingdom and glory, or a glorious kingdom, to which they are called and fitted for in effectual vocation; an everlasting kingdom, into which they will be introduced when time shall be no more with them (Matt. 25:35; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:11); a kingdom that has all the regalia belonging to it.

The glory of this state is sometimes expressed by a crown, and is called a crown of life, even of eternal life, and will be enjoyed for ever; a crown of righteousness, which will be given by the righteous judge in a way of righteousness, and according to the rules of justice; a crown of glory that fadeth not away; not like the garlands or crowns given to conquerors in the Olympic games, to which the allusion is, which were made sometimes of flowers and herbs, that soon withered away; they ran, they strove to obtain a corruptible crown, we an incorruptible one (Rev. 2:11; 2 Tim. 4:8; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Cor. 9:25): the same is also expressed by a throne, another ensign or emblem of the glory of a kingdom; a throne of glory, or a glorious throne, to which the saints are raised from the dunghill (1 Sam. 2:8) to sit upon and inherit, even the same throne Christ himself sits upon; for, says he, to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne (Rev. 3:21).

How glorious and magnificent must this state be! It is set forth by every thing that is pleasing and grateful to the mind, or striking to the senses; and by such things as exceed all the enjoyments of them in this world. Here the saints will sit down with Christ at his table, and drink new wine with him in his Father's kingdom; here they will pluck and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, which stands in the midst of the paradise of God; that tree of life which bears twelve manner of fruits, yielded every month, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations; here they will drink of the river of divine pleasure, that pure water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb (Luke 22:18, 30; Rev. 2:7; 22:1, 2); here they will see what eye hath not seen, hear what the ear hath not heard, nor have entered into the heart of man (1 Cor. 2:9): the eye of man has seen many things on earth very grand and illustrious, and what have been very entertaining to it; but it never saw such objects as will be seen in heaven: the ear of man has heard

and been entertained with very pleasing sounds, very delightful music, vocal and instrumental; but it never heard such music as will be heard in heaven: the heart of man can conceive of more than it has either seen or heard; but it never conceived of such things as will be enjoyed in the world above.

Secondly, Our conceptions of the heavenly glory, at least of the greatness of it, may be aided and assisted by considering the epithets given unto it. It is represented as an unseen glory, as consisting of things not seen (2 Cor. 5:8), which are eternal; which faith and hope for the present have only concern with: faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1); we have not so much as a glimpse of this glory but by faith; and hope is waiting for it, as something yet unseen: hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Rom. 8:24, 25).

This glory is also future; nothing as yet enjoyed is that; it is something to come, greater than ever has been possessed in this world; it is a glory that shall be revealed; it is grace, or that glory to be which is the perfection of grace, that is brought unto us, at the revelation of Christ, when the saints shall appear with him in glory; at present it does not appear what they shall be, but when he shall appear, they shall be like him, and see him as he is (Rom. 8:18; Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

Moreover, this glory is an incomparable one; there is nothing in this world to be compared to it. All the wealth, riches and grandeur of it are trifling and empty things in comparison of it. The apostle has a strange expression at first sight upon this subject: I reckon, says he, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18). One would rather have thought he should have said, that all that can be desired and enjoyed in the present state, are not to be compared or made mention of with the glory of the other world; but he instances in the sufferings of the saints, the purest part of their services, if they may be called so; and asserts that these are far from being meritorious of this glory, fall infinitely short of it, there being no proportion between them and that; they are light afflictions, this a weight of glory; they are for a moment, this eternal; and this is what supports the saints in their suffering circumstances, and makes them choose affliction with the people of God, and to esteem reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, having respect to the recompence of reward (Heb. 11: 25, 26); which is of grace, and not of works; and causes them to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, for the sake of Christ, knowing that they have in heaven a better and an enduring Substance (Heb. 10:34).

Likewise, this glory is always the same; the glory of this world passes away, but the glory of the world to come never will: is it a crown of glory? it is a never-fading one: is it an inheritance? it is an inheritance that fadeth not away. When kingdoms, crowns and scepters are no more, and all that is great and glorious in this world, this will endure; for it is eternal glory (1 Pet. 5:10), the God of all grace calls his people to, and will put them in the possession of. The epithet is joined to all the images by which it is expressed; is it an house? is it eternal in the heavens; is it an inheritance? it is an eternal one; is it a city? it is what continues for ever; is it a kingdom? it is an everlasting one; it is a being for ever with the Lord, and which raises and aggrandizes the idea of it.

Thirdly, We may obtain some further knowledge of the glory of heaven, by considering what will be the enjoyment of the saints, both in the separate state of the soul before the resurrection, and in its conjunct state with the body after it. 1st, In its separate state before the resurrection. The soul of a saint as soon as separated from the body, as has been observed, will be immediately with Christ, and happy; it will enter into, and enjoy the presence of God and Christ. And if the gracious presence of God is so desirable by his

people now, that they choose not to go any where without it, but say with Moses, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence (Ex. 33:15); if this gives more joy and gladness than the increase of all worldly enjoyments; what will the glorious presence of the Lord be, in which presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore (Ps.16:11), not to be conceived of?

If the presence of Christ in his church is such as makes his tabernacles amiable, and a day in his courts better than a thousand (Ps. 84:2, 10) elsewhere; if the enjoyment of him by his disciples at his transfiguration upon the mount, was such as caused them to say, it is good for us to be here (Matt. 17:4); how glorious and happy must it be, to be for ever with him in a state where there will be no more a separation from him, nor interruption of communion with him? for in this state the separate soul shall enjoy uninterrupted communion with Father, Son, and Spirit.

If fellowship with the Father and with the Son causes saints now to exult and glory when they enjoy it; and if the communion of the Holy Ghost is so desirable, and is prayed and wished for now, what will all this be in a state of perfection? If to sit with Christ at his table, when our spikenard sends forth the smell thereof, and to be brought into Christ's banqueting house, where his banner over us is love (Cant. 1:12; 2:4), under which we sup with him, and he with us, are so exceeding delightful and entertaining now; what will it be to sit down with him at his table in his kingdom and glory!

To which may be added, that there will be in this state not only communion with God, but conformity to him; saints will be like him, as well as see him: if every view of the glory of Christ by faith is assimilating now, and changes into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18); what will a full view of him, a clear sight of him, do? Then will the great end of predestination, to be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29), be completely answered with respect to the soul; which in all its powers and faculties will bear a resemblance to Christ, and be wholly swallowed up in him; its understanding will have a clear and unobscured discernment of him; the bias of the mind will be wholly towards him; the will will be entirely submitted to him; the affections will be in the strongest manner set upon him, and things above; and the memory will be fully stored with divine and heavenly things; there will be nothing irregular and disagreeable in the soul in its motions, thoughts, and actions.

Besides all this, there will be a converse in this separate state with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. How angels communicate their thoughts to, and converse with each other, we know not; but no doubt they have ways and means by which they do, and in the same way can communicate and converse with the souls of men, spirits like themselves; and these also one with another, which will be a considerable branch of the happiness of this separate state: in which also there will be perfect knowledge in the soul; perfect knowledge of God in his attributes, persons, and works, so far as a creature is capable of; perfect knowledge of the Son of God in his person, offices, and grace; perfect knowledge of the blessed Spirit; perfect knowledge of angels; perfect knowledge of one another, of which more hereafter; perfect knowledge of the providences of God, which have been intricate and obscure here, but now will be manifest; perfect knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel, of the mysteries of grace: now we know and prophecy but in part, but then shall we know as we are known (1 Cor. 13:9, 12).

There will be also perfect holiness; the soul will be entirely free from the being of sin, as well as from the guilt and pollution of it; it will be wholly delivered from the body of sin and death, under which it now groans, and be without spot, or blemish, or any such thing; no sinful thought, no impure desire, nor any evil inclination or bias in it. And so there will be perfect peace of mind: if perfect peace is given to such as believe now, much more hereafter the end of such will be peace; when they die they enter into it, even into

the joy of their Lord (Ps.37:37; Isa. 57:2; Matt. 25:21), which will be full, everlasting, and without interruption. 2dly, At the resurrection there will be a glory upon the body, as well as upon the soul; a glory equal to that of the sun, moon, and stars: the body, which is sown in the earth in corruption; a vile body, corrupted by sin, and now by death, and laid in corruption and dust, shall be raised in incorruption (1 Cor. 15:41-44, 53, 54); no more to be corrupted by sin, or by diseases, or by death; this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory; an entire conquest being obtained over it: and what is sown in dishonour, and has lost all its beauty and glory, and become nauseous and fit only to be the companion of worms, shall be raised in glory; in the utmost perfection, beauty, and comeliness, fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, and shine like the sun in the firmament of heaven: and what is sown in weakness, having lost all its strength, and carried by others to the grave, shall be raised in power; strong and hale, able to subsist without food, and to move itself from place to place, and will attend the service of God and the Lamb, without weakness and weariness; there will be no more complaint of this kind, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt.26:41): and what is sown a natural body, or an animal one, which while it lived was supported with animal food, and when it died, died as animals do, shall be raised a spiritual body; not turned into a spirit, for then it would not have flesh and bones, as it will have; but it will subsist as spirits do, without food, and the like, and no more die; then it will be no encumbrance to the soul, as now, in spiritual services, but aiding and assisting to it in them, and be fitted for spiritual employments, and to converse with spiritual objects; and thus will it continue for ever.

Wherefore, 3dly, In this conjunct state, when soul and body will be united together, there will be a fresh accession of glory to the whole man, and new enjoyments possessed, or the same in a more large and sensible manner. As, 1.

There will be what is commonly called the beatific vision; which though in part enjoyed before, will be now enlarged, and will be both intellectual and corporal, according to the diversity of objects it will be concerned with. (1) There will be the vision of God: now we walk by faith, then by sight; we shall see his face in righteousness, yea face to face, and even see him as he is (2 Cor. 5:7; Ps. 17:15; 1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2); not his essence and nature, so as to comprehend it; but shall have a clear and unobscured apprehension of his perfections and glory: we shall see God in all his persons; we shall see the Father of Christ and ours, who loved us with an everlasting love; who chose and blessed us with all spiritual blessings in his Son; who made a covenant with him, and us in

him, ordered in all things and sure; who laid help on him the mighty One, and sent him in the fulness of time, to be our Redeemer and Saviour: we shall see the Son of God himself, who became our surety, and is the Mediator between God and man; who assumed our nature, suffered and died in our room and stead; who rose again, ascended to heaven, is set down at the right hand of God, and will judge the world in righteousness: we shall see the glory of his divine person, with the eyes of our understanding fully enlightened, and his glory as mediator, of which we have little knowledge now, only believe it, but then we shall have a clear understanding and discernment of it; yea in our flesh shall we see God, as Job says (Job 19:26, 27), and with our corporal eyes behold the glory of Christ's

human body; we shall see that beautiful face that was once besmeared with sweat and blood, shine like the sun in its full strength; and those blessed temples that were crowned with thorns, crowned with glory and honour; and him whose hands and feet were pierced with nails, and covered with gore blood, holding the scepter of his kingdom, or walking in stately majesty, or sitting on his throne of glory: we shall see the blessed Spirit, who convinced us of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and was our quickener and

comforter; who led us into truth, and took of the things of Christ and shewed them to us; who witnessed to our spirits that we were the children of God, and often assisted us in our prayers to him; was the earnest of our inheritance, and by whom we were sealed unto the day of

redemption: we shall see him who began, and carried on, and perfected the work of grace in us; and that with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness. (2) Saints will see all the holy angels in their shining forms, ranks, and orders; those thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers made by Christ, and subject to him: we shall see those sons of God, those morning-stars that sung together when the foundation of the earth was laid; those ten thousands of holy ones that made such a considerable figure in the apparatus at mount Sinai, when from the Lord's right hand went a fiery law; that multitude of the heavenly host that descended at Christ's incarnation, and sung "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men;" that numerous company of them that attended our Lord at

his ascension, and will be with him when he comes a second time to judge the world in righteousness: we shall see them bowing their heads whilst they adore the divine being, and celebrate the perfections of his nature, and clapping their wings whilst the heavenly arches resound their praises, and those of glorified saints. (3) The saints will see and know one another in this perfect state.

The question was asked Luther a little before his death, whether we should know one another in the other world? to which he answered, by observing the case of Adam, who knew Eve to be flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, whom he had never seen before how did he know this? says he, by the Spirit of God, by revelation; so, added he, shall we know parents, wives, children, in the other world, and that more perfectly. Besides, how did the apostles know Moses and Elias on the mount with Christ, whom they had never seen before, no not any statue, picture, or representation of them, which were not allowed among the Jews, but by revelation? so the saints shall know one another in heaven; how otherwise can those, whom gospel-ministers have been the instruments of their conversion and edification, be their "joy and crown of rejoicing at the last day?"

And indeed it seems necessary to the felicity of society to know one another; we are never quite free and easy in company, when a stranger is in it we know not: and it will undoubtedly give a pleasure not to be expressed, to see and know those personages we then shall. There we shall see the first man that was in the world, the head and representative of all mankind, and the figure of him that was to come, with Eve the mother of all living; we shall see this happy pair in a more exalted station than when in a state of innocence in Eden's garden: there we shall see the first martyr whose blood was shed in the cause of religion, who by faith in the sacrifice of Christ, at that distance from it, offered a more excellent one than his brother: there we shall see the man that saw two worlds, the old world that then was, and the present world that now is; who built an ark for the saving of himself and family, when the world of the ungodly was swept away with the deluge: there we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the rest of the patriarchs, both before and after the flood; and sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven: there we shall see Moses the meekest of men, by whom the Lord did such wonders in the land of Ham, and in the fields of Zoan, the lawgiver of Israel, who led them through the red-sea and wilderness, to the border of Canaan's land: there we shall see the man after God's own heart, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, striking his harp to a higher note, to a better tune, and to better purpose than when here on earth: there we shall see the evangelic prophet Isaiah, with the rest of his brethren the prophets, who prophesied beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow: there we shall see the forerunner and harbinger of Christ, who prepared his way by preaching and baptizing, and who so clearly painted him out as "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world:" there we shall see the apostles of Christ, the

companions of our dear Redeemer, who heard his doctrines, saw his miracles, and were witnesses of his sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven; and were the instruments of spreading the Gospel through the several parts of the world, and sealed it with their blood; there we shall see the wondrous man that was caught up into the third heaven, who heard words unspeakable, not lawful for a man to utter; who preached the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, and was the means of converting so many thousands of souls, and of planting so many churches in the Gentile world.

There we shall see all the confessors and martyrs of Jesus, that have been in all ages; yea, "the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven;" the bride the Lamb's wife, with the glory of God upon her; even the whole innumerable company of the chosen, redeemed, and called ones, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. 2. As in this state there will be an enjoyment of all that is good, so a freedom from all that is evil. There will be an entire deliverance from sin; the saints will no more groan, being burdened with it; the Canaanite will be no more in the land; or such sins and corruptions in the heart, which are now thorns in the flesh, and pricks in the eyes and sides of good men; there will be no more a pricking briar, or grieving thorn, through the heavenly land or any temptations of Satan to disturb and molest; the people of God will be out of the reach of his fiery darts; he found ways and means to get into the earthly paradise, to seduce our first parents: but he will never be able to get into the heavenly paradise; he is cast out and fallen from thence, and will never reassume his place any more there; nor will wicked men any more oppress them, there the wicked cease from troubling (Job 3:17); nor will their ears be offended any more with their oaths and blasphemies, or grieved with their filthy conversation; they will then be shut up in the pit of destruction, and a vast chasm, a great gulf fixed between them, so that there will be no passing from one to the other: nor will there be any afflictions attending the saints in this state; they will now be come out of great tribulations, and shall hunger and thirst no more, nor be annoyed and distressed with any outward calamity whatever; there will be no more pain or sorrow, diseases and death; nor will there be any inward distresses; no more fightings without, the warfare will be accomplished, nor fears within (2 Cor. 7:5), about their state and condition; no more doubts nor questioning, nor misgivings of heart, nor unbelief; no more darkness and desertion, but "everlasting joy shall be upon them, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away;" and there will be nothing but perfect rest, ease and peace.

The employment of the saints in this state deserves notice, and will be no small part of their happiness: as their bodies will be raised and united to their souls, they will spend the happy hours and days of eternity in conversing with each other, in sitting, walking, and talking together about divine, spiritual, and heavenly things, and that in an audible manner: what language they will speak is not for us to say; it is highly probable, since tongues will cease (1 Cor. 13:8), that the jargon of speech introduced at Babel will be no more; but that one language will be spoken by all, but what that will be, cannot be determined; perhaps a language more pure, more perfect, more elegant, more refined than ever was spoken by man on earth the saints will now be employed in serving the Lord continually, not by preaching, or hearing, or reading, or praying, or attending on ordinances as now, which will be no more, but in praising the Lord for all the benefits of his grace and goodness; they will sing the song of Moses and the Lamb; the songs of electing, redeeming, justifying, adopting, calling, sanctifying, and persevering grace; and this will be their work throughout an endless eternity.

But I hasten, To point out unto you in a few words the persons that shall enjoy this glory. And these are the objects and subjects of the grace of God, on whom it is bestowed and in whom it is wrought. God first gives grace, and then gives glory; and to whomsoever he gives the one, he gives the other. They are the

elect of God, such as are ordained unto eternal life, that are interested in predestinating grace; for whom he did predestinate to the adoption of children, them he glorifies (Rom.8:30).

They are the redeemed of the Lamb, the church and people he has purchased with his blood; nor will he lose his purchase, which he would, should they not be brought to glory; were it so, his death would be in vain, nor would he see "the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" but he will have them all with him on mount Zion. These are the harpers that will be continually harping with their harps, singing the new song, which none but the redeemed can sing, they themselves being redeemed from among men (Rev.14:1-4).

They are such as are called by the grace of God with an high, holy and heavenly calling: and as they are called to a state of glory and happiness, they shall certainly enjoy it. These are regenerated by the Spirit of God, and shall both see and enter into the kingdom of heaven; they are born heirs apparent to the heavenly inheritance; they are openly and manifestatively the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and so "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." They are such who are justified by the righteousness of Christ; no unrighteous ones shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, nor any enter into it that have not a better righteousness than their own; only the righteousness of Christ is the justification of life (Rom. 5:18), or what entitles to eternal life; and such who are justified by it become heirs of that life, and shall possess it; for whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30): in a word, all that truly and spiritually know Christ, whom to know is life eternal, or that really believe in him, shall partake of this glory; yea, he that believes on him hath everlasting life (John 6:47) already; he has the beginning, earnest, and pledge of it, and shall enjoy the whole; nothing is more true than this, he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved (Mark 16:16).

I close all with a word or two. Every one that has been hearing this discourse, I doubt not, will be desirous of this glory that has been spoken of, and wish to be admitted after death into this state of happiness; but the first question such should ask their own souls, is, whether they are partakers of the grace of God? for no graceless persons shall inherit glory. God gives glory to none but to whom he first gives grace; grace is his first gift, and glory is his last; and none have the latter, but those who share in the former: therefore the first concern should be about the grace of God, whether there is any reason to hope and believe that you are interested in electing and redeeming grace, by being called, regenerated, and sanctified; have you seen your lost state by nature, and been brought to believe in Christ, and trust in him for life and salvation; then you may assure yourselves of this happy state.

And let all truly gracious souls be seeking the things above, where Jesus is, and set their affections on them, and not on things on earth; let them be looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance of Christ, and be rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. And let them ascribe both their grace and glory to the sovereign good will and pleasure of God; for they are both the gifts of his grace, from whom every good and perfect gift (Jam. 1:17) comes. Grace is freely given and so is glory: Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23); and neither of them to be attributed to the works or deserts of men: wherefore we that are partakers of the one, and hope for the other, should look upon ourselves under the highest obligations to glorify God for such undeserved grace and goodness; should be careful to walk worthy of the grace by which we are called, and of the glory we are called unto; and since we look for such great and glorious things to come, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, and to be diligent that we may be found of Christ in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Pet. 3:11, 14).

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