

Praise, One of the Chief Employments of Heaven

by Jonathan Edwards

The saints in heaven are employed in praising God, and their love for Him will vent itself in praise, causing heaven to ring with praise.

Topics: "Heavenly Praise", "Worship"

Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the importance of praising God, highlighting how the saints in heaven are continuously engaged in praising God with fervency and joy. He emphasizes that the work of the saints in heaven primarily consists of praising God, showcasing the heavenly inhabitants' deep sense of God's greatness, mercy, and love. Edwards urges believers to repent of their sins, turn to God, and cultivate a heart of humility, love, and fervent praise to prepare for their eternal work of praising God in heaven. He provides instructions, exhortations, reproof, and consolation to guide individuals in embracing the heavenly work of praising God with sincerity and unity.

Transcript

Praise, One Of The Chief Employments Of Heaven

THANKSGIVING SERMON, Nov. 7, 1734

Revelation 14:2

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.

We may observe in these words (1.) What it was that John heard, viz. the voice and melody of a company praising God. It is said in the next verse that they sung a new song before the throne. (2.) Whence he heard this voice, "I heard," says he, "a voice from heaven." This company that he heard praising God was in heaven. It is said in the following verse, "They sung this song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders." But the throne of God, and the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, are all represented in these visions of John, as being in heaven.

So that this voice was the voice of the heavenly inhabitants, the voice of the blessed and glorious company that is in heaven, before the throne of God there. (3.) The kind of voice, which is here set forth in

a very lively and elegant manner. It is said to be as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, and as the voice of harpers harping with their harps. Hereby several things are represented in a very striking manner. 1. The distance of the voice. 2. That it was the voice of a vast and innumerable multitude, so that it was as the voice of many waters.

How naturally does this represent the joint, continual, and loud voice of a vast multitude at a distance, that it resembled the voice of many waters. 3. The loudness of the voice. It was as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; which describes the extraordinary fervency of their praises, and how lively and vigorous they were therein, and how that everyone praised God with all his might. They all, joining together, sung with such fervency, that heaven did as it were ring with their praises.

The noise of thunder, and the roaring of many waters, are the most great and majestic sounds ever heard upon earth, and are often spoken of in the Scriptures as the mightiest sounds. John could not distinctly hear what they sang, but they being in heaven, at a great distance, he knew not what better to compare it to, than to the roaring of the sea, or a great thunder. Yet, 4. It was a melodious sound, signified by this expression, I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.

The harp was a stringed instrument that David made much use of in praising God. John represents the matter thus to us, That the voice which he heard, being at a great distance, it was in distinct; and being of such a vast multitude, and such a mighty fervent voice, that it seemed in some measure like distant thunder, or the roaring of water, and yet he could perceive the music of the voice at the same time. Though it was in some respects as thunder and the noise of water, yet there was a sweet and excellent melody in it.

In short, though these comparisons of which John makes use, to signify to us what kind of a voice and sound it was that he heard, are exceedingly lively and elegant. Yet this seems to be evident from them, that what he heard was inexpressible, and that he could find nothing that could perfectly represent it. That a voice should be as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and yet like the voice of harpers, is to us not easily to be conceived of. But the case was, that John could find no earthly sound that was sufficient to represent it; and therefore such various and different similitudes are aggregated and cast together to represent it.

But thus much seems to be signified by it, that it seemed to be the voice of an innumerable multitude, and that they were exceedingly fervent and mighty in their praises. That the voice of this multitude was very great, and exceedingly full of majesty, and yet a most sweet and melodious voice at the same time.

Doctrine. The work of the saints in heaven doth very much consist in praising God.

I. Proposition. The saints in heaven are employed. They are not idle. They have there much to do. They have a work before them that will fill up eternity.

We are not to suppose, when the saints have finished their course and done the works appointed them here in this world, and are got to their journey's end, to their Father's house, that they will have nothing to do. It is true, the saints when they get to heaven, rest from their labors and their works follow them. Heaven is not a place of labor and travail, but a place of rest. Heb. 4:9. There remaineth a rest for the people of God. And it is a place of the reward of labor. But yet the rest of heaven does not consist in idleness, and a cessation of all action, but only a cessation from all the trouble and toil and tediousness of action.

The most perfect rest is consistent with being continually employed. So it is in heaven. Though the saints are exceedingly full of action, yet their activity is perfectly free from all labor, or weariness, or unpleasantness. They shall rest from their work, that is, from all work of labor and self-denial, and grief, care, and watchfulness, but they will not cease from action. The saints in glory are represented as employed in serving God, as well as the saints on earth, though it be without any difficulty or opposition.

Rev. 22:3, "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." Yea, we are told, that they shall serve God day and night, that is, continually or without ceasing. Rev. 7:15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." And yet this shall be without any manner of trouble, as it follows in the next verse. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat."

In this world saints labor, as it were, in the wearisome heat of the sun. But there, though they shall still serve God, yet shall the sun not light on them nor any heat. In one sense, the saints and angels in heaven rest not day nor night, Rev. 4:8, that is, they never cease from their blessed employment. Perfection of happiness does not consist in idleness, but on the contrary, it very much consists in action. The angels are blessed spirits, and yet they are exceedingly active in serving God.

They are as a flame of fire, which is the most active thing that we see in this world. God himself enjoys infinite happiness and perfect bliss, and yet he is not inactive, but is himself in his own nature a perfect act, and is continually at work in bringing to pass his own purposes and ends. That principle of holiness that is in its perfection in the saints in heaven, is a most active principle. So that though they enjoy perfect rest, yet they are a great deal more active than they were when in this world.

In this world they were exceedingly dull, and heavy, and inactive, but now they are a flame of fire. The saints in heaven are not merely passive in their happiness. They do not merely enjoy God passively, but in an active manner. They are not only acted upon by God, but they mutually act towards him, and in this action and re-action consists the heavenly happiness.

II. Proposition. Their employment consists very much in praising God.

John the beloved disciple had often visions of heaven, and in almost every instance had a vision of the inhabitants as praising God. So in the fourth chapter he tells us, that he looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven, and he was called up thither, and that he saw the throne of God and him that sat on the throne. And there he gives us an account how those that were round about the throne were praising God. The four living creatures rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him, the four and twenty elders fall down before him and worship him, etc., etc. Again in the fifth chapter, we have an account how they sing praises to Christ, Rev. 5:8, 9, etc. And so in Rev. 7:9, 10, 11, 12. And in Rev. 11:16, 17. And in the twelfth chapter, 10th verse. And in Rev. 15:2, 3, 4. And in the beginning of the nineteenth chapter we have an account how the hosts of heaven sing hallelujahs to God. By all which it most evidently appears, that their work very much consists in praising God and Christ. We have but a very imperfect knowledge of the future state of blessedness, and of their employment. Without doubt they have various employments there. We cannot reasonably question but they are employed in contributing to each other's delight. They shall dwell together in society. They shall also probably be employed in contemplating on God, his glorious perfections, and glorious works, and so gaining knowledge in these things. And doubtless they will be employed many ways, that we know nothing of: but this we may

determine, that much of their employment consists in praising God, and that for the following reasons.

First, because they there see God. This is a blessedness promised to the saints, that they shall see God, Mat. 5:8. That they see God, sufficiently shows the reason why they praise him. They that see God cannot but praise him. He is a Being of such glory and excellency that the sight of this excellency of his will necessarily influence them that behold it to praise him. Such a glorious sight will awaken and rouse all the powers of the soul, and will irresistibly impel them, and draw them into acts of praise. Such a sight enlarges their souls, and fills them with admiration, and with an unspeakable exultation of spirit.

'Tis from the little that the saints have seen of God, and know of him in this world that they are excited to praise him in the degree they do here. But here they see but as in a glass darkly; they have only now and then a little glimpse of God's excellency. But then they shall have the transcendent glory and divine excellency of God set in their immediate and full view. They shall dwell in his immediate glorious presence and shall see face to face, 1 Cor. 13:12. Now the saints see the glory of God but by a reflected light, as we in the night see the light of the sun reflected from the moon. But in heaven they shall directly behold the Sun of righteousness, and shall look full upon him when shining in all his glory. This being the case, it can be no otherwise, but that they should very much employ themselves in praising God. When they behold the glorious power of God, they cannot but praise that power. When they see God's wisdom that is so wonderful, and infinitely beyond all created wisdom, they cannot but continually praise that wisdom. When they view the infinitely pure and lovely holiness of God, whereby the heavens themselves are not pure in comparison with him, how can they avoid with an exalted heart to praise that beauty of the divine nature! When they see the infinite grace of God, and see what a boundless ocean of mercy and love he is, how can they but celebrate that grace with the highest praise!

Second, they will have another sense of the greatness of the fruits of God's mercy than we have here in this world. They will not only have a sight of the glorious attributes of God's goodness and mercy in their beatific vision of God, but they will be sensible of the exceeding greatness of the fruits of it; the greatness of the benefits that he has bestowed. They will have another sense of the greatness and manifoldness of the communications of his goodness to his creation in general.

They will be more sensible how that God is the fountain of all good, the Father of lights, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift. We do now but little consider, in comparison with what we should do, how full the world is of God's goodness, and how it appears in the sun, moon, and stars, and in the earth and seas, with all their fullness, and wheresoever we turn our eyes, and how all ranks and orders of being, from the highest angel to the lowest insect, are dependent upon, and maintained by, the goodness of God.

These the saints in heaven clearly see. They see how the universe is replenished with his goodness, and how the communications of his goodness are incessantly issuing from God as from an everflowing fountain, and are poured forth all around in vast profusion into every part of heaven and earth, as light is every moment diffused from the sun. We have but faint imperfect notions of these things, but the saints in heaven see them with perfect clearness. They have another sense of the greatness of God's goodness to mankind, and to the church, and to them in particular, than any of us have.

They have another sense of the greatness of God's goodness in the temporal mercies which God bestowed upon them while they were here in this world, though they know that spiritual mercies are infinitely greater. But especially they have an immensely greater sense of the exceeding greatness of the

fruits of God's grace and mercy bestowed in redemption. They have another sense how great a gift the gift of God's only-begotten Son is. They have another sense of the greatness and dignity of the person of Christ, and how great a thing it was for him to become man, and how great a thing it was for him to lay down his life, and to endure the shameful and accursed death of the cross.

They have another sense how great the benefits are that Christ has purchased for men, how great a mercy it is to have sin pardoned, and to be delivered from the misery of hell. They have another sense how dreadful that misery is, for the damned are tormented in the presence of the holy angels and saints, and they see the smoke of their torment; and have another sense what eternity is, and so are proportionably more sensible how great a mercy it is to be delivered from that torment.

They have another sense how great a fruit of God's grace it is to be the children of God, and to have a right and title to eternal glory. They are sensible of the greatness of the benefits that Christ has purchased, by their experience. For they are in possession of the blessedness and glory that he has purchased. They taste the sweetness of it. And therefore they are more sensible what cause they have to praise God for these things. The grace and goodness of God in the work of redemption appears so wonderful to them that their thoughts of it do excite them to the most ardent praise.

When they take a view of the grace of God and of the love of Christ in redemption, they see that there is cause that they should exert the utmost of their capacities, and spend an eternity in praising God and the Lamb. It is but a very little that we at best can conceive of the greatness of the benefits of redemption, and therefore we are but little affected by it, and our praises for it are low and dull things.

Third, another reason is [that] they will be perfect in humility. In order to a person's being rightly disposed to the work of praise, he must be an humble person. A proud person is for assuming all praise to himself and is not disposed to ascribe it to God. It is humility only that will enable us to say from the heart, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the glory." The humble person admires the goodness and grace of God to him. He sees more how wonderful it is that God should take such notice of him, and show such kindness to him, that is so much below his notice. Now the saints in heaven have this grace of humility perfected in them. They do as much excel the saints on earth in humility as in other graces. Though they are so much above the saints on earth in holiness and in their exalted state, yet they are vastly more humble than the saints on earth be. They are as much lower in humility as they are higher in honor and happiness. And the reason of it is that they know more of God. They see more of his greatness and infinite highness, and therefore are more sensible how wonderful it is that God should take so much notice of them, to have such communion with them, and give them such a full enjoyment of him. They are far more sensible what unworthy creatures they have been, that God should bestow such mercies upon them, than the saints on earth. They have a greater sight of the evil of sin. They see more what filthy vile creatures they were by nature, and how dreadfully they provoked God by actual sin, and how they have deserved God's hatred and wrath. The saints in heaven have as much greater a sense of their unworthiness in their natural state than the saints on earth as they have a greater sense of God's glorious excellency. For it is the sight of God's excellency which gives them a sight of their own unworthiness. And therefore they do proportionally admire the love of God to them in giving Christ to die for them, and the love of Christ in being willing to offer himself for their sins, and of the wonderful mercy of God in their conversion, and bestowing eternal life upon them. The humble sense the saints have of their own unworthiness, doth greatly engage and enlarge their hearts in praise to him for his infinite mercy and grace.

Fourth, their love to God and Christ will be perfect. Love is a principal ingredient in the grace of thankfulness. There is a counterfeit thankfulness in which there is no love. But there is love in exercise in all sincere thankfulness. And the greater any person's love is, the more will he be disposed to praise. Love will cause him to delight in the work. He that loves God, proportionably seeks the glory of God, and loves to give him glory. Now the hearts of the saints in heaven are all, as it were, a pure flame of love. Love is the grace that never faileth. Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. Faith shall cease in vision, and hope in fruition, but love never faileth. The grace of love will be exalted to its greatest height and highest perfection in heaven. And love will vent itself in praise. Heaven will ring with praise because it is full of love to God. This is the reason that great assembly, that innumerable host, [praises] God with such ardency, that their praise is as the voice of many waters, and as the mighty thunderings, because they are animated by so ardent, vigorous, and powerful a principle of divine love.

APPLICATION

I. This subject may be applied in the way of INSTRUCTION.

First, hence we may learn the excellency of this work of praising God. That it is a most excellent employment, appears because it is a heavenly employment. It is that work wherein the saints and angels are continually employed.

If we sincerely and frequently praise God, we shall therein be like the heavenly inhabitants, and join with them.

That it is the work of heaven shows it to be the most honorable work. No employment can be a greater honor to a man than to praise God. It is the peculiar dignity of the nature of man, and the very thing wherein his nature is exalted above things without reason, and things without life, that he is made capable of actively glorifying his Creator. Other creatures do glorify God. The sun, moon, and stars, and the earth and waters, and all the trees of the field, and grass and herbs, and fishes and insects do glorify God. Psa. 19:1-6; Job 12:7, 8. But herein is the peculiar dignity of the nature of man, that he is capable of glorifying him as a cause, by counsel, understandingly and voluntarily, which is a heavenly work.

Second, this doctrine may give us an idea of the glorious and happy state of the saints in heaven. It shows how joyfully and gloriously they spend their time. Joy is a great ingredient in praise. There is an exultation of spirit in fervent praise. Praise is the most joyful work in the world. And how joyful a society are they that join together, so many thousands and millions of them, with one heart and one soul, to sing a new song before the throne, that fill heaven with their glorious melody! How joyful they are in their work, appears in the text, by their fervency in it, so that their voices resounded as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder. What ineffable joy was there in those harpers whom John heard harping with their harps!

This shows how different a state the saints are in in heaven, from what they are in this world. Here much of the work to which the saints are called, consists in laboring, in fighting, in toilsome traveling in a waste howling wilderness, in mourning and suffering, and in offering up strong crying and tears. But there in heaven, their work continually is to lift up their joyful songs of praise.

This world is a valley of tears, a world filled with sighs and groans. One is groaning under some bodily pain. Another is mourning and lamenting over a dear departed friend. Another is crying out by reason of

the arm of the oppressor. But in heaven there is no mixture of such sounds as these. There is nothing to be heard amongst them but the sweet and glorious melody of God's praises. There is a holy cheerfulness to be seen throughout that blessed society. Rev. 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." They shall never have anything more to do with sighing and crying; but their eternal work henceforward shall be praise.

This should make us long for heaven, where they spend their time so joyfully and gloriously. The saints especially have reason to be earnestly breathing after that happy state, where they may in so joyful a manner praise God.

Third, this may put natural persons upon reflecting on their own state, that they have no part nor lot in this matter. You are an alien from the commonwealth of Israel. You are not one of the people of God. You do not belong to their society that are to spend their eternity after that joyful manner, which you have now heard. You have no right nor portion in heaven. If you hereafter come and offer yourself to be admitted into this blessed society, in your present state; if you come and try to be admitted, you will be thrust out. You will be driven away. If you come and knock, and cry to be admitted to the wedding, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, all will be to no purpose! You will hear no other word except Depart! You shall be shut out into outer darkness. You shall not be permitted to sing among the children, but shall be driven out, to howl among dogs. Rev. 22:14, 15, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city; for without are dogs," etc. You are in danger of spending eternity, not in joyfully singing praises, but in a quite contrary manner; in weeping, in wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and blaspheming God because of your pains and because of your plagues. You shall see others coming from the east and the west, and sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, taking their places among that blessed, happy society, and joining their voices in their heavenly music. But you see your lot. You shall have other work to do. Isa. 65:14, "Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit."

II. In the way of EXHORTATION. -- If it be so that praising God is very much the employment of heaven, hence let all be exhorted to the work and duty of praising God. The following considerations will show why we should be stirred up by this doctrine to this work.

First, let it be considered that the church on earth is the same society with those saints who are praising God in heaven. There is not one church of Christ in heaven, and another here upon earth. Though the one be sometimes called the church triumphant, and the other the church militant, yet they are not indeed two churches. By the church triumphant is meant the triumphant part of the church. And by the church militant, the militant part of it, for there is but one universal or catholic church. Song 6:9, "My dove, my undefiled, is but one." Christ has and hath many members." The glorious assembly and the saints on earth make but one family. Eph. 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Though some are in heaven, and some on earth, in very different circumstances, yet they are all united. For there is but one body, and one spirit, and one Lord Jesus Christ. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all. God hath in Christ united the inhabitants of heaven, and the holy inhabitants of this earth, and hath made them one. Eph. 1:10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." Heaven is at a great distance from the earth. It is called a far country. Mat. 25:14. Yet the distance of place does not separate them so as to make two societies. For though the saints on earth, at present, are at a distance from heaven, yet they belong there. That is their proper home. The saints that are in this world are strangers here. And therefore the apostle reproved the Christians in his day, for acting as though they

belonged to this world. Col. 2:20, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?"

Some of a people may be in their own land, and some in a strange land. And yet be but one people. Some of a family may be at home, and some sojourning abroad. And yet be but one family. The saints on earth, though they be not actually in heaven, yet have their inheritance in heaven, and are traveling towards heaven, and will arrive there in a little time. They are nearly related to the saints in heaven. They are their brethren, being children of the same Father, and fellow heirs with Jesus Christ. In Eph. 2:19, the saints on earth are said to be fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. And the apostle tells the Christian Hebrews, Heb. 12:22-24, that they were "come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." But how were they come to this heavenly city, and this glorious assembly, when they were yet here on earth? They were come to them, ere they were brought and united to them in the same family. But this is what I would inculcate by all this, that the church of God on earth ought to be employed in the same work with the saints in heaven, because they are the same society. As they are but one family, have but one Father, one inheritance, so they should have but one work. The church on earth ought to join with the saints in heaven in their employment, as God hath joined them in one society by his grace.

We profess to be of the visible people of Christ, to be Christians and not heathens, and so belong to the universal church. We profess therefore to be of the same society, and shall not walk answerably to our profession, unless we employ ourselves in the same work.

Second, let it be considered, that we all of us hope to spend an eternity with the saints in heaven, and in the same work of praising God. There is, it may be, not one of us but who hopes to be a saint in heaven, and there continually to sing praises to God and the Lamb. But how disagreeable will it be with such a hope, to live in the neglect of praising God now! We ought now to begin that work which we intend shall be the work of another world. For this life is given us on purpose that therein we might prepare for a future life. The present state is a state of probation and preparation, a state of preparation for the enjoyments and employment of another, future, and eternal state. And no one is ever admitted to those enjoyments and employments, but those who are prepared for them here. If ever we would go to heaven, we must be fitted for heaven in this world. We must here have our souls molded and fashioned for that work and that happiness. They must be formed for praise, and they must begin their work here. The beginnings of future things are in this world. The seed must be sown here. The foundation must be laid in this world. Here is laid the foundation of future misery, and of future happiness. If it be not begun here, it never will be begun. If our hearts be not in some measure tuned to praise in this world, we shall never do anything at the work hereafter. The light must dawn in this world, or the sun will never rise in the next. As we therefore all of us would be, and hope to be, of that blessed company which praise God in heaven, we should now inure ourselves to the work.

Third, those works of God's mercy for which the saints in heaven will chiefly praise him, have been wrought amongst us in this world.

The mercy and grace of God for which the saints in heaven will chiefly praise him is his mercy exercised in the work of redemption, which work has been wrought out in this world. This love of God is the chief object of their admiration, and what they chiefly contemplate, and that employs their most ardent praises.

The grace of Christ, about which their praises will be principally employed is that he should so love sinful man as to undertake for him, to take upon him man's nature, and lay down his life for him. We find that is the subject of their praises in Rev. 5:8, 9, "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints; and they sang a new song, Thou art worthy, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

They will chiefly praise God for these fruits of his mercy, because these are the greatest fruits of it that ever have been, far greater than the glorifying of saints. The saints in heaven will praise God for bestowing glory upon them. But the actual bestowment of glory upon them, after it has been purchased by the blood of Christ, is in no measure so great a thing as the purchasing of it by his blood. For Christ, the eternal Son of God, to become man, and to lay down his life, was a far greater thing than the glorifying of all the saints that ever have been, or ever will be glorified, from the beginning of the world to the end of it. The giving Christ to die, comprehends all other mercies. For all other mercies are through this. The giving of Christ is a greater thing than the giving of all things else for the sake of Christ. This evidently appears, from Rom. 8:32, "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" So that the work of redemption is that for which the saints in heaven do chiefly praise God. But this work has been wrought here, among us in this world. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The incarnation of Christ was a thing that was brought to pass in this world, and the sufferings and death of Christ were also accomplished on earth. Shall heaven be filled with praises for what was done on earth, and shall there be no praises on earth where it was done?

Fourth, if you praise God sincerely in this world, it will be a sign that you are really to be one of those that shall praise him in heaven. If any man be found sincerely glorifying God, he will in due time be brought to them, as one who is fit to be of their company. Heaven is the appointed place of all sincere praisers of God. They are all to be gathered together there. And no man can sincerely praise God unless he be one of those who are redeemed from among men, one that God has separated from the rest of the world, and set apart for himself.

Fifth, if we begin now to exercise ourselves in the work of heaven, it will be the way to have foretastes of the enjoyments of heaven. The business and the happiness go together. This will be the way to have your heart filled with spiritual joy and comfort. If you heartily praise God, you shall rejoice in him, and he will show you more of himself, of his glory and love, that you may still have greater cause of praise.

I proceed to give some DIRECTIONS for the performance of this work.

First, be directed, in order to your acceptably performing this duty, to repent of your sins, and turn to God. If you have not a work of conversion wrought in you, you will do nothing to any purpose in this work of praise. An unconverted person never once sincerely or acceptably praises God. If you would do the work of the saints in heaven, you must be, not only in profession, but really, one of their society. For there are none else can do their work. As in the verse following the text: "And they sung as it were a new song, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty-four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth." A hundred and forty-four thousand is a mystical number for the church of God, or the assembly of the saints, or those that are redeemed from the earth.. There is no man can learn the song that they sing in heaven, but those of that number. It is beyond the reach of all natural men, let them be persons of ever so great abilities and sagacity. They never can learn that heavenly song, if they be not of that number. For it is only the

sanctifying, saving instruction of the Spirit of God, that can teach us that song.

Second, labor after more and more of those principles from whence the praise of the saints in heaven doth arise. You have already heard that the saints in heaven do praise the Lord so fervently because they see him. Labor therefore that you, though you have not an immediate vision of God, as they have, may yet have a clear spiritual sight of him, and that you may know more of God, and have frequent discoveries of him made to you.

You have heard that the saints in heaven make praise so much their work, because of the great sense they have of the greatness and wonderfulness of the fruits of the Lord's goodness. Labor therefore to get your minds more deeply impressed with such a sense.

The saints in glory are so much employed in praise, because they are perfect in humility, and have so great a sense of the infinite distance between God and them. They have a great sense of their own unworthiness, that they are by nature unworthy of any of the mercy of God. Labor therefore that you may obtain more of a sense of your own littleness, and vileness; that you may see more what you are, how ill you have deserved at the hands of God, and how you are less than the least of all his mercies.

The hearts of the saints in heaven are all inflamed with divine love, which continually influences them to praise God. Seek that this principle may abound in you, and then you likewise will delight in praising God. It will be a most sweet and pleasant employment to you.

Third, labor, in your praises, to praise God, so far as may be, in the same manner that the saints do in heaven. They praise him fervently, with their whole heart, and with all their strength, as was represented in vision to John by the exceeding loudness of their praise. Labor therefore that you may not be cold and dull in your praises, but that you also may praise God fervently.

The saints in heaven praise God humbly. Let it also be your delight to abase yourselves, to exalt God, and set him upon the throne, and to lie at his footstool.

The saints in heaven praise God unitedly. They praise him with one heart and one soul, in a most firm union. Endeavor that you may thus praise God in union with his people, having your hearts knit to them in fervent love and charity, which will be a great help to your praising and glorifying God unitedly with them.

III. In the way of REPROOF to those who neglect the singing of God's praises. Certainly, such a neglect is not consonant to the hope and expectation of spending an eternity in that work. It is an appointment of God, that we should not only praise in our prayers, but that we should sing his praises. It was a part of divine worship, not only under the Old Testament, but the New. Thus we read that Christ and his disciples sung praises together, Mat. 26:30. So it is commanded, Eph. 5:18, 19, "Be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." And Col. 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." 1 Cor. 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." So also the saints in heaven are represented as singing God's praises. And is that their happy and glorious employment; and yet shall it be so neglected by us, who hope for heaven? If there be any of the godly that do neglect this duty, I would desire them to consider how discordant such a neglect is with their profession, with their state, and with the mercies which God has bestowed. How much cause has God given you to sing his praise! You have received more to prompt you to praise God than all the natural men

in the world. And can you content yourself to live in the world without singing the praises of your heavenly Father, and your glorious Redeemer?

Parents ought to be careful that their children are instructed in singing, that they may be capable of performing that part of divine worship. This we should do, as we would have our children trained up for heaven, for we all of us would have our children go to heaven.

IV. In the way of CONSOLATION to the godly. It may be matter of great comfort to you that you are to spend your eternity with the saints in heaven, where it is so much their work to praise God. The saints are sensible what cause they have to praise God, and oftentimes are ready to say they long to praise him more and that they never can praise him enough. This may be a consolation to you, that you shall have a whole eternity in which to praise him. They earnestly desire to praise God better. This, therefore, may be your consolation, that in heaven your heart shall be enlarged, you shall be enabled to praise him in an immensely more perfect and exalted manner than you can do in this world. You shall not be troubled with such a dead, dull heart, with so much coldness, so many clogs and burdens from corruption, and from an earthly mind; with a wandering, unsteady heart; with so much darkness and so much hypocrisy. You shall be one of that vast assembly that praise God so fervently, that their voice is "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings."

You long to have others praise God, to have every one praise him. There there will be enough to help you, and join you in praising him, and those that are capable of doing it ten thousand times better than saints on earth. Thousands and thousands of angels and glorified saints will be around you, all united to you in the dearest love, all disposed to praise God, not only for themselves, but for his mercy to you.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jonathan-edwards/praise-one-of-the-chief-employments-of-heaven/>

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