

# A Messenger

by Thomas Bradbury

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*Thomas Bradbury's sermon 'A Messenger' explores God's grace through the story of Job, emphasizing the role of Christ as the ultimate messenger and interpreter of divine truth.*

**Scripture:** Job 1:21, Job 33:23, Psalm 40:7, Psalm 51:4, Isaiah 61:1, John 1:14, John 1:18, Romans 5:21, Romans 10:3, 1 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Timothy 1:14

**Topics:** "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Righteousness"

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## Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the remarkable book of Job, highlighting God's care for and interest in Job's education and discipline, despite the opinions of men. Job's unwavering faith and humility in the face of extreme trials showcase his righteousness in God's eyes. The sermon delves into the interactions between Job and his friends, emphasizing the need for grace-filled ministry over legalistic judgment. Elihu's role as an interpreter and daysman mirrors Jesus Christ's grace and truth, offering spiritual instruction and revealing God's righteousness to the convicted sinner.

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## Transcript

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"If there be a Messenger with him, an Interpreter, One among a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness: then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." (Job 33:23,24)

THIS is a wonderful chapter of a very wonderful book. It forms part of a record of God's dealings in grace and providence with a very remarkable man. Here we see God's care for, and interest in, the education and discipline of one of those who lie close to His heart, and deep in His eternal affections. The book was written to describe God's loving attention to and appreciation of His servant Job, without respect to the opinions of men concerning him. It reveals to us the blessed fact that the patient patriarch in all the varied scenes and trying circumstances surrounding him was everything to God. Everything else that appears formed but the filling up of this exquisite picture. The Holy Ghost says, "There was a man" not a myth "a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job: and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." How different is all this to many who are ever charging Job with self-righteousness. He remembered his children before God every morning, because, said he, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. This did Job continually." (chap. 1:5) Why should Job thus be anxiously suspicious concerning his son's good behaviour? Because he knew what a

vile and deceitful heart their father had. It is a blessed privilege when we can carry our children to Him who has dealt so tenderly with us.

The sons of God present themselves before Him. Satan is among them. Job is the object of Satan's lying attacks, in which he defames Job and acknowledges God's preserving care. Calamity after calamity overtakes the patriarch until he seems involved in one irremediable ruin. God, men and devils, heaven, earth and hell, sword, fire and wind, all appear bent upon Job's destruction. But amid the general gloom God's jewel shines most brightly, while hell's dark schemes prove to be of none effect. In Job's education all things serve His purpose and all are His servants. Satan may scheme the Sabaeans may slay the Chaldeans may steal the whirlwind may smite, and death and desolation meet Job's gaze on every hand, yet God is first and last in all his thoughts. In profound humility he worships, and says, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither; the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21) Do you see the self-righteousness in this? I do not. Neither did God. Mark well His judgment on His afflicted servant. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Personal afflictions estranged not his soul from God. The foolish request of his wife drew forth the patient reproof, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (chap. 1:21,22; 2:10)

But changes took place in the experience of this God-fearer. While he had to do immediately with God, the whirlwind and the storm yielded peace and quiet to his reposing spirit; but when man appeared on the scene, and anxious friends began to meddle with God's strange work of judgment, then Job's anxieties began, and his impatience broke forth in murmuring and complaining. To Job's three friends, and to all such it might well be said, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him." (1 Cor. 2:11) "The heart knoweth its own bitterness," (Prov. 14:10) and meddlers can only increase its perplexity. Job's friends did not show themselves friendly to him, for they did not understand his case, nor the way of God's dealings with him. They could say many good things, and heap up truth before him, but their ministry was destitute of grace. They could ask questions, but knew not themselves how to answer them. Like many in our day, they could expose abuses which they could not rectify, and talk about failures only existing in their own disordered imaginations. We need not wonder at Job's want of courtesy toward them, nor at the censorious titles he hurled at them. See! "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value;" (chap. 13:4) "Miserable comforters are ye all;" (chap. 16:2) "But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." (chap. 30:1)

I do not quote these to encourage any child of God to justify himself to so objectionable a course, for, I know who is the greatest sufferer in such cases. Job possessed two natures, the old and the new, and under Divine discipline the elder must serve the younger. The elder at times would rebel, and roar, and rage, but a Greater than he obtained the mastery. The severe and legal attentions of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were annoying and irritating, being void of grace. You and I know too well the aggravating effects of such communications upon our tempers and tongues. Thank God, He has given to us a more excellent ministry. One could say, "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace," (chap. 22:21) while Job in the next chapter breathes a spirit of intense desire for the company of his Best Friend, which was foreign to Eliphaz and his companions altogether. They demanded, but gave not wounded, but healed not searched out and exposed maladies and infirmities, but discovered no remedy. Pretty characters these to minister to a tried and tempted, suffering and sorrowing saint. To come up to their standard Job must appear without a boil on his body, or a sorrow in his soul As they looked on his wounds and bruises they could tell him

there was something wrong, but did not point him to the Good Physician with His healing balm. In beholding the desolations that had overtaken him, they could talk to him of judgment, but were silent respecting God's covenant mercy and unfailing compassion.

"Evil communications corrupt good manners." So said Paul, and so felt Job. His religion was from above. Their utterances were their own carnal conclusions. They persecuted him with their unwarrantable insinuations, and he, forgetting the gracious power of his Vindicator, pierced them with his ungracious retaliations. They seemed to delight in mutual misunderstanding, demanding what he could not give. He knew his helplessness, and they were cross with him because he did not help himself. They persisted in accusing him, and he was so shortsighted as to endeavour to justify himself to them. They had not one feeling in common with him. He had not one particle of sympathy for them. They knew not how to labour in prayer for each other, and their profitless talk only tended to penury. Between Job and his critics a great gulf existed, which neither he nor they were able to bridge. "So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes." (chap. 32:1) Yes, poor man, "he was righteous in his own eyes" when these men continued laying things to his charge which he knew not, and he was righteous in respect to the charges they had hurled against him. At this point of time this lull in the tempest of words and bitter feelings Elihu appears. He was the very character Job had sighed for. See chap. 9:32,33: "For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that He might lay His hand upon us both." Now Job saw in Elihu the very Daysman he had so sorrowfully desired. Look at that name ELIHU. What is its meaning? GOD THE LORD. It is a compound of "GOD," and the abbreviated form of "JEHOVAH." Mark well another meaning "HE IS MY GOD HIMSELF." Also this, "GOD IS HE." We see in the person and name of Elihu a precious shadowing forth of our own "Emmanuel, God with us," (Matt. 1:23) of our own Jesus, God our Saviour, (Matt. 1:21) of "the Child born, the Son given, the Mighty God," (Isa. 9:6) "Christ Who is over all, God blessed for ever." (Rom. 9:5)

Here we have One full of grace and truth. Not grace at the expense of truth, nor truth at the risk of grace. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (John 1:14,17) Truth teaches us what we really are undone, unclean. Grace supplies us with all we need for the enjoyment of nearness to God and communion with Him. In the Person and work of Jesus Christ, grace and truth are inseparable. Truth asserts and establishes the claims of a just and holy God. Grace provides all that a redeemed sinner can need for justification, introduction, and acceptance with God. "Grace reigns," but it is through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 5:21) All this is graphically set forth in the utterances of Elihu. He reproved Job for self-justification, while he rebuked Job's three friends for condemning him. Listen to his rebuke, "Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say. Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words. Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom: God thrusteth him down, not man." (chap. 32:11-13) They thought they could do what none but God can do. To convince of sins is God's prerogative, and when these men had proved their inability, they condemned Job with all their heart and soul. Their sayings savored of self-conceit and self-importance, while the language of a broken heart and contrite spirit is, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." (Ps. 51:4) Legalists and self-justiciaries know nothing of the spirit of language like this, hence Job's accusers and judges were shut up and answered no more.

We now are brought to our wonderful and interesting chapter, where we will seek for spiritual instruction in Elihu's address to Job. All is spiritual, heavenly, divine, perfect. There is nothing disjointed or out of place. You will remember Job's longing for a daysman, an umpire, one that could argue, and here you will see in Elihu the very character for whom Job longed. In his varied characteristics we see Jesus. To Job, Elihu says, "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay." (chap. 33:6) The believing heart sees God's Sent One here the Word Who was with God, and was God. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:1,14) "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14,15) How precious is all this to the sin-burdened and weary sinner who longs for the rest that none but Christ can give. Christ delights in the company of such. He has not terrifying words for His own who are sick of sin and sigh for His salvation. "In all their affliction He is afflicted," and words of sweetest sympathy from His grace-filled lips cheer and comfort their sorrowing souls. Listen! "Behold My terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall My hand be heavy upon thee." The heart that has been crushed beneath the denunciations of legal censors, receives with meekness the gracious declaration of Jesus' tenderness, "My hand shall not be heavy upon thee." The hand of Christ is not exacting upon those whose hearts know the bitterness of sin. Yet He will empty those whom He fills with the good things of His kingdom. He wounds to bind up He smites to heal He strips to clothe He weakens to gird with strength. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." He felt the heavy hand of inflexible justice during His agony and bloody sweat, and when the cruel curse of Calvary pressed hard upon Him, so that His gentle hand of covenant love might rest on those whose sins He bore.

In the few verses preceding the words of our text we have a striking description of the state of a sinner labouring under the conviction of sin, burdened with guilt, dreading the execution of the righteous sentence of the law. Feelingly he draws near to hell and destruction, but he is not left there. The hand which planned his salvation now brings him succour, and blessed him with unfailing security. Look at these precious words, "If there be a Messenger with him." No one can be truly humble and convinced of sin without the nearness of the Covenant Messenger. This is none other than EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US, MY GOD JEHOVAH, THE BLESSED SON OF GOD, THE MAN JEHOVAH'S FELLOW. He is the JEHOVAH-ANGEL, THE SENT ONE OF THE FATHER, THE ANGEL OF HIS PRESENCE, Who was promised to Israel, "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." (Exod. 23:20) He wrestled with Jacob at Penuel, (Gen. 32:24) and redeemed him from all evil. (Gen. 48:16) There is no misunderstanding these words of the prophet, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold He shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Mal. 3:1) His loving desire and determination to wait upon His tried and tempted people is sweetly expressed in His covenant declaration, "Lo, I come," (Ps. 40:7) and is seen in faithful accomplishment in the reiterated truth of John's gospel, "He whom God hath sent," (chap. 3:34) "Him that sent Me," (chap. 4:34) "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father Which hath sent Me," (chap. 5:30) "the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." (chap. 5:36,37) As the Messenger of the covenant He is faithful to His trust. He was anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, and was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to open the prison to them that are bound. (Isa. 61:1) All those to whom, and for whom, the Father sent Him shall abundantly testify to His faithfulness, when they see Him in their Father's house above. Not one of them shall lack His attention or care in the time set down in the counsels of eternal love.

"An Interpreter." Jesus not only comes with messages of love and grace, but He carries with His own to interpret and expound the difficult and dark things of His kingdom. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (John 1:18) He alone is the Interpreter of Divine mysteries, the Revealer of covenant secrets, the Expounder of the Father's mind and will to the elect family of God. By Him the everlasting affection of the Father is revealed to the everlastingly loved children. He is "the Brightness of His Father's glory and the Expressed Image of His Person." (Heb. 1:2,3) Without Him all thoughts of God are dark, dull, and dismal. He says in David, "I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren." (Ps. 22:22) He said to His Father, "I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26) He said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9) Our need of Him as our Interpreter is demonstrative proof of our ignorance and shortsightedness, for an interpreter is one who explains the meaning of words to those who do not understand them. Blessings on His name, in Him we find our Mediator to bring us to God, and our Interpreter to instruct us in the good and right way, refreshing our minds with the very words which the Father entrusted to Him for us. (John 17:8) How cheering to the hearts of the redeemed who delight to sit at the feet of their Infallible Instructor are the words of prophetic promise, "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon Thee "the Interpreter of the Father's will, the Revealer of the Father Himself" and My words which I have put in Thy mouth, shall not depart out of Thy mouth of Thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." (Isa. 59:20,21)

"One among a thousand." Here we see a great disparity in numbers. Nine hundred and ninety-nine liars to one who speaks the truth of God. A multitude of deceivers who lead astray to one who guides into the way of peace. The nine hundred and ninety-nine are eager to sound out their own praises to boast of their own works to proclaim their own goodness to establish their own righteousness, and who submit not to the righteousness of God, ignorant of the great gospel fact, that, "Christ is the End of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." (Rom. 10:3,4) Job's three friends misunderstood and misrepresented him, looking upon him as receiving punishment as a transgressor instead of the discipline of a saint. He could give a good account of himself in his outward conduct, which he certainly does throughout chapter 29. But association with the Covenant Messenger, the Heavenly Interpreter, the One among a thousand, compelled him to count all this as dung and dross. Wherever the Interpreter of the language of the covenant is welcome, there is no parading a devoted life, an orthodox faith, a deep repentance, a sound experience. The heart language of all such is, "Behold, I am vile."

It is only here and there, and frequently in the most unexpected quarters, that the Heavenly Interpreter reveals Himself to the most unlikely persons, and all this "to show unto man His uprightness." Not the uprightness of universal man, for universal man is removed altogether from original uprightness. The convinced sinner, described in the preceding context, is the man to whom the One among a thousand reveals His righteousness, "even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:22,23) Our "Emmanuel, God with us" here sweetly reveals His offices, qualifications and perfections to the Elect of God, the Redeemed of the Lord, the Regenerate children of God. Here He reveals the blessed fact that, as the last Adam, He did always the things that pleased His Father, and wrought out a righteousness, clothed in which the favoured sinner is everlastingly justified. He is the Prophet to teach, the Priest to ransom, the King to rule and govern all, who, by the Spirit's convincing power and grace, know themselves unclean and undone. He effectually teaches these that He is made

unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and glory, and that they are wise in His wisdom, righteous in His righteousness, holy in His holiness, upright in His uprightness, comely in his comeliness, perfect in His perfections, "complete in Him." To them He is "ONE ABOVE A THOUSAND" "THE MOST EXCELLENT ONE" "THE CHIEFEST AMONG TEN THOUSAND" "THE ALTOGETHER LOVELY," of Whom they can say in all honesty, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend." (Song 5:10,16)

"Then He is gracious unto him." Certainly He is. How can He be otherwise? To all such "sinners poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore," He is very gracious at the voice of their cry, and He waits to be gracious unto them. (Isa. 30:18,19) When they are ready to perish He is ready to save. When the law condemns and curses, and the convinced sinner trembles at the dread wrath of a sin-hating God, Christ appears with blood for pardon, and righteousness for justification, and Himself for full salvation. "Then," He is gracious to the heart open to receive Him, and to the soul that cries at the sight of Him, "My Lord and my God." Words of life, light, love, and liberty, flow from His grace-filled lips. Gifts of grace and acts of tenderest compassion abound in His liberal hands. His heart overflows with grace to the graceless, mercy to the miserable, compassion to the afflicted, pity to the needy, and sympathy to the suffering. O, my dear friends, much as we have experienced the loving attention and care of our gracious Emmanuel, we know but little of His boundless and undiminished grace. With Paul we may well say, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 1:14) And what He was to Paul, He is, and ever will be, to all such in like case, whom He seeks, saves, secures, and satisfies with the goodness of His Father's house. "He will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11) Upright walkers are only found in Him. "He giveth more grace." (James 4:6) Abundant grace for great transgressors. (Rom. 5:20) Sufficient grace for tempted children. (2 Cor. 12:9) Helpful grace for weary pilgrims. (Heb. 4:16) Exceeding grace for every object of His love and care. (2 Cor. 9:14)

Let us notice a few instances in which His persevering and persistent grace is revealed. Saul, the persecuting pietist, seemed to have raced beyond its reach when "he made havoc of the Church," (Acts 8:3) "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," (Acts 9:1) "compelled the saints to blaspheme, being exceeding mad against them, and persecuted them even unto strange cities," (Acts 26:11) "was a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious," (1 Tim. 1:13) yet sovereign mercy, abundant grace were brought to him by the Messenger of grace, Whom he hated with a cordial hatred. He had nothing to show, but enmity and sin, why Jesus Christ was gracious unto him. Grace in the Person of Christ brought salvation to him. Grace in the power of the Spirit succoured him in every temptation, and sustained him in every trial. He gloried in "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding," and so do I. It shines gloriously in the case of the woman who was a sinner. (Luke 7:37-50) Simon, the Pharisee, did not want her in his house. Jesus delighted to have her in His heart. She was a poor "nothing to pay" sinner, of whom He could say so graciously, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Look at the man who had fallen among thieves, stripped, wounded, half-dead. The Messenger of mercy came where he was with oil to mollify and wine to cheer, and, as the Interpreter with an eloquent speech, He gave instructions for his sustenance and security. (Luke 10:30-37) Mark well the grace that prayed for Peter's restoration before he fell which cared for him when fallen which instructed him after his recovery. Forget not the grace which unceasingly declares concerning Corinthian sinners, so filthy and so foul, "And such were some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:11) Grace preserves from the womb to the tomb from self to God from earth to heaven. The God of all grace, Christ, the Repository of all grace, and the Spirit of grace, are engaged in all

honour to see all the election of grace safely gathered home to glory.

Grace commands, "Deliver him from going down to the pit." Deliverance from wrath, sin, and evil, always accompanies the gracious presence of the Messenger of the covenant, and is enjoyed as He talks with His loved ones by the way, opens to them the Scriptures, and interprets the language of heaven to the weary and wayworn sinner. Before He reveals Himself, the wrath to come is dreaded, and the soul trembles at the thought of deserved damnation in the pit of hell. The pit of perdition anticipated is an awful experience. David knew this when he cried, "Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down to the pit." (Ps. 143:7) In his fear he sighed, "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." (Ps. 69:15) His joy must have been great when he declared, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings." (Ps. 40:2) Hezekiah's experience of the pit must have been doleful, and his deliverance there from delightful, as set forth in his own words, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back. For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth." (Isa. 38:17,18) Love removes all difficulties keeps back the souls of loved ones from the pit and brings those back who are overwhelmed with the dread of it to be enlightened with the light of the living, which is nothing short of the presence and power of the Covenant Deliverer. We now consider the gracious announcement.

"I have found a ransom." O what a glorious revelation! This is none other than the Christ of God, Whom the Father found in the counsels of eternity as the Surety of the covenant the Redeemer of His people, the Deliverer of His own elect. In the fullness of time He appeared as the Sent of God in the mystery of His holy incarnation, and association in flesh and blood with His elect brethren. Himself, in His sufferings and death, obedience and blood, is the Ransom of His people from the pit of eternal woe. Christ is the Purchaser and the Price, the Sacrifice, Priest, Altar, and All in all, in the redemption and deliverance of His charge.

"Great was the price to justice due,

When Jesus would redeem His bride;

Nothing but precious blood would do,

And that must flow from His own side."

Neither men nor angels could ever have found so glorious and precious a ransom as this. It is a Ransom of God's finding a Redemption of God's devising, an Atonement discovered and brought to light by Infinite Wisdom. Left to ourselves it would have been everlastingly lost to us, and we should have been oblivious to it. The secret of all this lies in the fact of the Surety having experienced the blackness of darkness in the pit of hell for His people, as He says in Ps. 88:6,7: "Thou hast laid Me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon Me, and Thou hast afflicted Me with all Thy waves." He could not, He would not come out from thence until He had paid the uttermost farthing until justice had exacted the last mite. This was fully accomplished when the Faithful Surety, after His dreary season of desertion, cried in the place of condemnation and death, "It is finished." (John 19:30) The ransom price was paid the law was magnified, justice was satisfied, God was glorified, the Church was saved in the Person of the Messenger, the Interpreter, with an everlasting salvation.

All this is truly believed and appreciated by the heart as Jesus is revealed in the preciousness of His truth and by the power of His Spirit. At the sound of the Interpreter's voice the convinced sinner owns himself lost, and sees not a redeeming feature in the whole of his character, nor a compensating quality in any part of his nature. But the interpretation of Gospel truth to the heart, which none but Christ can give, reveals a ransom fully paid righteousness, perfect resurrection power. It is in this way that God finds the ransom in the hand of the suppliant righteousness adorning the saved and resurrection power animating and reviving the accepted son. God is satisfied with the Ransom of His own finding, and leaves not His loved ones to the caprice of their disordered wills, or to the uncertainty of their own short-sightedness. In Christ, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD, the redeemed are everlastingly justified. In Christ, THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, the justified eternally live. Thus blessed, "our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself." Amen.

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