

A Christian on Earth, Still in Heaven

by Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson's sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a continuous relationship with God through the Psalms and the characteristics of a gracious heart.

Scripture: Psalm 3:1, Psalm 23:4, Psalm 31:14, Psalm 40:17, Psalm 41:4, Psalm 55:12, Psalm 65:3, Psalm 69:3, Psalm 94:14

Topics: "Spiritual Comfort", "Communion With God"

Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the spiritual paradise found in the Scriptures, particularly in the book of Psalms, which offers both delight and usefulness to every Christian. He highlights how the Psalms are enriched with variety and suited to every condition, providing comfort and guidance in times of sickness, reproach, unkind dealings, enemies, poverty, sin, prayer, desertion, and even death. Watson emphasizes the importance of being 'still with God,' illustrating how a gracious heart is continuously drawn towards God through contemplation, desire, love, faith, and a life lived in communion with Him.

Transcript

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The Scripture is a spiritual paradise, and the book of Psalms is placed as the tree of life, in the midst of this paradise. The Psalms are not only for delight--but usefulness. They are like the pomegranate tree which is not only good for fragrance--but fruit. The Psalms are like those trees of the sanctuary, Ezek. 47:12, good both for food and medicine. The Psalms are enriched with variety, and suited to every Christian's estate and condition. They are a spiritual treasury and storehouse. If a Christian finds his heart cold--here he may fetch fire! If he is weak in grace--here he may fetch armor! If he is ready to faint--here are cordials to refresh him! There is no condition you can name, but there is a Psalm suited to that condition.

1. In case of SICKNESS. Psalm 41:4, "You will make all his bed in his sickness." Surely, that bed must needs be soft which God will make. There is a parallel Psalm to this, Psalm 73:26, "My flesh fails," my health is declining, "but the Lord is the strength of my heart."

2. In case of REPROACH. "I was a reproach among my enemies," Psalm 31:11. "But I trusted in you O Lord, I said, you are my God," verse 14. "Blessed be the Lord, for he has shown me his marvelous loving-kindness in a strong city," verse 18. Here was some sunshine breaking forth of those black clouds.

3. In case of unkind dealings from FRIENDS. Psalm 55:12-14, "If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God." Here was the remedy, "Cast your burden upon the Lord," verse 22. God is power, therefore he is able to help. He is mercy, therefore he is willing to help. "He shall sustain you," here is God's promise, which is his bond to secure us.

4. In case we are close begirt with ENEMIES. There is a Psalm suited to this condition; "O Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me!" Psalm 3:1. "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me." verse 5. David, when beleaguered with enemies, could lie down and sleep upon the soft pillow of a good conscience. Psalm 27:3, "Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident." Verse 5, "For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock." He shall hide me so safe as if I were in the holy place of the sanctuary, where none but the priest was to enter.

5. In case of POVERTY. If a Christian's state is brought so low, that like the widow, 1 Kings 17:12, he has nothing but "a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug," there is a Psalm of consolation, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me," Psalm 40:17. "I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food," Psalm 132:15. Here is the dew of a blessing distilled, Psalm 119:57. "YOU are my portion, O Lord." Behold riches in poverty; what though the water in the bottle is spent--if this well is at hand?

6. If SIN prevails against a child of God. There is a consolatory Psalm, "When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions." (Psalm 65:3). In the Hebrew it is you shall hide them. It alludes to the mercy-seat which was covered with the wings of the cherubim; just so are the sins of the godly, when repented of, covered with the wings of mercy and favor.

7. In case of PRAYER, and no speedy return. Psalm 69:3. "I am weary of my crying, my eyes fail while I wait for my God." But in the same Psalm he draws the breast of comfort, verse 33, "the Lord hears the poor, and despises not his prisoners." Would we have fruit before it is ripe? When the mercy is ripe, we shall have it. And besides, there is nothing lost by waiting; we send out the golden fleet of prayer to heaven, the longer this fleet stays out, the greater return it will bring with it. David found it so; therefore he pulls off his sackcloth, and puts on the garments of praise; "I will praise the name of God with a song," verse 30.

8. In case of DESERTION. This is the poisoned arrow which wounds to the heart--but still there is a Psalm to turn to, "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance," Psalm 94:14. This is like a star in a dark night; or like the plank and broken pieces of the ship on which Paul and the rest came safely to shore, Acts 27:44. God may conceal his love from his children, but he will never take it away, 2 Sam.7:15. He may change his providence towards them, but he will never alter his purpose.

9. In case of DEATH. There is a Psalm which revives, "though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," Psalm 23:4. The sting and poison of this serpent is taken away! "For You are with

me"--with your power to support, with your grace to sanctify, with your love to sweeten. "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me." I have the staff of your promise in the hand of my faith, and with this I can walk through the dark valley of death.

Thus in every condition David's Psalms like David's harp, may serve to drive away the evil spirit of sadness and uncheerfulness from a Christian. So much concerning the Psalms in general.

I come now to the words of the text, "When I awake I am still with you." Psalm 139:18.

Here you have the very portrait of a godly man drawn out--he is one who is still with God. It was David's happiness that he lived above the common rate of men, not only as he was higher in power and dignity, being a king--but higher in sublimeness of affection, having his heart and hope raised above the world, "I am still with you." Commentators give many reasons why David was called a man after God's own heart--but surely this is not the least, because the frame of his heart was so heavenly, this being most agreeable to God's nature and will. David was a man that, as Ambrose speaks, "lived in the world above the world!" As soon as he awakened, he stepped into heaven. David was a seraphic saint, a mortal angel. Like a true bird of paradise, he seldom touched his feet upon the earth. He was least alone when he was most alone. When he awaked, he was with God!

Nor was this a temporary state with him--a thought of God and then done. But it was a fixed temper of his heart. I am still with you. The pulse of his soul was still beating after God. The hypocrite may have a fit of religion, which is quickly over, Job 27:10. But the constitution of David's soul was heavenly, "I am still with you."

Caution. Not but that David had some diversions of mind--to have the eye always fixed upon God, will be the state of the glorified in heaven!

1. But David was still with God, because the bias and bent of his spirit was towards God. His heart like the needle in the compass, which pointed heavenward.

2. But David was still with God, because he was more with God, than he was any where else. As we say, "a man lives in his house." This does not mean, that he never leaves his house. But he is said to live there, because he is most resident there.

The words hold forth this proposition.

Doctrine. That it is the sweet temper of a gracious heart, to be still with God. "I am still with you." David awakened in heaven. He was ever above. We read in the old law, that those creatures which crept on four legs, were to be had in abomination; but those which had wings to fly, and legs to leap with, were accounted clean, Lev. 11:20. They are among the unclean, and are abominable to God--whose souls creep upon the earth. But those who have the legs and wings of grace to mount up with, who are still with God--these are pure and precious in God's eyes. For the illustrating this point there are three things to be explained and amplified.

1. What it is to be still with God.
2. In what sense the soul is still with God.
3. Why a gracious heart is still with God.

1. WHAT it is to be still with God. In general, it is to have a sweet fellowship and communion with God, 1 John 1:3. "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus." In prayer we speak to God; in the sacrament he kisses us with the kisses of his lips, he gives us a secret seal of his love.

2. HOW is the soul to be still with God. I answer, the soul is still with God, in five ways.

1. The soul is still with God by CONTEMPLATION. So Ainsworth understands the Text. "I am still with you," that is, by divine contemplation. David's thoughts were ever and always running upon God. So verse 17, "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God!" David's mind was a spiritual mint. He minted most gold--most of his thoughts were heavenly. Thoughts are as travelers and passengers in the soul; David's thoughts were still traveling towards the Jerusalem above. In David's dangers--God was still with him. In David's contemplations--he was still with God. Anaxagoras said he was born to contemplate heaven. Thus a Christian is still with God, that is--he is viewing glory, his thoughts are all packed up and gone to heaven.

2. The soul is still with God by DESIRE. His anchor is cast in heaven, Heb. 6:19, and he is carried there with the sails of desire. David shot his heart into heaven--by desire. He had strong pantings after God, "Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!" Psalm 73:25-26. He does not say that he desired nothing upon earth; he had his crown and scepter--but nothing he desired like God.

Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants after the water brooks, my soul so pants after you, O God!" The deer is a dry thirsty creature, especially when chased by the hunter--it must have water to quench it. Thus the pious soul pants after the refreshing streams of Christ's blood; and these desires of a Christian are rightly terminated. He desires as well conformity to Christ in grace, as communion with him in glory. He desires the Sun of Righteousness, not only for its refreshing beams--but for its healing wings. He desires not only Christ's presence--but his image! "Lord give me yourself that I may be more holy! What would I do in heaven with this unholy heart! What converse could I have with You?" Thus the soul is still with God by desire, and he desires not only mercy to forgive his sins--but grace to to make him live godly.

3. The soul is with God by LOVE. Where a man's love is--there he is! What an expansion of heart is there--to that which we love. Bonaventure calls love--the wing of the soul. On this wing, did David fly to heaven. "I am still with you." Love has this property, it unites at a distance; it fixes the heart upon the object. Thus the lovesick spouse, when she could not see Christ, yet she embraced him in her affections. When her eye was not upon him, yet her love was. 'Have you seen him anywhere, this one I love so much?' Cant. 3:3. "Christ my love is crucified," said Ignatius. As Christ was fastened to the cross--so he is fastened to a Christian's heart.

A true saint is like the tribe of Manasseh, half of the tribe was on this side Jordan--and half on the other side in the holy land. So it is with a saint; half of him is on earth--and half in heaven! His flesh is on earth--his heart in heaven! As it was said of Paul, 2 Cor. 12:2, "Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell;" so it may be said of a godly Christian, it is hard to tell whether he be in the body or out of the body! His love is in heaven, he is lodged in the tree of life. The fire of love, boils the heart as high as heaven.

4. The soul is still with God by FAITH. Unbelief is called "a drawing back from God," Heb. 10:39, and faith "drawing near to God," Heb. 10:22. By an eye of faith, through the telescope of a promise--we look into heaven. The people of Israel stood in the outer court of the temple--but the high-priest "entered within the

veil," into the holy of holies; thus the senses stand in the outward court of the body--but faith enters within the veil! It sees Christ clothed with the robe of our human nature, and sitting down in glory above the angels. Faith embraces Christ. Augustine moves the question, "how shall I put out a long arm to reach Christ in heaven?" "Believe," says he, "and you have laid hold on him!" Faith is the golden clasp that joins us to Christ. By faith we put on Christ as a garment, Romans 13:14. By faith we receive and are nourished by him, Col. 2:6. By faith we are ingrafted into him as the scions into the stock, John 15:5. Indeed a believer's life is outside of himself; he lives more in Christ than he lives in himself--as the beam lives in the sun, as the branch in the root, Col. 3:3. As Judah said concerning Jacob, "his life is bound up in the lad's life," Gen. 44: 30, so is a believer's life bound up in Christ. And thus is the gracious soul ever with God--by faith.

5. A Christian is still with God in the whole course and tenor of his life. Not only his heart is in heaven--but his life too, Phil. 3:28. Our deportment is in heaven; we walk as nobles of that city. It is said of Christ, "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," Luke 9:50. A godly Christian should be known by his face--his life should show that he is going to the Jerusalem above. A true saint is a citizen of heaven; he manifests what place he belongs to--by his speech, habits, and walk. There is a kind of angelic brightness on him; he shines in holiness, as Moses' face shined when he had been with God in the mount. He is still doing angels' work--his life is a very heaven upon earth. "Noah walked with God," Gen. 6:9. And in this sense the pious soul is still with God, he walks perseveringly with God. Though he meets with some rubs and difficulties in the way--yet still he keeps his walk.

And thus we have seen in what sense a gracious soul is still with God; the eagle may sometimes sit upon a low bough--but her nest is built high. A Christian walks upon the surface of the earth--but his nest is built upon the Rock, Christ. The moon is seen in the water, yet it is seated in the sky. So a Christian is seen here below--but he is above, "he is still with God."

3. WHY a gracious heart is still with God. There are five reasons why it is so.

1. From the nature of grace. Grace carries the soul up towards God. Grace is like fire. It is the nature of fire to ascend. You who lie groveling on the earth--feeding like the serpent, on dust--or like eels wrapping yourselves in the mud and slime of the world, had you that new and holy principle of grace infused, your souls would sparkle upwards--you would "mount up to heaven as eagles," Isaiah 40:31. Had you the sharp eye of faith to see Christ, you would soon have the swift wing of desire to fly to him.

2. From that magnetic power of God's Spirit. The Spirit has not only a soul-purifying power--but a soul-elevating power. As the sun draws up the vapors from the earth--so the Spirit draws up the heart to God. "The Spirit lifted me up," Ezek. 3:14. Though there is grace in the heart which would be still mounting upward, yet there is much corruption to pull us down. A Christian in this life is both checked and spurred; grace spurs him forward in his way to heaven, and then corruption checks him. But the Spirit comes in and draws up the heart to God; which is a mighty power--as if you should see a mill-stone drawn up into the sun.

3. A gracious heart is still with God, because he is the center of the soul. And where should the heart ever be--but in its center? While the heart is on the earth it shakes and trembles like the needle in the compass, until it turns to God. God is the proper orb where the soul fixes itself. A Christian rests in God, as the bee in the hive, as the bird in the nest. "Return to your rest, O my soul," Psalm 116:7. Noah's dove was never well--until it was in the ark. The ark was a type of Christ.

4. The soul is still with God, because of those dear relations it has to God. Here are all the terms of close relationship. God is our Father, John 20:17, and where should the child be but with its Father? God is our husband, Isaiah 54:5, and where should the wife be but with her husband? God is our friend, John 15:15, now friends desire to be still together. God is our rock, 2 Sam. 22:2, where should Christ's doves be but in the clefts of this blessed rock? God is the saints' treasure, and "where the treasure is, there will their hearts be also."

5. The gracious soul is still with God, because of those rare excellencies which are in God.

1. FULLNESS. Everyone desires to be at a full fountain, Col. 1:19, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." Observe, Christ is not only said to be full in the concrete--but fullness in the abstract; nay, in him is all fullness! A vessel may be full of water--but that is not all fullness--as it is not also full of wine. A chest may be full of silver--but that is not all fullness--as it is not also full of pearls. But in Christ is all fullness. He is bread to strengthen, John 6:48. He is wine to comfort, John 15:1. He is gold to enrich, Rev. 3:18. He is all, and in all, Col. 3:11.

Thus there is a variety of fullness in the Lord Jesus. O Christian, what is it, that you need? Do you need quickening grace? Christ is the Prince of life, Acts 3:15. Do you need healing grace? Christ has made a medicine of his own body to cure you, "by his wounds we are healed," Isaiah 53:5. Do you need cleansing grace? there is the bath of his blood to wash you, "The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sin," 1 John 1:7.

Let not the Poets tell us of their magic fountains in which they supposed their nymphs to have washed. These waters distilled out of Christ's side are infinitely more pure. Pliny says that the water-courses of Rome are the world's wonder. Oh had he known these sacred water-courses in Christ's blood--how would he have been stricken with astonishment! And do you wonder that the soul is still with Christ--when there is all fullness in him?

Nay--but that all is not all; the Apostle goes further; "it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell." To note the duration of this fullness; it is not transient but permanent. This fullness is not in Christ--as the water in the pipe or spout; the spout may be full of water--but it continues not there; water does not dwell in the spout. But this fullness is in Christ--as light in the sun; it dwells there. Christ's fullness is a never-failing fullness; what more can be said? Nay--but the Apostle carries it yet higher. In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. If Christ had all the fullness of the creation, the treasures of the earth, the holiness of the angels; yet this could not satisfy the soul. In him there is the fullness of the Godhead--the riches of the Deity are in him! And the communication of this blessed fullness, so far as there is a capacity to receive, is that which satisfies the soul, and fills it brim full; and if there is such a plenitude and fullness in God, no wonder a gracious heart desires to be still with God.

2. SWEETNESS. God is love, 1 John 4:19. Everyone desires to be with them from whom they receive most love. The Lord does often make himself known to the soul in an ordinance, as he did to the disciples in breaking of bread, Luke 24:35. He manifests himself in the comforts of his Spirit, which are so sweet and ravishing, that they pass all understanding. It is no wonder then, that the soul is so strongly desirous of God. He gives those jewels and bracelets, those love-tokens--that the soul cannot but desire to be still with God.

Use 1. It shows us the art of how to be in heaven before our time, namely, by being still with God. A godly Christian begins his heaven here, grace translates him into the paradise of God. Elijah left his mantle

behind--but he was taken up in a fiery chariot. So it is with a saint, the mantle of the flesh is left behind--but his soul is carried up in a fiery chariot of love.

Use 2. Is of Reproof; and it consists of two branches.

Branch 1. It reproves those who are NEVER with God. They live without God in the world, Ephes. 2:12. It is made the characteristic note of a wicked man, that "God is not in all his thoughts," Psalm 10:4. He never thinks of God, unless with horror and bewilderment, as the prisoner thinks of the judge and the trial; and here two sorts of sinners are indicted.

1. Such as are still with their sins. A child of God, though sin is with him, yet he is not with sin, his will is against sin; Romans 7:15. "I really want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do the very thing I hate." He would gladly shake this viper into the fire. He forsakes sin--but sin will not forsake him; so that though sin is with him--yet he is not with sin. But a wicked man and sin are together, as two lovers mutually solacing and embracing; "a wicked man is a worker of iniquity," Luke 23:27, like a workman who follows his trade in his shop.

2. Such as are still with the world. It is counted a miracle to find a diamond in a vein of gold; and it is as great a miracle to find Christ, that precious stone, in an earthly heart. The world is mens' idol; "they mind earthly things," Phil. 3:19. Like the ostrich, though she has wings, yet by reason of the weightiness of her body cannot fly high; most men are so weighed down with thick clay, that they cannot soar aloft. They are like Saul, hid among the stuff. They are like Sisera, who had his head nailed to the earth; so their hearts are nailed to the earth. Absalom's beauty stole away the hearts of Israel from their king, 2 Sam. 15: 6. Just so, the world's bewitching beauty steals away mens' hearts from God. It is sad when the husband sends his wife a jewel, and she so falls in love with the jewel that she forgets her husband. An estate should be a load-stone to draw men nearer to God--but it is often a millstone to sink them to hell.

There is a moderate use of these things--but there is a danger in the exercise. The bee may suck a little honey from a flower--but put it in a barrel of honey, and it dies.

Christians must stave off the world--that it gets not into their heart, Psalm 62:10. For as the water is useful to the ship, and helps it to sail better to the haven. But let the water get into the ship--and it sinks the ship. Just so, riches are useful and convenient for our passage. We sail more comfortably with them through the troubles of this world--but if the love of riches get into the heart, then we are drowned with them! 1 Tim. 6:9.

Branch 2. It reproves those who are SELDOM with God. They are sometimes with God--but not still with God. The shell-fish, as naturalists observe, has so little life in it, and moves so slow, that it is hard to determine whether it lives a vegetative or an animal life. Just so it may be said of many Christians, their motion heavenward is so slow and inconstant, that we can hardly know whether the life of grace is in them or not; they are seldom with God. Rev. 2:4, "You have left your first love." Many professors have almost lost their acquaintance with God. Time was, when they could weep at a sermon--but now these wells are stopped up.

Time was, when they were tender of sin; the least hair makes the eye weep; the least sin would make conscience smite. Now they can digest this poison! Time was, when they trembled at the threatenings of the Word. Now, with the leviathan, they can "laugh at the shaking of a spear," Job 41:29. Time was, when they "called the sabbath a delight," Isaiah 58:13, the queen of days; how did they wait with joy for the

rising of the Sun of Righteousness on that day! what pantings of soul after God! what mounting up of affections! But now the case is altered; "What a weariness is it to serve the Lord?" Mal. 1:13. Time was, when they delighted in the Word; indeed it is a looking-glass which mends their eyes that look on it! Now they have laid it aside, seldom do they look in this mirror. Time was, when they could send forth strong cries in prayer, Heb. 5:7. But now the wings of prayer are clipped; they come like cold suitors to God, their petitions even cool between their lips; as if they would tempt God to deny them! Oh why have you left off your communion with God! "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" Jer. 2:5. Let Christians lay this sadly to heart: "Remember from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do your first works," Rev. 2:5. You are in a spiritual lethargy! Oh never leave until your hearts are pitched up to such a heavenly frame, as here David's was, "When I awake I am still with you." And that brings me to the next point.

Use 3. The third use is of EXHORTATION. To persuade all those who profess themselves Christians, to imitate this blessed pattern in the text, "be still with God." You shall never go to heaven when you die--unless you begin heaven here. The church in the Revelation has a crown of stars on her head, and the moon under her feet, Rev. 12:1. Christ is not to be found in the furrows--but upon the pinnacle; now that you may get your hearts loosened from these things below, and be still with God, I shall only propound two arguments.

1. Consider how UNWORTHY it is for a Christian to have his heart set upon the world.

1. It is unworthy of his soul. The soul is dignified with honor, it is a noble coin that has a divine impress stamped upon it; it is capable of communion with God and angels; now it is too far below a man to spend the affections and energies of this heaven-born soul, upon drossy things. It is as if one should embroider sackcloth with gold, or set a diamond in clay.

2. It is unworthy of his profession. 'Are you seeking great things for yourself?' Jer. 45:5. What! you Baruk? you who are a godly man? a Levite? Oh, how sordid is it for him that has his hope in heaven--to have his heart upon the earth! It is just as if a king should leave his throne--and follow the plough; or as if a man should leave a golden mine--to dig in a gravel pit. The lapwing has a crown on her head--and yet feeds on dung. A fit emblem of those who have a crown of profession on their head--yet feed with eagerness on these things below. Christians should deny themselves--but not undervalue themselves; they should be humble--but not base. If Alexander would not exercise at the Olympics, it being too far below him; shall they then who are the holy seed, the heirs of glory--disparage themselves by too eager pursuit after these contemptible things? "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:1-2.

2. The second argument to persuade us to be still with God, is, consider what a rare and excellent thing this is; which will appear in four particulars.

1. To be still with God is the most noble life. It is as much above the life of reason--as reason is above the life of a plant; the true Christian is like a star in the highest orb, he looks no lower than a crown. Grace puts high thoughts, princely affections, a kind of heavenly ambition into the soul. Grace raises a Christian above himself, it makes him as Caleb--a man of another spirit. He lives in the altitudes, his thoughts are lodged among angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect." Is not this the most noble life--to be still with God? The philosophers compare the soul of man, to a bird mounting up with her wings in the air.

Thus with the wings of grace, the soul flies aloft, and takes a prospect of heaven.

2. To be still with God is the most satisfying life, nothing else will do it. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full," Eccl. 1:7. Let all the golden streams of worldly delights run into the heart of a man--yet the heart is not full. Strain out the quintessence of the creature--it turns to froth, Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities!" But in God is sweet satisfaction and contentment. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, Psalm 63:5. Here is a hive of sweetness, a mirror of beauty, a storehouse of riches! Here is the river of pleasure, where the soul bathes with infinite delight, Psalm 36:8, and this river has a fountain at the bottom, ver. 9, "For with you is the fountain of life!" Is not this most satisfactory? It is a witty observation of Picus Mirandula, that in the creation of the world, God gave the water to the fish; the earth to the beasts; the air to the birds; and afterward, made man in his own image, that man might say, "Lord there is nothing on earth to be desired besides You;" what can satisfy my soul--but to be still with you.

3. To be still with God is the most comfortable life. What sweet harmony and music is in that soul? The bird, the higher it takes its flight, the sweeter it sings. Just so, the higher the soul is raised above the world--the sweeter joy it has. How is the heart inflamed in prayer? How is it ravished in holy meditation? What joy and peace in believing? Romans 15:13, and these joys are those honey-streams which flow out of the rock, Christ! Tell me, is it not comfortable being in heaven? He who is still with God--carries heaven about him. He has those tastes of God's love, which are the beginnings of heaven. So sweet is this kind of life, that it can drop sweetness into the troubles and afflictions of the world, that we shall be scarcely sensible of them. It can turn the prison into a paradise; the furnace into a festival; it can sweeten death. A soul elevated by grace, can rejoice to think of dying: death will but cut the string, and the soul, that bird of paradise, shall fly away and be at rest.

4. To be still with God is the most durable life. The life of sense will fail; we must shortly bid farewell to all our outward comforts; these blossoms will drop off: We read of "a sea of glass mingled with fire," Rev. 12:2. Bullinger, and other learned expositors understand by that sea of glass, the world. Indeed it is a fit emblem of it; the world is a sea--it is seldom calm; and it is a sea of glass--slippery; and this glass is mingled with fire--to show it is of a perishable and consuming nature. Riches take wings, and relations take wings. But you, who by the wings of grace are still soaring aloft, this life shall never have an end--it is the beginning of an eternal life. Happiness is but the cream of holiness! You who are still with God, shall be forever with the Lord, 1 Thess. 4:17. You shall see God in all his embroidered robes of majesty! 1 John 3:2, "We shall see him as he is;" and this sight will be ravishing, and full of glory. O then is not this the best kind of life? He who when he awakes is still with God, when he goes to sleep at death, shall be forever with the Lord.

Question. But how shall I arrive at this blessed frame of heart, to be still with God?

Answer 1. Get a right judgment. It is a great matter to have the judgment set right. Get a right judgment of sin--and you will never be with it. Get a right judgment of God--and you will be still with him. In God are all combined excellencies: how sweet is his love, how satisfying is his presence! But when I speak of the glorious perfections in God--I must draw a veil; neither pen nor pencil can set them forth in their orient luster; the angels here must be silent.

2. If you would be still with God, watch over your hearts every day; lock up your hearts with God every morning, and give him the key. The heart will be stealing out to vanity. "Lord," says Bernard, "there is nothing more flitting than my heart!" Keep watch and ward there. Especially, Christians, look to your hearts

after an ordinance; when you have been with God in duty, now expect a temptation. Physicians say, the body must be more carefully looked to, when it comes out of a hot bath, for the pores being open, it is in more danger of catching cold. So after your spiritual bathing in an ordinance, when you have been at a sermon or sacrament, now take heed that you do not catch cold.

3. Beware of remissness in duty. When you begin to slacken the reins, and abate your former heat and vigor in piety--a deadness steals insensibly upon the heart, and by degrees there arises a sad estrangement between God and the soul. And, brethren, how hard a work will you find it--to get your hearts up again, when they are once down! A weighty stone that has been rolled up to the top of a steep hill, and then falls down to the bottom, how hard is it to get it up again!

Oh take heed of a dull, lazy temper in God's service! We are bidden to be "fervent in spirit," Romans 12:11. The Athenians inquiring at the oracle of Apollo, why their plagues continued so long; the oracle answered them, that they must double their sacrifices. Just so, those who would hold constant communion with God, must double their devotion, they must be much in prayer, and mighty in prayer! We read that the coals were to be put to the incense, Lev. 16:13. Incense was a type of prayer, and the coals put to the incense was to show, that the heart of a Christian ought to be inflamed in holy services; nothing is more dangerous than a plodding formality.

4. If you would be still with God, be much in the communion of saints. Many Christians live as if this article were blotted out of their creed. How does one saint whet and sharpen another! As vain company cools good affections, so by being in the communion of saints we are warmed and quickened. Be often among the spices--and you will smell of them!

These directions observed, we shall be able to keep our acquaintance with God, and may arrive at this blessed frame, as here David had, "When I awake I am still with you."

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