

# The Death of the Righteous

by Thomas Watson

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*Believers are great gainers at death, gaining many things, including a glorious sight of God, the love of God, a celestial palace, the society of glorified saints and angels, perfection of holiness, a royal magnificent feast, and honor and dignity.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:11, 1 Corinthians 15:26, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Revelation 7:17, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Eternal Life", "Heavenly Glory"

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## Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the death of the righteous, emphasizing that for believers, to live is Christ and to die is gain. He explains that at death, believers are freed from sin, troubles, care, fear, labor, suffering, temptation, and sorrow, entering into a state of eternal glory where they see, love, and are loved by God. The sermon highlights the privileges believers receive at death, including being united with Christ in the grave, entering into heavenly glory, enjoying the society of angels and saints, experiencing perfection in holiness, dignity, honor, harmony, rest, and eternity in God's presence.

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## Transcript

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"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!" Philippians 1:21

Paul was a great admirer of Christ. He desired to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified. 1 Cor 2:2. There is no medicine like the blood of Christ!

I. "For to me, to live is Christ." That is, "Christ is my life!" Or thus, "My life is made up of Christ." As a wicked man's life is made up of sin, so Paul's life was made up of Christ--he was full of Christ. That I may give you the sense of the text more fully, take it in these three particulars:

[1] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--Christ is the PRINCIPLE of my life. I fetch my spiritual life from Christ, as the branch fetches its sap from the root. "Christ lives in me." Gal 2:20. Jesus Christ sends forth life and spirits into me, to quicken me to every holy action. Thus, for to me to live is Christ: Christ is the principle of my life; from his fullness I live--as the branch lives from the root.

[2] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--Christ is the END of my life. I live not for myself--but for Christ. All my living, is to do service to Christ. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord." Rom 14:8. We lay out ourselves wholly for Christ. We propagate his gospel; the design of our life is to exalt Christ, and to make the crown upon his head flourish. It may then be said, for to us to live is Christ--when our whole life is a living for Christ.

[3] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--Christ is the JOY of my life. Psalm 43:4, "God my exceeding joy," or the cream of my joy. A Christian rejoices in Christ's righteousness. He can rejoice in Christ when worldly joys are gone. When the tulip in a garden withers--a man still rejoices in his jewels which are locked up in the house. Just so--when worldly joys are gone--a saint can rejoice in Christ, the pearl of great price. In this sense, Christ is the joy of my life. If Christ were gone--my life would be a death to me.

It should exhort us all to labor to say as the apostle, "For to me, to live is Christ!" Christ is the principle of my life, the end of my life, the joy of my life. If we can say, "For to me, to live is Christ," we may comfortably conclude, "and to die is gain!"

II. "And to die is gain!" To a believer death is great gain. A saint can count what his losses for Christ are here--but he cannot count how great his gains are at death. "To me to die is gain." Death to a believer is the daybreak of eternal brightness. To show fully what a believer's gains are at death, would be a task too great for an angel; all hyperboles fall short of it; the reward of glory exceeds our imagination. Let me give you some dark views and imperfect lineaments only, of that infinite glory the saints shall gain at the hour of death. "To me to die is gain."

[1] Believers at death, shall bid an eternal farewell to all sins and troubles. They shall be in a state of impeccability. Sin expires with their life. I think sometimes what a happy state that will be, never to have another sinful thought, and to have a quietus from all troubles. Here David cried out, "My life is spent with griefs, and my years with sighing." "Long life is merely long torment," Augustine. Life begins with a cry, and ends with a groan; but at death all troubles die.

[2] Believers at death, shall gain the glorious sight of God. They shall see him:

(1.) Intellectually with the eyes of their mind, which divines call the beatific vision. If there were not such an intellectual sight of God, how do the spirits of just men, made perfect, see him?

(2.) They shall behold the glorified body of Jesus Christ; and if it be pleasant to behold the sun, how blessed a sight will it be to see Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, clothed with our human nature, shining in glory above the angels! Through Christ's flesh, as through a transparent glass, some bright rays and beams of the Godhead shall display themselves to glorified eyes. The sight of God through Christ will be very delightful; for the terror of God's essence will be taken away; his majesty will be mixed with beauty, and sweetened with mercy. It will be infinitely delightful to the saints to see the amiable aspects and smiles of God's face.

[3] The saints at death shall not only have a sight of God--but shall enjoy his love. There shall be no more a veil on God's face, nor shall his smiles be chequered with frowns--but his love shall discover itself in all its orient beauty and fragrant sweetness. Here on earth, the saints pray for his love, and they have a few drops; but there they shall have as much as their vessels can receive. To know the love that passes knowledge, will cause a jubilation of spirit, and create such holy raptures of joy in the saints, as are superlative, and would soon overwhelm them, if God did not make them able to bear it.

[4] Believers at death shall gain a celestial palace, a house not made with hands. 2 Cor 5:5: Here on earth, the saints are straitened for room; they have but poor cottages to live in; but they shall have a royal palace to live in hereafter. Here is their sojourning house; there in heaven is their mansion-house, a house built high above all the visible orbs, bespangled with light, and enriched with pearls and precious stones. Col 1:12, and Rev 21:19. It is not their landlord's house--but their Father's house, and stands upon consecrated ground. John 14:2. It is represented by transparent glass, to show its holiness. Rev 21:21.

[5] Believers at death shall gain the sweet society of glorified saints and angels; which will add to the felicity of heaven, as every star adds some luster to the sky.

(1.) The society of the glorified saints. We shall see them in their souls, as well as in their bodies. Their bodies will be so clear and bright, that we shall see their souls shining through them, as wine through the glass. Believers at death will have close converse with glorified saints. How delightful will it be, to be freed from all the sinful corruptions, pride, envy, passion and censoriousness, which as scars disfigured them here! In heaven there will be perfect love among the saints; as the olive and myrtle, they will sweetly embrace each other. If in the transfiguration Peter knew Moses and Elijah, whom he never saw before, Matt 17:3, much more, in the glorified state, will saints perfectly know one another, though they never saw each other before.

(2.) The saints at death will behold the angels with the glorified eye of their understandings. The wings of the cherubim (representing the angels) were made of fine gold, to denote both their sanctity and splendor. Angels are compared to lightning, Matt 28:3, because of those sparkling beams of majesty, which as lightning shoot from them. When saints and angels meet and sing together in concert in the heavenly choir, what divine harmony, what joyful triumphs will there be!

[6] Believers at death shall gain perfection of holiness. Here on earth, grace is but "in its cradle," very imperfect; so that we cannot write a copy of holiness without blotting. Here on earth, believers receive but "the first fruits of the Spirit." At death the saints will arrive at perfection; their knowledge will be clear; their sanctity perfect; their sun will be in its full meridian splendor. They need not then pray for increase of grace; for they shall love God as much as they would love him, and as much as he desires to have them love him. They shall be in respect of holiness as the angels of God.

[7] At death, the saints will gain a royal magnificent feast. I told you before what a glorious palace they shall have; but a man may starve in a house, if there is no cheer. The royal banquet which saints have at death is shadowed out in Scripture by a marriage-supper. Rev 19:9. Bullinger and Gregory the Great understand by the marriage-supper of the Lamb, the stately, magnificent festival the saints will have in heaven, when they shall feed on the tree of life. Rev 22:2. They shall have the heavenly nectar and ambrosia, "the spiced wine, and the juice of the pomegranate." Cant 8:2. This royal supper of the Lamb will not only satisfy hunger--but prevent it. "They shall hunger no more." Rev 7:16. Nor can there be any surfeit at this feast, because a fresh course will be continually served. New and fresh delights will spring from God; therefore the tree of life in paradise is said to bear twelve sorts of fruit. Rev 22:2.

[8] Believers at death shall gain honor and dignity; they shall reign as kings. We read therefore of the ensigns of their royalty, their white robes and celestial crowns. Rev 4:4. We read that the doors of the holy of holies were made of palm-trees and open flowers, covered with gold. This is an emblem of the victory and triumph, and the golden garland of honor with which God invests the glorified saints. When all worldly honor shall lie in the dust--then shall the saints' honor remain; not one jewel shall be plucked out of their

crown. At death they shall gain a blessed eternity. If the saints could have the least suspicion or fear of losing their glory, it would much cool and embitter their joy; but their crown fades not away. I Pet 5:4. As the wicked have a worm which never dies, so the elect have an unfading crown of glory. 'Forever' is a short word--but it has no end. "At the last our joy shall be never-ending," Bernard. "The things which are not seen are eternal." 2 Cor 4:18. "At your right hand are pleasures for evermore." Psalm 16:2. Who can span eternity? Millions of ages stand but for ciphers in eternity. Forever in Christ's bosom is the highest strain of the saint's glory!

How do the saints come to have all this gain?

They have a right to all this gain at death upon several accounts, as by virtue of the Father's donation, the Son's purchase, the Holy Spirit's pledge, and faith's acceptance. Therefore the state of future glory is called the saint's proper inheritance. They are heirs of God and have a right to inherit. "Always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and he has brought us into the Kingdom of his dear Son." Colossians 1:12-13

Use one: See the great difference between the death of the godly and the wicked. The godly are great gainers at death--but the wicked are great losers at death. They lose four things:

(1.) They lose the WORLD; and that is a great loss to the wicked. They laid up their treasure upon earth, and to be turned out of it all at once is a great loss.

(2.) They lose their SOULS. Matt 16:26, 27. The soul was at first a noble piece of coin, upon which God stamped his own image. This celestial spark is more precious than the whole globe of the world; but the sinner's soul is lost: not that the souls of the wicked are annihilated at death--but tormented.

(3.) They lose HEAVEN. Heaven is the royal seat of the blessed; it is the region of happiness, the map of perfection. There is the manna which is angels' food; there is the garden of spices, the bed of perfumes, the river of pleasure. Sinners at death, lose all these.

(4.) They lose all HOPE. Though they lived wickedly, they hoped God would be merciful, and they hoped they would go to heaven. Their hope was not an anchor--but a spider's web. At death they lose their hopes, and see they did but flatter themselves into hell. "Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless. What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web." Job 8:13-14. It is dreadful to have life and hope cut off together! "The hopes of the godly result in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked are all in vain." Proverbs 10:28. "When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes." Proverbs 11:7. "The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath." Proverbs 11:23.

Use two: If saints gain such glorious things at death, well may they desire it. Does not everyone desire happiness? No one is content before his death. Faith gives a title to heaven; death gives the possession of heaven. Though we should be desirous of doing service here--yet we should be ambitious of being with Christ. "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far!" Phil 1:23. We should be content to live--but willing to die. Is it not a blessed thing to be freed from sin, and to lie forever in the bosom of divine love? Is it not a blessed thing to meet our godly relations in heaven, and to be singing divine anthems of praise among the angels? Does not the bride desire the marriage day, especially if she has the prospect of a crown? What is the place we now live in--but a place of banishment from God? We are in a

wilderness! Here on earth, we are combating with Satan--should we not desire to be out of the bloody field, where the bullets of temptation fly fast--and receive a victorious crown? Think what it will be, to have always a smiling look from Christ's face! to be brought into the banqueting-house, and have the banner of his love displayed over us! O you saints, desire death; it is your ascension-day to heaven.

Said Hilarion on his death-bed, "Go forth, my soul, Go forth!" Another holy man said, "Lord, lead me to that glory which I have seen as through a dark glass; hasten, Lord, and do not tarry!" Some plants thrive best when they are transplanted. Just so, believers, when transplanted by death, cannot but thrive, because they have Christ's sunbeams shining upon them. What though the passage through the valley of the shadow of death is troublesome! who would not be willing to pass a tempestuous sea, if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came to shore?

Use three: We may here find comfort in the loss of dear and pious relations. They are not only taken away from the evil to come--but are great gainers by death. They leave a wilderness, and go to a paradise! They change their complaints into thanksgivings! They leave their sorrows behind, and enter into the joy of their Lord! Why should we weep for their happiness? Believers have not their portion paid to them, until the day of their death. God's promise is his bond to give heaven to them; but though they have his bond, they do not receive their portion until the day of death. Oh! rejoice to think of the happiness of those who die in the Lord. To them "to die is gain." They are as rich as heaven can make them!

#### A Believer's Privilege at Death

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain!" Philippians 1:21

Hope is a Christian's anchor, which he casts within the veil. "Rejoicing in hope." A Christian's hope is not in this life--but he "has hope in his death." The best of a saint's comfort, begins when his life ends; but the wicked have all their heaven here. "What sorrows await you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now!" Luke 6:24. You may make your acquittance, and write "Received in full payment." "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things." But a saint's happiness is in the anticipation of heavenly glory. "The righteous has hope in his death." God keeps the best wine until last. If Cato, the heathen, said, "To me to die is gain," as he saw death to be a mercy; what, then, may a believer say! "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth." A queen of England said she preferred her coffin before her cradle.

What benefits do believers receive at death?

I. The saints, at death, have great immunities and freedoms. An apprentice, when he has served his time, is made free. Just so, when the saints have finished their time of living, they are made free! They are not made free until death.

[1] At death they are freed from a body of SIN. There are in the best believers, the remnants of sin--some remainders and relics of corruption. "O wretched man who I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" By the body of death is meant the mass and lump of sin. It may well be called a body--for its weightiness; and a body of death for its harmfulness.

(1.) Sin weighs us down. Sin hinders us from doing good. Like a bird that would be flying up--but has a chain tied to its legs to hinder it--a Christian would be flying up to heaven with the wings of desire--but sin hinders him! He is like a ship under sail, and at anchor! Grace would sail forward--but sin is the anchor that

holds it back!

(2.) Sin is more active in its sphere, than grace. How stirring was lust in David, when his grace lay dormant!

(3.) Sin sometimes gets the mastery, and leads a saint captive. "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing." Rom 7:19. Paul was like a man carried down the stream, and could not bear up against it. How often is a child of God overpowered with pride and passion! Therefore Paul calls sin, "a law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members." Rom 7: 23. Sin binds as a law; it has a kind of jurisdiction over the soul, as Caesar had over the senate.

(4.) Sin defiles the soul. Like a stain to beauty--sin turns the soul's azure brightness into darkness.

(5.) Sin debilitates us, disarms us of our strength. "I am this day weak, though anointed king." Though a saint is crowned with grace, and anointed a spiritual king--he is weak.

(6.) Sin is ever restless. "The flesh lusts against the spirit." Gal 5:17. Sin is an inmate that is always quarreling--it will never be quiet.

(7.) Sin adheres to us, we cannot get rid of it. It may be compared to a wild fig-tree growing on a wall, the roots of which are pulled up--but some fibers of it are left in the joints of the stone-work, which cannot be gotten out.

(8.) Sin mingles with our duties and graces. It makes a child of God weary of his life, and makes him water his couch with his tears--to think that sin is so strong an inhabitant, and that he often offends the God he loves. This made Paul cry out, Miser ego homo! "Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin?" Romans 7:24. He did not cry out because of his affliction, or his prison-chains--but for the body of sin.

Now a believer at death is freed from sin, he is not taken away in his sins--but from his sins. He shall never again have a vain, proud thought! He shall never again grieve the Spirit of God! Sin brought death into the world--and death shall carry sin out of the world. The Persians had a certain day in the year in which they killed all serpents and venomous creatures; such a day will the day of death be to a believer. Death will destroy all his sins, which, like so many serpents, have stung him. Death smites a believer as the angel did Peter--and made his chains fall off. Acts 12:7. Believers at death are made perfect in holiness. "The spirits of just men made perfect." At death the souls of believers recover their virgin purity. Oh! what a blessed privilege is this, to be without spot or wrinkle; to be purer than the sunbeams; to be as free from sin as the angels! This makes a believer desirous to have his passport, and to be gone from his sin! He would gladly live in that pure air, where no black vapors of sin arise!

[2] At death the saints shall be freed from all the troubles and incumbrances to which this life is subject. "Sin is the seed sown--and trouble is the harvest reaped!" Euripides. Life and trouble are married together. There is more in life to trouble us, than to tempt us. Parents divide a portion of sorrow to their children, and yet leave enough for themselves. "Man is born to trouble." Job 5:7. He is heir to it, it is his birth-right. You may as well separate weight from lead, as trouble from the life of man. King Henry's emblem was a crown hung in a bush of thorns. There is a far greater proportion of bitterness, than pleasure in this life. "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon." Prov 7:17. For one sweet ingredient there were two

bitter; for the sweet cinnamon, there were bitter myrrh and aloes. A man's grace will not exempt him from troubles. "My years have been few and difficult." Gen 47:9. Thus said a godly patriarch, though he had met with God. "I have seen God face to face!" and yet he had his troubles. There are many things to embitter life and cause trouble--but death frees us from them all!

(1.) Death frees a believer from CARE. The mind is full of perplexed thoughts--how to bring about such a design; or how to prevent such an evil. The Greek word for care comes from a primitive in the Greek, which signifies, to cut the heart in pieces. Care torments the mind; wastes the spirits. No such bitter bread, as the bread of carefulness. Ezek 12:19. Care is a spiritual canker, which eats out the comfort of life. Death is its only cure!

(2.) Death frees a believer from FEAR. Fear is the epilepsy of the soul, which sets it shaking. "There is torment in fear." Fear is like Prometheus' vulture gnawing the heart. There is a mistrustful fear--a fear of lack; and a distracting fear--a fear of danger; and a discouraging fear--a fear that God does not love us. These fears leave dreadful impressions upon the mind. But at death, a believer is freed from these torturing fears! He is as far from fear--as the damned are from hope. The grave buries a Christian's fear!

(3.) Death frees a believer from LABOR. "All things are wearisome, more than one can say." Eccl 1:8. Some labor with their bodies--others with their minds. God has made a law, "In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread." But death gives a believer a quietus--it takes him off from his hard labor. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: they rest from their labors." They no longer need to work--for they have entered upon their reward! They no longer need to fight--for they have the crown set on their head! "They rest from their labors."

(4.) Death frees a believer from SUFFERING. Believers are as a lily among thorns; or as the dove among vultures. The wicked have an antipathy against them; and secret hatred will often break forth into open violence. "He who was born after the flesh, persecuted him who was born after the Spirit." The dragon is described with seven heads and ten horns. Rev 12:3. He plots with the seven heads, and pushes with the ten horns. But at death, the godly shall be freed from the molestations of the wicked! They shall never more be pestered with these vermin! "There the wicked cease from troubling." Job 3:17. Death does to a believer, as Joseph of Arimathea did to Christ--it takes him down from the cross. The eagle which flies high, cannot be stung with the serpent. Death gives the soul the wings of an eagle, to fly above all the venomous serpents here below!

(5.) Death frees a believer from TEMPTATION. Though Satan is a conquered enemy--yet he is a restless enemy. "Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour." 1 Peter 5:8. He prowls about; he is always going about his diocese. He has his snares and his darts! One he tempts with riches, another with beauty. It is a great trouble to be continually followed with temptations; it is as bad as for a virgin to have her chastity daily assaulted. But death will free a child of God from temptation, so that he shall never again be vexed with the old serpent! After death has shot its dart--the devil will be done shooting his! Grace puts a believer out of the devil's possession--but only death frees him from the devil's temptation!

(6.) Death frees a believer from SORROW. A cloud of sorrow often gathers in the heart--and drops into tears. "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." It was part of the curse, "In sorrow you shall bring forth." Gen 3:16. Many things occasion sorrow: sickness, law-suits, treachery of friends, disappointment of hopes, and loss of estate. "Don't call me Naomi (that is, pleasant). Instead, call me

Mara (that is, bitter), for the Almighty has made life very bitter for me." Ruth 1:20.

Sorrow is the evil spirit which haunts us. "The people wept loudly. So they named that place Bochim (that is, weeping)." Judges 2:4-5. The world is a Bochim! Rachel wept for her children; some grieve that they have no children, and others grieve that their children are unkind. Thus we spend our years with sighing. The world is a valley of tears! But death is the funeral of all our sorrows! "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!" Rev 7:17. Then Christ's spouse puts off her mourning garments; for "how can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them?" Matt 9:15. Thus death gives a believer his quietus; it frees him from sin and trouble. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." 1 Corinthians 15:26. Though the apostle calls death the last enemy--yet it is the best friend! "To me to die is gain!"

See here that which may make a true saint willing to die. Death will set him out of gunshot, and free him from sin and trouble. There is no cause for weeping--to leave a valley of tears--to leave the stage on which sin and misery are acted. Believers are here in a strange country, why then should they not be willing to leave it? Death beats off their fetters of sin, and sets them free! Who goes weeping, when released from a jail?

Besides our own sins, there are the sins of others. The world is a place where Satan's throne is; a place where we see God daily dishonored. Lot, who was a bright star in a dark night, felt his righteous soul tormented with the filthy lives of the wicked. 2 Pet 2:7. To see God's truths adulterated, and his glory eclipsed--wounds a godly heart. It made David cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." Kedar was Arabia, where Ishmael's posterity lived. It was a cut to David's heart to dwell there. O then, be willing to depart out of the tents of Kedar!

II. The BODIES of believers are united to Christ in the grave, and shall rest there until the resurrection. They are said to sleep in Jesus. 1 Thess 4:14. The dust of believers is part of Christ's mystic body. The grave is a dormitory, or place of rest to the saints, where their bodies quietly sleep in Christ, until they are awakened out of their sleep by the trumpet of the archangel.

How shall we know that at death we shall be freed from sin and trouble, and have our bodies united to Christ in the grave?

"To me," says Paul, "to die is gain;" to me, insofar as I am a true believer. Are we such? Have we this blessed faith? Faith, wherever it is, is operative. Jewelers say there is no precious stone, but has some hidden virtue in it. Just so I may say of faith--it has some secret virtue in it; it anchors the soul on Christ; it has both a justifying and sanctifying virtue. It fetches blood out of Christ's side to pardon; and water out of his side to purify. Faith works by love. Faith constrains to duty. Faith makes the head study for Christ, the tongue confess him, and the hands work for him.

I have read of a father who had three sons, and in his will, he left all his estate to that son who could find his ring with the jewel--which had a healing virtue. The case was brought before the judges; the two elder sons counterfeited a ring--but the younger son brought the true ring, which was proved by the virtue of it; whereupon his father's estate went to him. To this ring I may compare faith. There is a counterfeit faith in the world: but if we can find this ring of faith which has the healing virtue in it to purify the heart--it is the true faith which gives us a saving interest in Christ, and entitles us to all these privileges at death--to be freed from sin and sorrow--and to have our bodies united to Christ, while they are in the grave.

III. At death, the SOULS of believers pass into glory. Death brings the removal of all evils, and the attainment of all blissful things! Death is the daybreak of eternal brightness. Here I shall lead you to the top of Mount Pisgah and give you a glimpse of the Holy Land.

What is comprehended, in heavenly glory?

"Glory is a state of being made perfect, by the gathering together of every precious thing," Boethius. It is a perfect state of bliss, which consists in the accumulation and heaping together all the precious things of which immortal souls are capable. And truly here I am at a loss; for all I can say falls short of the reality of celestial glory. Appelles' pencil cannot delineate it! Angels' tongues cannot express it! We shall never understand glory fully--until we are in heaven! Let me give you some dark views only, and some imperfect lineaments of that state of glory at which saints shall arrive after death.

[1] The first and most sublime part of the glory of heaven--is the full and sweet fruition of God. We are apt to think the happiness of heaven, is in being free from pain and misery; but the very essence of happiness is the enjoyment and fruition of God. God is an infinite inexhaustible fountain of joy; and to have him, is to have all. The enjoyment of God implies three things.

1. The enjoyment of God implies our SEEING him. "We shall see him as he is." How shall we see God?

(1.) We shall see him INTELLECTUALLY, with the eyes of the mind. This divines call the beatific vision. We shall have a full knowledge of God--though not know him fully. This sight of God will be very glorious--as when a king, on his coronation-day, shows himself in all his royalty and magnificence.

(2.) We shall PHYSICALLY behold the glorified body of Jesus Christ. And if it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, how blessed a sight will it be to behold the Sun of Righteousness! to see Christ clothed in our human nature, sitting in glory above the angels! Solomon says that, "the eye is never satisfied with seeing." But surely the eyes of saints will be satisfied, with seeing that orient brightness which shall shine from the beautiful body of Christ! It must needs be satisfying, because through Christ's flesh, some rays and beams of the Godhead will gloriously display themselves! God's excellent majesty would overwhelm us; but through the veil of Christ's flesh we shall behold the divine glory!

(3.) Our seeing God will be TRANSFORMING. We shall so see him, as to be in some measure assimilated and changed into his image! "We shall be like him." If, Moses' face shined, when was with God on the Mount, and had but some imperfect sight of his glory--how shall the saints glorified face shine, being always in God's full presence, and having some beams of his glory put upon them! "We shall be like him!" One who is deformed may look on beauty--and not be made beautiful. But the saints shall so see God--as that sight shall transform them into his likeness. "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness." Not that the saints shall partake of God's essence; for as the iron in the fire is made fiery--yet remains iron still, so the saints, by beholding God's majesty, shall be made glorious creatures--but are creatures still.

(4.) Our seeing God in heaven will be without weariness. Let a man see the rarest sight that is, he will soon be glutted; as when he comes into a garden, and sees delicious walks, fair arbors, pleasant flowers--within a little while he grows weary. But it is not so in heaven; there is no surfeit there. The saints will never be weary of seeing God; for, God being infinite--there shall every moment be new and fresh delight springing from him into their souls!

2. The second thing implied in enjoying God--is LOVING him. It is a saint's grief--that his heart is now like the frozen ocean, and he can melt no more in love to God. But in heaven--he shall be like the seraphim, burning with divine love! Love is a pleasant affection; "fear has torment." Love has joy in it. To love beauty is delightful. God's amazing beauty will attract the saints' love--it will be their heaven to love him!

3. The third thing implied in enjoying God--is God's loving us. Were there glory in God--yet, if there were not love, it would much eclipse the joys of heaven; but "God is love." The glorified saints cannot love God so much--as they are loved by God. What is their love--compared to God's love? What is their candle--compared to this Sun? God loves his people on earth, when they are black with sin and imperfections. But oh! how entirely will he love them when they are "without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish--when they will be holy and without fault!"

"You will be called Hephzibah, (that is, God's delight)" Isaiah 62:4. This is the felicity of heaven, to be in the sweet embraces of God's love--the delight of the King of Glory--to be sunning ourselves in the light of God's countenance. Then the saints shall know that love of Christ which passes knowledge. Eph 3:19. From this glorious manifestation of God's love--will flow infinite joy into the souls of the blessed; therefore heaven is called "entering into the joy of our Lord."

The seeing God, loving God, and being loved by God--will cause a jubilation of spirit, and create such holy raptures of joy in the saints, which are unspeakable and full of glory! "There is a certain sweetness about God, which delights--nay, rather, ravishes the soul!" Augustine.

On earth, the saints spend their years with sighing; they weep over their sins and afflictions. In heavenly glory, their water shall be turned into wine; their sorrow will be turned into joy; the vessels of mercy shall be filled and run over with joy. They shall have their palm branches and harps in their hand, in token of their triumphs and rejoicing. Rev 14:2.

[2] The second thing comprehended in glory--is the good SOCIETY there. There are the angels. Every star adds to the light. Those blessed cherubim will welcome us to paradise. If the angels rejoiced at the conversion of the elect, how will they rejoice at their coronation! There is the company of the saints. "The spirits of just men made perfect."

Will the saints in glory know each other?

Certainly they shall; for our knowledge in heaven shall not be diminished--but increased. We shall not only know our godly friends and relations--but we shall also know those glorified saints whom we never saw before! It must be so; for society without acquaintance is not comfortable. Indeed, the Scripture seems to hint as much to us; for, if Peter in the transfiguration knew Moses and Elijah, whom he never saw before--then surely in heaven the saints shall know one another, and be infinitely delighted in each other's company!

[3] The third thing comprehended in glory--is perfection in HOLINESS. Holiness is the beauty of God and angels--it makes heaven. What is happiness--but the essence of holiness? Here on earth, a Christian's grace is imperfect. At death believers shall arrive at perfection of grace. Then this sun shall be in its meridian splendor! Then shall they not need to pray for increase of grace, for they shall be as the angels--their light shall be clear, and their joy shall be full.

[4] The fourth thing in glory--is DIGNITY and HONOR. They shall reign as kings! Therefore glorified saints are said to have their royal insignia--their white robes and their crown. Rev 7:9. Caesar, after his victories, in token of honor, had a chair of ivory set for him in the senate, and a throne in the theater. Just so, the saints, having obtained their victories over sin and Satan, will be enthroned with Christ in the empyreal heaven. To sit with Christ denotes safety; to sit on the throne denotes dignity. "This honor have all the saints."

[5] The fifth thing in glory is--the HARMONY and union among the heavenly inhabitants. The devil cannot get his cloven foot into heaven! He cannot conjure up any storms of contention there. There shall be perfect union. There is no jarring string in the heavenly music! There is nothing to make any trouble--there is no pride or envy there. Though one star may differ from another, one may have a greater degree of glory--yet every vessel shall be full. There shall the saints and angels sit as olive-plants around about their Father's table--in love and unity. Then shall they join together in concert, then shall the loud anthems of praise be sung in the heavenly choir!

[6] The sixth thing in glory is a blessed REST. "There remains a rest for the people of God." It is a happy transition--from toil to rest. Here on earth, we can have no rest, tossed and turned as a ball on the ocean. "We are troubled on every side." How can a ship rest--in a storm? But after death the saints get into their haven. Everything is quiet in the center. God is "the center where the soul does sweetly acquiesce." A Christian, after his weary marches and battles, shall take off his bloody armor, and rest himself upon the bosom of Jesus--that bed of perfume! When death has given the saints the wings of a dove, then they shall fly away to paradise and be at rest!

[7] The seventh thing in glory is its ETERNITY. "An eternal weight of glory." Glory is a weight. The Hebrew word for glory is a weight. God must make us able to bear it. An eternal weight. Glory is such an eternal manna--as does not breed worms. If the saints' glory in heaven were but for a time--and they were in fear of losing it--it would eclipse and embitter the joys of heaven. But eternity is written upon their joys. The garland made of the flowers of paradise will never wither.

I have read of a river called the Day-river, which runs with a full torrent during the day--but at night is dried up. Such are all earthly comforts--they run with a full stream all the daytime of life--but at the night of death--they are dried up! The glorified saints shall drink of the rivers of pleasure for evermore. Eternity is the heaven of heavens! "At the last, our joy shall be never-ending," Bernard. The joys of heaven are overflowing and everlasting! "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." Psalm 16:11.

WHEN do believers enter upon possession of glory?

They pass immediately after death, into glory. The Romans, when their great men died, caused an eagle to be let loose, and fly about in the air--signifying hereby that the soul was immortal, and did not die with the body. Christ tells us, the soul is not capable of being killed, therefore not of dying. Matt 10:28. And as the soul does not die, so neither does it sleep in the body for a time. If the soul at death is absent from the body--it cannot sleep in the body. 2 Cor 5:8. There is an immediate passage from death to glory; it is but the twinkling of an eye--and we shall see God" "This day shall you be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43. By paradise is meant heaven: the third heaven, into which Paul was taken. 2 Cor 12:4. Christ said to the thief on the cross, "This day shall you be with me in paradise." His body could not be there, for it was laid in the grave; but it was spoken of his soul--that it should be, immediately after death, in heaven. Let none be so

vain as to talk of purgatory. A soul purged by Christ's blood, needs no fire of purgatory--but goes immediately from a deathbed, into a glorified state!

Use one: See what little cause believers have to fear death--as it brings such glorious benefits. Why should the saints fear their happiness? Is it not a blessed thing to see God, to love God, and to lie forever in the bosom of divine love? Is it not a blessed thing to meet our godly relations in heaven? Why should the saints be afraid of their blessings? Is a virgin afraid to be matched unto the crown?

Now we have but the engagement contract; at death is the marriage-supper of the Lamb! Rev 19:9. Death does not do us any hurt--it only takes us from among fiery serpents--and places us among angels! It only clothes us with a robe of immortality! Has he any wrong done to him--who has his sackcloth pulled off, and has royal attire put upon him? Do not fear dying--you cannot really live--but by dying.

Use two: You who are real saints, whose hearts are purified by faith, spend much time in musing upon those glorious benefits which you shall have by Christ at death. Thus might you, by a contemplative life, begin the life of angels while here on earth, and be in heaven before you arrive there. Eudoxius was so affected with the glory of the sun, that he thought he was born only to behold it. What should we contemplate--but celestial glory, when we shall see God face to face! David had gotten above the ordinary sort of men; he was in the altitudes when he said, "I am ever with you." "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.

A true saint every day takes a turn in heaven; his thoughts and desires are, like cherubim, flying up to paradise. Can men of the world delight in looking upon their bags of gold, and fields of grain? And shall not the heirs of heaven take more delight in contemplating the glory of heaven? Could we send forth faith as a spy, and every day view the glory of the Jerusalem above--how would it rejoice us--as it does the heir--to think of the wealthy inheritance which is to come into his hand shortly!

Use three: This may comfort the saints in two cases.

(1.) Under their needs. They abound only in needs. The food in the cupboard is almost spent. But be patient until death--and you shall have a supply of all your needs--you shall have a kingdom, and be as rich as heaven can make you! He who has the promise of a wealthy estate after a few short years have expired, though at present he has nothing to help himself--he comforts himself with this--that shortly he shall have a rich estate come into his hand. "It does not yet appear what we shall be." We shall be emparadised with glory--and be as rich as the angels!

(2.) Under their sufferings. A true saint is, as Luther says, "an heir of the Cross." It may make us go cheerfully through our sufferings, to know that there are great things laid up in store for us; that there is glory coming, which eye has not seen; we shall drink of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of heaven. Though now we drink in a wormwood cup--yet there is sugar to sweeten it. We shall soon taste of those joys of paradise, which exceed our faith; and which will be better felt--than they can be expressed!

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