

The Portion of the Righteous

A Sermon by Jonathan Edwards

Romans ii. 10. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good.

The apostle, having in the preceding verses declared what is the portion of wicked men; *viz.* indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; in this verse declares what is the portion assigned to good men. In the words of the text we should observe.

1. The description of a good man; *viz. the man that worketh good.* Such men are here described by the fruit which they bring forth. Christ has taught us that the tree is known by its fruit. Paul here describes them by that which most distinguishes them; not by the external privileges which they enjoy or the light under which they live; but by the fruits which they bring forth. For as the apostle says, in verse 13. "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of it shall be justified." That which distinguishes good men from bad, is not that they *hear* good, or that they *profess* good, or that they *intend* good; but that they *do* good. They are *workers* of good.

2. The reward of such a man; *viz. "glory, honour, and peace";* in which are mentioned three sorts of good that are assigned to them as their portion.

1. Their moral good, expressed by the word *glory*. Glory shall be given them; *i. e.* they shall be made excellent and glorious. They shall be endued with those excellent and glorious qualifications, which will render them beautiful and lovely. They shall have the image of God, and be partakers of his holiness. Thus the word glory is used by St. Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 18. We are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

2. Their relative good; *Honour*. They shall be in most honourable circumstances. They shall be advanced to great dignity, receive a relation to God, and Christ, and the heavenly inhabitants, and God shall put honour upon them.

3. Their natural good; *Peace* which, as it is ;used in the Scriptures, signifies happiness; and includes all comfort, joy, and pleasure.

I shall endeavour to show from the text, that glory, honour, and peace are the portion which God has given to all good men. In describing their happiness, I shall consider the successive parts of it; both here and hereafter.

First. I propose to treat of their happiness in this world. Those who are truly good men have been the subjects of a real thorough work of conversion, and have had their hearts turned from sin to God. Of such persons it may be said, that they are truly blessed. They are often pronounced blessed by God. He is infinitely wise, and sees and knows all things. He perfectly knows who are blessed, and who are miserable. He hath said, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" "Blessed is he whose sins are forgiven." "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust." "Blessed are the poor in spirit" "the meek" "the merciful" "the pure in heart." In considering the happiness of the righteous in this world, I shall pursue the method which the text obviously points out, and shall consider,

1. The excellency;
2. The honour; and,
3. The peace and pleasure, which God bestows upon them in the present life.

I. The excellency or glory. The sum of this consists in their having the image of God upon them. When a person is converted, he has the image of God instamped on him. Coloss. iii. 10. "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him." And Ephes. iv. 23, 24. "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness." They have their eyes opened, and are led into such a sight of God and thorough acquaintance with him, as changes the soul into the image of God's glory.

What can render a creature more excellent than to have the very image of the Creator? and how blessed a change is that which is wrought in conversion, which brings a man thus to be in the image of God! For though the image of God in Christians in this world is very imperfect, yet it is real.

The real image of God is most excellent, though it be imperfect. Hence, "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," and "the saints are the excellent of the earth." The image of God is their glory, and it may well be called glory, for imperfect as it is, it renders

them glorious in the eyes of the angels of heaven. The image of God is a greater beauty in their eyes, than the brightness and glory of the sun in the firmament.

Indeed the saints have no excellency, as they are in and of themselves. In them, that is, in their flesh, dwells no good thing. They are in themselves poor, guilty, vile creatures, and see themselves to be so; but they have an excellency and glory in them, because they have Christ dwelling in them. The excellency that is in them, though it be but as a spark, yet it is something ten thousand times more excellent than any ruby, or the most precious pearl that ever was found on the earth; and that because it is something divine, something of God.

This holy heavenly spark is put into the soul in conversion, and God maintains it there. All the powers of hell cannot put it out, for God will keep it alive, and it shall prevail more and more. Though it be but small, yet it is powerful; it has influence over the heart to govern it, and brings forth holy fruits in the life, and will not cease to prevail till it has consumed all the corruption that is left in the heart, and till it has turned the whole soul into a pure, holy, and heavenly flame, till the soul of man becomes like the angels, a flame of fire, and shines as the brightness of the firmament.

II. I would consider the honour to which Christians are advanced in this world; and the sum of this is, that they are the children of God. This is an excellent and glorious degree of honour and dignity to which they are admitted; and that because the Being to whom they are related is an infinitely glorious being, a being of incomprehensible majesty and excellency; and also because the relation is so near and honourable a relation. It is a great honour to be the servant of God. John the Baptist said of Christ, that he was not worthy to stoop down to loose the latchet of Christ's shoes. But Christians are not only admitted to be the servants of God, but his children; and how much more honourable in a family is the relation of children than that of servants! Gal. iv. 7. "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Rom. viii. 16, 17. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 1 John iii. 1. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" The honour appears the greater if it be considered how Christians are brought into their relation to God; and that is

by Christ. They become the children of God by virtue of their union with the only-begotten and eternal Son of God; they are united to him as his spouse, and members of his body, as his flesh and his bones, and as one spirit; and, therefore, as Christ is the Son of God, so they are sons; therefore are they joint heirs with Christ, because they are joint sons with him. To this end God sent forth his Son, that so they might through him also be sons. Gal. iv. 4, 5. "But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." And therefore they partaking of the relation of the Son, so are they also of the spirit of the Son; as it follows in the next verse, "and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

Herein Christians are the children of God in a more honourable way than the angels themselves; for the angels are the sons of God by virtue of that relation which they have to God, as they are in themselves singly and separately. But Christians are the children of God, as partaking with Christ, the only-begotten Son, in his sonship, whose sonship is immensely more honourable than that of the angels. And Christians, being the children of God, are honoured of God as such. They are sometimes owned as such by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God. For, as it is found in the verse already cited from Romans, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." They are treated as such in the great value God puts upon them, for they are his jewels, those which he has set apart for himself; and he is tender of them as of the apple of his eye. He disregards wicked men in comparison of them. He will give kings for them and princes for their life. He is jealous for them. He is very angry with those that hurt them. If any offend them, it were better for them that a mill-stone were cast about their neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea. He loves them with a very great and wonderful love. He pities them as a father pities his children. He will protect them, and defend them, and provide for them, as a father provides for his children. This honour have all they that fear and love God, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Peace and pleasure are also the portion of Christians in this world. Their peace and joy in God begin in the present life, and are no less excellent than the glory with which he invests them, and the honour to which he advances them.

We ought here to consider,

1. What foundation they have for peace and joy.

2. What peace and joy they actually have.

1st. Their foundation for peace and joy is in their safety and their riches.

1. They have ground for peace because of their safety. They are safe in Jesus Christ from the wrath of God and from the power of Satan. They that are in Christ shall never perish, for none shall pluck them out of his hand. They are delivered from all their dreadful misery, that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which shall come on ungodly men. They were naturally exposed to it, but they are delivered from it; their sins are all forgiven them. The hand-writing is eternally blotted out. Their sins are all done away; God has cast them behind his back, and buried their sorrows in the depths of the sea, and they shall no more come into remembrance. They are most safe from misery, for they are built on Christ their everlasting rock. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God. They have the faithful promise of God for their security, that is established as a sure witness in heaven. They have an interest in that covenant, that is well ordered in all things and sure. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus."

2. They have a foundation of unspeakable comfort and joy, because of their riches. They have true and infinite riches. They are the possessors and heirs of something real and substantial, and that is worthy to be called by the name of riches. The things they possess are excellent, more precious than gold and than rubies; all the desirable things of this world cannot equal them, and they have enough of it. The riches that they have given them of God are inexhaustible. It is sufficient for them; there is no end of it. They have a fountain of infinite good for their comfort, and contentment, and joy; for God has given himself to them to be their portion, and he is a God of infinite glory. There is glory in him to engage their contemplation for ever and ever, without ever being satiated. And he is also an infinite fountain of love; for God is love, yea, an ocean of love without shore or bottom! The glorious Son of God is theirs; that lovely one, who was from all eternity God's delight, rejoicing always before him. All his beauty is their portion, and his dying love is theirs, his very heart is theirs, and his glory and happiness in heaven are theirs, so far as their capacity

will allow them to partake of it; for he has promised it to them, and has taken possession of it in their name. And the saints are also rich in the principle that is in them. They have inward riches which they carry about with them in their own hearts. They are rich in faith. James ii. 5. "Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" They have the grace of God in their hearts, which is a most excellent treasure, and a good foundation of joy; for it is the seed of joy. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. And the seed that is sown in their hearts is the grace of God there. That is a seed that, however it lies hid, will certainly in due time spring up, and put forth itself, and will bud, and blossom, and will bring forth rich fruit. These riches are the true riches. This is that good which God reserves for his friends. God distributes silver and gold and such like things among his enemies, because he slights them and regards them not. They are contemptible things in his eyes, as we throw husks to swine. But he has reserved better things for his children, of which no ungodly man, though a prince or monarch shall partake. This is the ground which Christians have of peace and pleasure in this world. However, the saints cannot always take comfort, and do not always taste the sweetness that there is in store for them, by reason of the darkness and clouds that sometimes interpose. But though they may walk in great darkness for a long time, yet they are happy notwithstanding.

2d. They sometimes in this world have the actual enjoyment of peace and pleasure, that are most excellent. Sometimes the clouds that are in the way are removed, and Christians are enabled to behold the ground they have for rejoicing. Though God's glory and love be often hid from them, as it were with a veil, or at least, so as to hinder a clear view of it, yet God sometimes is pleased to remove the veil, to draw the curtain, and to give the saints sweet visions. Sometimes there is, as it were, a window opened in heaven, and Christ shows himself through the lattice; they have sometimes a beam of sweet light breaking forth from above into the soul; and God and the Redeemer sometimes come to them, and make friendly visits to them, and manifest themselves to them. Sometimes Christians have seasons of light and gladness for some considerable period, and at other times their views are more transient. Sometimes their light and joy arise in reading of the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in hearing the word preached, sometimes at the Lord's Table, sometimes in the duty of prayer, sometimes in Christian conference, sometimes in meditation when they are

about their occupations, as in the time of more set and solemn meditations; and sometimes in the watches of the night.

Those spiritual joys and pleasures which believers possess in this world, are chiefly of three sorts.

1. The joy which they have in a sense of their own good estate; in the sense they have of the pardon of their sins, and their safety from hell; and a sense of the favour of God, and in the hope they have of eternal life.

2. The joy and delight which they have in the apprehension and view of God's excellency and love. The joy of a Christian does not consist merely in the sense of his own good estate, as natural men often are ready to imagine; but there is an excellent, transcendent, soul-satisfying sweetness that sometimes fills the soul in the apprehension of the excellency of God. The soul dwells upon the thought, fixes on it, and takes complacency in God as the greatest good, the most delightful object of its contemplation. This pleasure is the sweetest pleasure that a Christian ever feels, and is the foretaste of the pleasures of heaven itself. Herein sometimes the saints do boast of the clusters of Canaan. This sort of joy is evidence of sincerity above any other joy, a more sure evidence than a rejoicing in our own good estate. From the joy which the Christian has in the view of the glory and excellency of God; the consideration of the love of God to him cannot be excluded. When he rejoices in God as a glorious God, he rejoices in him the more because he is his God, and in consideration of there being a union between him and this God; otherwise, if there were a separation, the view of God's excellency, though it would raise joy one way, would proportionally excite grief another. God is sometimes pleased to manifest his love to the saints, and commonly at those times, when a Christian has the greatest views of God's excellency, he has also of his love; the soul is spiritually sensible of God as being present with it, and as manifesting and communicating himself; and it has sweet communion with God, and tastes the sweetness of his love, and knows a little what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge.

3. The third kind of joy is found in doing that which is to the glory of God. The true love of God makes this sweet and delightful to the soul. The joy of a Christian not only arises in knowing and viewing but also in doing; not only in apprehending God, but also in doing for God. For he loves God not only with a love of complacency, but a love of benevolence also;

and as a love of complacency delights in beholding, so does a love of benevolence delight in doing for, the object beloved. The peace and pleasure which the Christian has in these things, is far better and more desirable than the pleasures that this world can afford, and especially than the pleasures of wicked men; and that on the following accounts.

1. There is light in this pleasure. The peace and pleasures of wicked men have their foundation in darkness. When wicked men have any quietness or joy, it is because they are blind, and do not see what is their real condition. If it were not for blindness and delusion, they could have no peace nor comfort in anything. There needs nothing but to open a wicked man's eyes, and let him look about him and see where he is, and it would be enough to destroy all the quietness and comfort of the most prosperous wicked man in the world. But on the contrary, the peace of a godly man, is a peace that arises from light; when he sees things most as they are, then he has most peace; and the distress and trouble which he sometimes feels, arise from clouds and darkness. When a godly man is in the greatest fear and distress, if he did not know what a happy state he were in, he would at the same time rejoice with unspeakable joy; so that his pleasure is not founded, like that of wicked men, in stupidity, but in sensibleness; not in blindness, but in light and sight, and knowledge.

2. There is rest in this pleasure. He that has found this joy, finds a sweet repose and acquiescence of the soul in it. It sweetly calms the soul and allays its disappointments. Christ says, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is a sweet contentment in it; the soul that tastes it, desires no better pleasure. There is a satisfaction in it. The soul that has been wandering before, when it comes to taste of this fountain, finds in it that which satisfies its desires and cravings, and discovers that in it which it needs in order to its happiness. John iv. 14. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." It is quite otherwise with the pleasures of ungodly men. There is no true rest in them, they are not enjoyed with inward quietness, there is no true peace enjoyed within, neither do they afford contentment. But those wicked men that have the most worldly pleasures, are yet restlessly inquiring, "Who will show us any good?" "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Wicked men in the midst of their enjoyment of pleasure have no true rest, neither do their reflections on it afford rest; but only remorse of conscience,

and disquietude of soul, under the guilt that is contracted. But the pleasures of the godly afford rest in the enjoyment, and rest and sweetness in the reflection; it oftentimes calms and refreshes the soul to look on past comforts.

3. There is life in it. It is a pleasure that strengthens and nourishes and preserves the soul, and gives it life, and does not corrupt and destroy and bring it to death, as do sinful pleasures. The pleasures of the wicked are poison to the soul, they tend to enfeeble it, to consume it, and kill it. But the pleasures of the godly feed the soul, and do not consume it; they strengthen, and do not weaken it; they exalt, and do not debase it; they enrich, and do not impoverish it. Death and corruption are the natural fruit of the pleasures of sin, but life is the fruit of spiritual pleasures. Gal. vi. 8. "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The life in which this joy consists, and to which it tends, is the most excellent life, and the only life worthy of the name; it is spiritual, and the beginning of eternal life: this pleasure is a fountain springing up to everlasting life. John iv. 14.

4. There is substance in it. This pleasure is not a mere shadow, an empty delight, as earthly pleasures are, but it is substantial joy. The pleasures of sin last but a little season, they are the crackling of thorns under a pot, or as the blazing meteors of the night, that appear for a moment, and then vanish. But this pleasure is like the durable light of the stars or the sun. Worldly pleasures are easily overthrown; a little thing will spoil all the pleasures of a king's court. Haman, in the midst of all his prosperity and greatness, could say, "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." But the joys of the saints are such as the changes of time cannot overthrow. If God lifts up the light of his countenance, this will compose and rejoice the heart under the saddest tidings. They joy in affliction. Their enemies cannot overthrow this joy; the devil and even death itself cannot overthrow it; but oftentimes it lives, and is in its greatest height, in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. When in the most tormenting death, how often have the martyrs sung in the midst of the flames, and under the hands of their cruel tormentors! Job xxxv. 10. "But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

5. There is holiness in it. It is the excellency of these joys that they are holy joys. They are not like the polluted stream of sinful pleasures, but they are pure and holy. Rev. xxii. 1. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of

God and of the Lamb.” These pleasures do not defile the soul, but purify it; they do not deform, but beautify it; they not only greatly delight the soul, but render it more excellent; they impart something more of God, more of a divine disposition and temper, dispose to holy actions, and cause the soul to shine as Moses’s face did when he had been conversing with God in the mount, and as Stephen’s face, which was as the face of an angel, when he saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Thus these pleasures make the soul more excellent, and more divine, as well as more happy.

6. There is sometimes glory in it. God sometimes unveils his face, and lets in light more plentifully. This is a delight and joy, the excellency, and sweetness, and admirableness of which cannot be expressed. It is a kind of glory that fills the soul. So excellent is its nature, that the sweetest earthly delight vanishes into nothing, and appears as base and vile as dross and dirt, or as the mere mire of the street. It is bright above all that is earthly, as the sun is brighter than the glow-worm.

Of this, the apostle takes notice. 1 Peter i. 8. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Secondly. I proceed to consider the happiness of the saints in death. It may seem a mystery to the world that men should be happy in death, which the world looks upon as the most terrible of all things; but thus it is to the saints. Their happiness is built upon a rock, and it will stand the shock of death: when the storm and floods of death come with their greatest violence, it stands firm, and neither death nor hell can overthrow it. Here,

1. Death is rendered no death to them. It is not worthy of the name of death. As the life of a wicked man is not worthy of the name of life, so the death of a godly man is not worthy of the name of death. It is not looked upon as any death at all in the eyes of God, who sees all things as they are, nor is it called death by him. Hence Christ promises, that those who believe in him shall not die. John vi. 50, 51. “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” It is no death to the saints, because it is no destruction to them. The notion of death implies destruction, or perishing, in it; but the godly are not destroyed by death, death cannot destroy them; for as Christ says, they shall never perish. John iii. 15. “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

eternal life." A godly man, when he dies, in no wise perishes. There is no end put to his life as a Christian, for that is a spiritual life that remains unquenched by death. A wicked man, when he dies, dies indeed, because then an end is put to all the life which he has; for he has no other life but temporal life; but the life of a Christian is hid with Christ, and safely laid up with him in heaven; and therefore death cannot reach his life, because it cannot reach heaven. Death can no more reach the believer's life than Christ's life. No death can reach Christ our life now, though he died once: but now he has for ever sat down at the right hand of God. He says, for the comfort of his saints, Rev. i. 18. "I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." Death not only cannot destroy a Christian, but it cannot hurt him; Christ carries him on eagle wings aloft on high, out of the reach of death. Death, with respect to him, is disarmed of his power: and every Christian may say, "O death, where is thy sting?" Death was once indeed a terrible enemy, but now he has become weak. He spent all his strength on Christ; in killing him, he killed himself; he was conquered then, and has now no power to hurt his followers. Death is now but the shadow of what he would have been if Christ had not conquered him; he was once a lion, but now he is but a lamb. A good man may indeed be harassed with fears of death, and may be much terrified when going through the valley of the shadow of death, but that is no just ground of any terror, and if the saints are terrified, it is only through their infirmity and darkness. As a child is frightened in the dark where there is no danger, because he is a child, so a good man may be affrighted at the terrible looks of death. But he will find this awful appearance to be only a shadow, that can look terribly, but can do nothing terrible. Death may, through the weakness of the saints, trouble them, and exercise them, but he cannot destroy the ground they have for comfort and support. When death comes to a wicked man, all those things on which he built his comfort fail, their foundation is overflowed with a flood. Job xxii. 16. But the foundation of the peace and comfort of the godly man is not shaken at such a time. Oftentimes the saints are actually carried above all the fears and terrors of death; they see that it is but a shadow, and are not afraid: not only their foundation of comfort remains, but that peace and comfort itself is undisturbed, the light shines through the darkness, and the lamb-like nature of death appears through the shadow of the lion. The godly have a God to stand by them when they come to die, in whose love and favour they may shelter themselves, in whose favour is life, yea, life in death; and they have a blessed Saviour to be with them, to uphold them with the right hand of his

righteousness. These are the friends they have with them, when they are going to take their leave of all earthly friends. God will be with them when their flesh and heart fails; God will be the strength of their heart, when they are weak and faint, and nature fails. God will put underneath his everlasting arms to support them, and will make all their bed for them in their sickness. Psal. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

2. Death is not only no death to them, but it is a translation to a more glorious life, and is turned into a kind of resurrection from the dead. Death is a happy change to them, and a change that is by far more like a resurrection than a death. It is a change from a state of much sin, and sorrow, and darkness, to a state of perfect light, and holiness, and joy. When a saint dies, he awakes, as it were, out of sleep. This life is a dull, lifeless state; there is but a little spiritual life, and a great deal of deadness; there is but a little light, and a great deal of darkness; there is but a little sense, and a great deal of stupidity and senselessness. But when a godly man dies, all this deadness, and darkness, and stupidity, and senselessness are gone for ever, and he enters immediately into a state of perfect life, and perfect light, and activity, and joyfulness. A man's conversion is compared to a resurrection, because then a man rises from spiritual death. Eph. ii. 1. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." But though spiritual life is then begun, yet there are great remains of spiritual death after this, and but little life. But when a godly man dies, he rises from all remains of spiritual death, and comes into a state of perfect life. This body is like a prison to the holy soul, it exceedingly clogs, and hinders, and cramps it in its spiritual exercises and comforts. But when a saint dies, the soul is released from this prison, this grave, and comes into a state of glorious freedom and happiness. So that death is not only deprived of his sting, but is made a servant to the saints, to bring them to Christ in heaven, who is their life. And their ground of comfort does not only last when they are going out of the world, but it is in some respects increased, for then their perfect happiness draws nigh. It is "far better" to depart and be with Christ, than to continue here. And when the saints are enabled to see their own happiness in death, they are enabled exceedingly to rejoice in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, and to triumph joyfully over the king of terrors. Death to the saints is always a passage or avenue, leading out of a world of vanity, and sin, and misery, into a world of life, light, and glory; but though often a dark avenue, it is at times full of light,

the darkness all vanishes away, and the light shines out of that glorious city into which they are entering. It shines through the darkness and fills the soul, and the clouds of death vanish before it. The awful appearance of death is but a mask or disguise that death wears. It is not terrible but joyful in reality, and this light of the new Jerusalem sometimes so clearly shines, that it shines through the frightful disguise, and shows the saints that death is but a servant. Yea, sometimes it is so when death has on its most terrible disguise that ever it wears, and comes in its most dreadful forms, as when the saints are burnt at the stake, and put to all cruel and tormenting deaths. It is oftentimes joyful to the saints when dying, to think that they are now going into the glorious, presence of God, to enjoy God and Christ to the full. The joyful expectation sometimes makes them ready to cry out, Rev. xxii. 20. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and Judges v. 28. "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

Thirdly. Let us next consider the happiness of the saints, in their state of separation from the body.

1. When the soul departs from the body, it is received by the blessed angels and conducted by them to the third heavens. On the eve of its departure there is a guard of angels standing round the dying bed; and the devils, though eager to seize upon it as their prey, shall by no means be suffered to come nigh. The holy angels shall be a guard to the soul, to keep off all its enemies. We are taught that this is part of the office in which God employs them. Psal. xxxiv. 7. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them" Psal. xci. 11. "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways;" as it was with Daniel in the lion's den. Dan. vi. 22. "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." And as soon as the soul is loose from the body, it shall be kindly and courteously received by those bright and blessed ones, to be conducted by them into Christ's glorious presence; for the angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be the heirs of salvation. This is one way in which they shall minister; viz. to guard and conduct the departed spirits of the saints; which we are plainly taught in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Luke xvi. 22. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried." These spirits of holiness and love, when they have received the soul, shall conduct it along through the aerial and starry heavens to

the most glorious part of the universe; the highest part of the creation, the place of God's most holy residence, the city and palace of the most high God, where Christ is. There are some who say that there is no such place as heaven; but this is evidently a mistake, for the heaven into which the man Christ Jesus entered with his glorified body, is certainly some place. It is absurd to suppose that the heaven where the body of Christ is, is not a place. To say that the body of Christ is in no place, is the same thing as to say he has no body. The heaven where Christ is, is a place; for he was seen ascending, and will be seen descending again; and the heaven where the departed souls of the saints are, is the same heaven where Christ has ascended. And therefore Stephen, when he was departing this life, saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. And he prayed to that same Jesus whom he saw, that he would receive his spirit; *i.e.* that he would receive it to him, where he saw him, at the right hand of God. And the apostle Paul signifies, that if he should depart, he should be with Christ. Phil. i. 23. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better:" 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Besides, there are some of the saints there already with their bodies, as Enoch and Elijah. Therefore there is some place, where God gloriously manifests himself, and where Christ is, and where saints and angels dwell, and whither the angels carry the souls of the saints when they depart from their bodies; and this place is called Paradise, and the third heaven. 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4. The aerial heaven is the first heaven; the starry heaven is the second; and the blessed abode of Christ and saints and angels the third, because it is above the other two; and so Christ is said to be made higher than the heavens. Heb. vii. 26. "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," *i. e.* higher than the visible heaven. This heaven is far above the stars. So it is said that Christ ascended far above all heavens. Eph. iv. 10. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," *i. e.* far above all the heaven that we see.

This is the mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and hither the angels conduct the souls of the saints when they leave their earthly tabernacles. When they come there, they shall be received with a joyful welcome, the doors of this glorious city are opened to them, and they shall have entrance given to them into heaven, as an inheritance

to which they have a right. Rev. xxii. 14. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And then shall open to view that glorious world, that beautiful city, and delightful paradise, which they had often before heard of, and thought of, and desired; then they shall see it, and possess it as their own. There they shall be welcomed and joyfully received by that glorious company that dwell there, by the angels, and by the saints that went to heaven before them. There was joy among them at their conversion, and now also will there be joy among them when they are brought home to glory. To have one that was dear to them before, because a child of the same family and a disciple of the same Lord, brought home from a strange country to come and dwell with them for ever; how will their fellow-citizens and brethren in heaven be glad for them, and rejoice with them, and embrace them, when they come there to join them in their praises of God and the Lamb! And then they shall be conducted unto the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory, and shall be presented to him perfectly free from sin, and without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; who will also abundantly welcome them to his glory, and to the blessed enjoying of his love. And then shall their good Shepherd rejoice, when he shall not only have brought home the soul that was lost to a saving close with him, but home to him in his heavenly Father's house. The Saviour shall then rejoice when he shall receive a soul that he loved before the foundation of the world; and for which he laid down his life, and endured such dreadful sufferings.

This was the joy that was set before him, to redeem and make happy the souls of his elect; and he will rejoice, therefore, when he sees this accomplished. He will bid them welcome, and make them welcome, and they shall be received into the full enjoyment of his love. The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and he shall present them also to God his Father, having redeemed them to him by his blood, who shall also abundantly welcome them there. Then the soul shall behold that glory and taste that pleasure which it long hoped for, and thought of with delight, and the thoughts of which were wont to be such a support to it when on earth; then shall it know by experience what the joys of heaven are; then shall the great and precious promises of the gospel be fulfilled; then shall faith be turned into vision, and hope into fruition; then shall all sin be eternally left behind; there shall be no more indwelling corruption, wicked thoughts, or sinful dispositions, to torment them. And whatever sorrow and affliction they underwent on earth, God shall now wipe

away all tears from their eyes; and though they have lately passed through death, yet there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, because the former things shall be passed away. Rev. xxi. 4. If they have lived hardly in this world, and suffered hunger and thirst, there shall be an end of it all; and they that have suffered persecution, and have had their raiment stained with their own blood, shall now suffer no more. "And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. vii. 14, 15, 16, 17. Though they had many enemies to conflict with while on earth, yet now shall they obtain the victory over them; now shall they triumph and sing, being for ever out of the reach of all Satan's temptations, and of all his power to afflict or molest them; now shall they appear in mount Zion with the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. Rev. vii. 9.

3. They shall remain there in a state of exceeding glory and blessedness, till the resurrection. They shall remain there in the enjoyment of God, dwelling with Jesus Christ in a state of perfect rest, without the least disturbance or molestation. Rev. xiv. 13. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." There they shall dwell in habitations of sweet delight and pleasure in paradise; there they shall drink of those rivers of pleasures for evermore; there they shall dwell in perfect light and perfect love; there they shall see and converse with God and Christ, and with angels and glorious spirits, and shall contemplate the wonderful love of God to men in sending his only Son; there shall they contemplate the glorious love of God to them, the love he had to them before the foundation of the world. There shall they see and know what love Christ had to them, that influenced him to lay down his life for them; and shall behold the beauty and excellency of Christ, and see face to face, and know even as they are known. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. There they shall sweetly meditate on the wonderful dealings of God to them while in this lower world, in preserving of them, in granting to them to live

under means of grace, when many thousands and millions of others never had these privileges. They shall contemplate the wonderful mercy of God to them in striving with them by his Spirit, in convincing them of sin, in stirring them up to seek salvation, in converting them, and in bringing them out of darkness into marvellous light. The mercy and grace of God in converting them will then appear otherwise to them than it does now. They shall then contemplate the manifold mercies of God to them through the whole course of their lives; they shall see how God has protected them, and guided them by his counsel, and led them all along; they shall see the wonderful wisdom and mercy of God towards them in these and those dispensations, that now appear most dark to them, shall see the meaning of those that were matter of difficulty to them, and shall see how all things wrought together for their good. These will be sweet meditations to them, and doubtless will be subjects of the saints' conversation with each other. How sweet will it be for the saints to look back and see how God carried them along through the wilderness, through all the storms of this world, and all its dangers, and temptations, and enemies, after they have come to their resting-place; and how sweet will it be for them to converse together of these things, and what ardent praises will it occasion! And then also shall they see the wisdom of God in the government and ordering of the affairs of his church all along, the scheme of divine providence shall be opened to them, and the admirable wisdom of it shall be unfolded; and they shall also see how God brings his purposes and promises to pass in his providence towards his church here on earth; they shall see and rejoice at it when the kingdom of God flourishes in the world. We are told, there is joy in heaven if but one sinner repenteth. Then doubtless the saints of the Old Testament after their entrance into heaven, saw and rejoiced when Christ came into the world; and therefore two of them, Moses and Elijah, came down to converse with Christ, at his transfiguration. Abraham, Moses, and David, and the prophets Isaiah and Daniel, and all the prophets, doubtless saw the fulfilment of the glorious things foretold in their prophecies with exceeding rejoicing. They saw that glorious enlargement of the church that was produced by the preaching of the prophets. And thus also the apostles and evangelists in heaven, and other primitive Christians and martyrs, saw the glorious flourishing and prevailing of the kingdom of Christ after their death, till the utter downfall of heathenism, and the establishment of Christianity throughout the Roman empire.

The holy martyrs with joy beheld the destruction of those pagan powers that persecuted the church of God. Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11. "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Therefore they rejoiced when they saw it accomplished. And so the saints that died in former ages, they without doubt beheld and rejoiced greatly at the time of the resurrection from popery in the days of Luther and Calvin, and other reformers. And so doubtless the saints that went to heaven, before this remarkable outpouring of the Spirit on this town and other neighbouring towns, especially those that went to heaven from hence, have seen this work and greatly rejoiced at it. And so the saints, that die before the glorious days that are coming at the downfall of antichrist and the calling of the Jews, will rejoice at the conversion of the world to Christianity. We are ready to lament that we shall not probably live to see those times. But if we die and go to heaven, we shall see them nevertheless, and rejoice in them not the less for not being in this world; but we shall rejoice more, for we shall see and understand more of the glory of God in such a work, and have more love to God, and therefore shall rejoice more at the advancement of his kingdom. Thus when the apostle John had visions of the glorious things that should be brought to pass for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he from time to time mentions the visions he also had of the hosts of heaven rejoicing at it. Rev. xi. 15, 16, 17. "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." So when the spiritual Babylon, the church of Rome, falls, the holy apostles and prophets, though dead many ages before, are called upon to rejoice. Rev. xviii. 20. "Rejoice over her, thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." So the multitude of the heavenly hosts are described as rejoicing, and as singing hallelujahs on that occasion; and all heaven is full of praise. Rev. xix. 1. "And after

these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke went up for ever and ever.” These things may give us some notion how the spirits of just men made perfect do employ themselves.

4. They remain in a joyful expectation of their more full and complete blessedness at the resurrection. As the wicked have not their full punishment until after the resurrection, so neither have the saints their complete happiness. Though they have attained to such exceeding glory, yet they are not yet arrived at its highest degrees, for that is reserved for their final state. The reward which the saints receive after the resurrection, is often spoken of as their chief reward. This is the reward that Christ has promised. John vi. 40. “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” This is the chief reward that the saints seek and wait for. Rom. viii. 23. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan earnestly within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.” Philip. iii. 11. “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” Heb. xi. 35. “Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.” So the happiness, that shall be given at Christ’s second coming, is spoken of as the principal happiness. Titus ii. 13. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This the saints will be in joyful expectation of in heaven; they shall rest in sweet repose on God’s promise that it shall be so, their desires of it bringing no uneasiness; they rejoicing in it most in the consideration that it will be in God’s time, in the fittest and best time.

Fourthly. I shall consider the glory, honour, and peace, which the godly shall receive at the resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

1. When the time appointed comes, notice shall be given of it in heaven, which will be to their exceeding joy. God has in his own eternal counsels fixed the time, but now it is kept secret; it is not only not known by any on the earth, but neither is it known in heaven by either saints or angels there, and the man Christ Jesus himself, in his state of humiliation,

did not himself know it: Matt. xxiv. 36. "But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." The saints and angels in heaven have a joyful expectation of it, but they know not when it is; but when the time comes, God's eternal counsels concerning it shall be made known; the joyful tidings shall be proclaimed through all heaven, that all may prepare to attend the Lord Jesus Christ in his descent to the earth.

2. They shall descend with Christ from the highest heaven towards the earth. When notice is given to the heavenly host, they shall all gather themselves together to attend on this most joyful and glorious occasion; and then the glorious Son of God shall descend, and the holy angels with him, and not only the angels, but the souls of the saints, shall come with Christ.

1 Thess. iv. 14. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Christ shall descend with the glory of his Father; he shall appear in a glory becoming the Supreme Lord and Judge of heaven and earth. Now heaven will for a time be left empty of its inhabitants; those glorious and blessed abodes will be deserted by those that dwelt there, to attend the judge of the world.

3. The saints on earth shall behold this glorious sight of their Saviour coming in the clouds of heaven, with all his holy angels with him. The first notice that shall be given of this descent shall be in heaven, but soon after there shall be notice of it on earth. Christ shall be seen coming while he is yet at a great distance; every eye shall see him, of both good and bad. And it will be the most joyful sight to the saints that ever they saw. The first notice of it will cause their hearts to overflow with joy and gladness, it will fill the hearts of the godly as full of joy as it will the wicked with terror and amazement. If the saints are then waked out of their sleep at midnight with this sound, that Christ appears in the clouds of heaven coming to judgment, it will be joyful news to them. It is probable many of the saints at that time will be found suffering persecution, for there are several things in Scripture which seem to declare, that the time when Christ is coming shall be a time when wickedness shall exceedingly abound, and the saints shall be greatly persecuted. But this shall set them at liberty; then they may lift up their heads out of prisons and dungeons, and many out of galleys, and mines, and shall see their Redeemer drawing nigh. This sight will drive away their persecutors, it will put an end to all their cruelties, and set God's people at liberty. And then when all the kindreds of the earth shall wail at the sight of Christ in the clouds of heaven, and wicked men everywhere shall be shrieking and crying with terrible amazement,

the saints shall be filled with praise and transport. We read that, when Christ ascended into heaven, the disciples stood steadfastly looking on as he went up. But the saints then on earth shall view Christ with more steadfastness as he descends in his heavenly and exceeding glory; they shall feed and feast their eyes with this majestic sight, beholding in what solemn and glorious pomp their own blessed Redeemer descends. This sight shall put a final end to all sorrow, and their everlasting joy and glory will commence from it. The hope of the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, is said to be a blessed hope. Titus ii. 13. "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." But when it comes it will be a more blessed sight.

4. The dead in Christ shall arise at the sound of the last trumpet with glorified bodies, and the living saints shall see them. The holy and blessed souls of saints that descended from heaven with Christ, shall then be re-united to those bodies that shall be prepared by infinite wisdom and skill to be fit organs for a holy and happy soul. The body shall not rise as it was before; there shall be a vast difference in it. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." The glory of that body that the saints shall rise with is what we now cannot conceive of. It shall not be such a dull and heavy-moulded thing as it is now: it shall be active and vigorous as a flame of fire fit for the use of a glorified soul. It will be no clog or hinderance to the soul as it is now, but an organ every way fit for the use of a glorious spirit. It shall not be weak, infirm, and frail as it is now; for, though it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. Now the body is in need of food and sleep continually, to recreate it, but it shall not be so then; now the body is subject to weariness, and to diseases, but it shall not be so then; now if God lets in any great matter of divine light into the soul, the body is ready to sink under it, but it shall not be so then. The glorified body of the saints shall not then fail or flag at all by the most powerful exercises of mind. Now no man can see God and live, but the body would immediately sink and be dissolved; but then the body shall not fail at all by the immediate beholding of God. Now the saints can see but little. When God a little reveals himself, as he doth at times, the saints are forced to beseech God either to strengthen them to see it, or to stay his hand; but then the body shall be so vigorous and

spiritual, that the constant and everlasting view of the glory of God shall not in any wise overcome it, or cause it in the least to fail.

The body shall not only be raised in an exceeding strength, but in wonderful beauty, for we are told that their bodies shall be like to Christ's glorious body. The greatest beauty that ever any human body appeared in in this world, is vile and base in comparison. The beauty of the bodies of the saints shall not only consist in the most lovely proportion of the features of their countenance and parts of their bodies, but in a semblance of the excellencies of their minds, which will appear exceedingly in their countenance; their air and mien will be such as will naturally result from the wisdom, purity, and love of the soul, and shall denote and hold forth an inexpressible sweetness, benevolence, and complacence; and if I may speak what appears to me probable, and what seems to be authorized by the Scriptures, their bodies shall be as it were clothed with garments of light. The prophet Daniel, speaking of the resurrection, says, Dan. xii. 2, 3. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And Christ, speaking of the end of the world, says, Matt. xiii. 43. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." And there is nothing to hinder our understanding this literally of their bodies, and especially when this shining of the saints is spoken of from time to time as what shall be at the resurrection, and not of their souls in a separate state. Moses's face shone when he had been conversing with God in the mount; much more may it be expected that the bodies of the saints shall shine, when they shall converse a thousand times more intimately with God, not in Mount Sinai, but in heaven. We read of Christ, that when his body was transfigured, to teach us what the body of Christ should be in its glorified state, we are told that, when his body was transfigured, his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Matt. xvii. 2. But we are told that the bodies of the saints shall be made like unto Christ's glorious body; there therefore seems to be much ground to think, that at the resurrection the bodies of the saints shall shine with a glorious light, and that they shall be as it were clothed with light. Thus the departed saints shall arise with glorious bodies, they shall lift up their heads out of their graves with joyful and glorious countenances: and at the same time the bodies of the living shall in a moment be changed

into the same strength, and activity, and incorruptibility, and beauty and glory, with which those that were dead shall arise. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 53. "Behold, I show you a mystery, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

5. Then all the saints shall mount up, as with wings, to meet the Lord in the air, and to be forever with him. After the dead in Christ are risen, and the living saints changed, then they will be prepared to go to Christ, and to meet the bridegroom. The world will be about to be destroyed, and the wicked shall be in dreadful amazement, but the saints shall be delivered. Dan. xii. 1. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall he a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." They shall take an everlasting farewell of this evil world where there is so much sin, and where they have met with so much trouble, and they shall be caught up in the clouds, and there they shall meet their glorious Redeemer; and a joyful meeting it will be. They shall go to Christ, never any more to be separated from him. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

6. Then shall the good works, which the saints have done, be declared to their peace and glory. We are often told that every man shall be judged according to his works, and Christ keeps a book of remembrance of the good works of the saints as well as of the sins of the ungodly. And however mean and polluted that which the saints do is in itself, yet all the pollution that attends it is hid, and everything they do for God that has the least sincerity in it is precious in God's eyes. Through his infinite grace it shall in no case lose its reward, neither shall it in any wise lose its honour. At the day of judgment they shall receive praise and glory in reward for it. Christ will declare all the good they have done to their honour; what they did secretly and the world knew it not, and when they did not let their left hand know what their right hand did. Then shall they receive praise and honour for all their

labour, for all their self-denial, and all their suffering in the cause of Christ; and those good works of theirs that were despised, and for which they were condemned, and suffered reproach, shall now be set in a true light; and however they were reproached and slandered by men, they shall receive praise of God in the sight of angels and men. 1 Cor. iv. 5. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." Those righteous men that have been condemned here before unjust judges, shall be acquitted and honoured then before the righteous Judge of heaven and earth. Heb. vi. 10. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Then will be the time when their Lord and Master will say unto them, "Well done, good and faithful servants. " Thus, in the description of the day of judgment in the 25th chapter of Matthew., Christ rehearses the good works of the saints. "For I was a hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And though the saints there reply, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" Though they thought that nothing that they had done was worthy to be so accounted of as it was by Christ, yet Christ of his grace esteemed it highly, and highly honoured them for it, as it there follows, 40th ver. "And the King shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And if the sins of the saints shall be rehearsed, it shall not be for their shame, but for the glory of divine grace, to give opportunity to them to plead the atonement of that Saviour who will be the Judge, to give occasion to them to produce Christ's righteousness, which will surely be accepted by himself.

7. The saints shall sit on thrones with Christ, to judge wicked men and devils. Christ will put that honour upon them on that day, he will cause them to sit on his right hand as judges with him, and so the saints shall judge the world. Matt. xix. 28. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the

twelve tribes of Israel." 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?" They shall judge kings and princes who were their persecutors, and the devils, who were their tempters.

8. At the finishing of the judgment Christ shall pronounce the blessed sentence upon them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

This blessed sentence Christ shall pronounce on them with inexpressible manifestations of grace and love. Every word of it will be ravishing to them, and will cause raptures of joy in their hearts; that this glorious person, though he orders with such indignation the wicked to depart from him, yet will so sweetly invite them to come with him, and that he should accost them after such a manner, saying, "ye blessed of my Father." Christ will pronounce them blessed in the sight of men and angels; and blessed indeed, because blessed by his Father. There will not only be a manifestation of Christ's love to them in this sentence, but a declaration of the Father's love, for they are declared to be blessed of him. Christ shall invite them to come with him, and for no less a purpose than to inherit a kingdom. Christ gives them a glorious kingdom; the wealth to which he invites them is the wealth of a kingdom; and the honour he gives them is the honour of kings; and what yet adds to the blessedness is this, that it is a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. God loved them from all eternity, and therefore he has prepared a kingdom for them.

God had respect to them in the creation of the world, and then prepared this glorious kingdom for them, and out of love to them. They have therefore a right to it, and now therefore they are invited to come to possess it; and not only to possess it, but to *inherit* it, that is, to possess it as *heirs*, as those that have a right to the kingdom by virtue of their being his children. Thus having considered what glory, honour, and peace the saints have in this life, at death, in a separate state, and at the Day of Judgment, I now proceed,

Fifthly, To consider their consummate state of happiness after the Day of Judgment. And here I would consider, 1. Their entrance into this happiness; and 2. Its nature, its degree, and some of the circumstances which attend it.

1st. Their entrance into this state of consummate happiness.

1. When the judgment is ended they shall ascend with Christ in a triumphant and glorious manner into heaven. Christ, when he has passed sentence, shall then return again; he shall pass beyond these aerial heavens, and shall ascend towards the highest heaven, together with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of glorious spirits, and of the saints with their glorified bodies. They shall leave this lower world, and all the wicked, to be burnt in everlasting fire, and as they are ascending shall look back and see it all in one vast conflagration. Then shall be fulfilled, in the most remarkable manner, the prophecy in Psal. xlvii. 4, 5. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom he loved. God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." And that will be the most joyful procession that ever will be seen. And when they are come to heaven they shall enter in with joy into that New Jerusalem where they are to dwell for ever; and this will be the most joyful day that ever was in heaven. It is probable, that when Christ ascended into heaven after his death and resurrection, it was the most joyful day in heaven that ever had been seen till then; but this second ascension will be a more glorious and joyful day than that.

2. When they have come to heaven, they shall be there actually instated by God and Christ in their ultimate and consummate happiness; and now they shall have complete redemption. To illustrate this, it may be observed,

1. They shall be perfectly happy in the whole man; both body and soul. Before their souls only were happy, while the body lay in a state of putrefaction in the grave. Now they shall be in that state which is natural to the human soul, which is a state of union with the body. It is natural for the soul to act by a body, and to make use of such an organ, and the soul is not complete without the body; and then both body and soul shall be glorified together.

2. Then will the body of Christ be perfect and complete. Then it shall have all its members, no one wanting. Now the body of Christ is incomplete, there are many members wanting; but then it will be perfected, having every member. Now the body of Christ is in a growing state, but then it shall have come to its perfect state, to receive no more addition. Then the body of Christ shall be perfect, not only as it shall have every member, but every member shall be in its perfect state. Now as there are many of the members of Christ's body wanting, so there are many that are imperfect; many that are engrafted into Christ have

great infirmity, and great remains of corruption, and many of his members are now under affliction. But then every member shall be perfectly freed from all sin and sorrow, and there never will be any more either sin or sorrow, in any member of the body of Christ. Then also the body of Christ will be complete, because those that are brought to a perfect state are wholly brought home; before only the soul was brought home to glory, while the body that was also to be united to Christ, lay in the grave. The body of Christ will then also be in its complete state, because then all the parts will be together; and this is one end of Christ's coming into the world, *viz.* that he might gather together all in one. Eph. i. 16. Before they were scattered, some in heaven and some on earth, some mixed with wicked men, as wheat with tares, and as lilies among thorns. The church, therefore, now being made complete, will exceedingly rejoice; and Christ, having his mystical body complete, will rejoice; and all his saints will rejoice with him. Christ will rejoice in the completeness of his church, and the church will rejoice in its own completeness.

3. Then will the Mediator have fully accomplished the work for which he came into the world. Then will he have perfected the work of redemption, not only in the impetration, but also in the application of it. Then all that God has given him will be actually and fully redeemed, their bodies as well as souls; then will he have conquered all his enemies, and will triumph over them all; then he will have put down all authority and power. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's, at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Then Christ will surely have obtained that joy that was set before him; then he shall have perfected the full design that was upon his heart from all eternity; and then Christ will rejoice, and all his members must rejoice with him. Christ shall triumph over his enemies, and the saints shall then triumph over all their enemies, and the joys of the triumph shall last for ever.

4. Then God will have obtained the end of all his great works which he has been doing from the beginning of the world. Then will be the consummation of all things: the deep designs of God will be unfolded, his marvellous contrivances, and his hidden, intricate, and inexplicable

works, will appear. The end being obtained, as all things are from God, so will they then all be to him, and will issue in his glory. His power appeared in the beginning of them, and his glory will be manifested in the end and consummation of them. Then will it be seen that all the revolutions and changes which have existed from the beginning of the world are for God's glory; then it will appear how all the wheels of his providence have conspired together to bring about the glory of God and Christ, and the happiness of his people; and this will cause an exceeding accession of happiness to the saints who behold it. Then will God have fully glorified himself, and glorified his Son, and glorified his elect; then he will see that all is very good, and will rejoice in his own works, which will be the joy of all heaven. Then will God rest and be refreshed, and thenceforward will all the inhabitants of heaven keep an eternal Sabbath of rest and praise, such as never was kept before.

5. Then will be the marriage of the Lamb. When the church is completely purified and beautified, and nothing wanting and all the parts of the body in their due proportion and joyful state; then may the Lamb's wife be said to have made herself ready; then will she be as a bride prepared for her husband. And when the church is thus prepared by Christ at such great cost, at the shedding of his own blood; it will be brought to a more glorious union to Christ than ever before, and to a more intimate communion with him, and to a more high enjoyment of his excellency and love. Then will be the highest accomplishment of the joy spoken of in Rev. xix. 7, 8, 9. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come; and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." It will be the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; the feast, and pomp, and holy mirth, and joy of this marriage day, will be continued to all eternity.

6. Then will Christ present his church to his Father. The Father sent forth Christ into the world on that errand, to redeem a vast number of the children of men, and to bring them home to God, from whom they had apostatized, to bring them back to him, the great Creator and Father of all things, and the fountain of all good. Christ, having accomplished this, will bring them to God, and present them to him; and then may Christ say, as in Heb. ii.

13. "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me;" none of them is missing: "of those that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing."

We read that Christ, when he shall have accomplished the work which the Father sent him to do, shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. 1 Cor. xv. 24. "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power." And as he shall deliver up the kingdom, he shall present the subjects of the kingdom; and what he has obtained by ruling, he shall present as the fruits of his reign.

7. Then will God make a still more abundant manifestation and communication of himself. God shall be all in all; and the glory of God and the glory of his Son shall be displayed in heaven, in a more abundant manner than ever before; and he will pour forth more plentifully of his Spirit, and will make answerable additions to the glory of the saints, such as will be becoming the commencement of the ultimate and most perfect state of things, and such as will become the joyful occasion of the marriage of the Lamb.

2d. I shall now describe the nature and degree of the consummate and eternal glory and blessedness of the saints.

1. The nature of this glory and blessedness.

1. I would begin with the lowest part of it, viz. the glory of the place. We have already observed that heaven is a place. They shall dwell in the most glorious part of the whole creation of God. It is called paradise. Luke xxiii. 43. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." 2 Cor. xii. 4. "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter." Rev. ii. 7. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The word *paradise* signifies a most pleasant and delightful garden, of which the Garden of Eden was a type. The Garden of Eden was without doubt a place that was delightful beyond what we can easily conceive; but if this earthly paradise was so delightful, how pleasant and glorious may we conclude the heavenly paradise to be; that was not made merely to be the residence of some of the innocent creatures of God during their time of probation, as Eden was, but was prepared by infinite wisdom and skill for the everlasting

dwelling-place of the great King of heaven and earth, and of his Son Jesus Christ; the place where they might show their glory, and wisdom, and love for ever, and which is to be the habitation of confirmed saints and angels! When God made the universe, he made many parts of it for inferior uses, in which he displayed marvellous skill; then he made the earth, and the sun, and moon, and stars, and the visible heavens, which appear truly glorious; but there was one part of the creation that God made more especially for himself, to be his own dwelling-place, the place of his glorious rest; and we may conclude that this is beyond all comparison more glorious than the other parts of it. If some parts of the visible world are so glorious, as the sun, moon, and stars, how glorious may we conclude the highest heavens to be! This is the heavenly mount Zion, the royal city of the great God. It has been the ambition of earthly monarchs to make the cities where they dwell exceedingly magnificent. Thus the king of Babylon boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

Dan. iv. 30.

Especially will kings have their own palaces most magnificent. But if those earthly cities and palaces are some of them so glorious, which are for the habitation of worms, how glorious may we think that to be which is for the glorious habitation of God Almighty! As the third heavens are higher than the earth, so we may expect that it is proportionally more glorious than any earthly garden, city, or palace. Heaven is not only the city of God, but his palace; not only his palace, but his throne: Isa. lxvi. 1. "Thus saith the Lord, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me; and where is the place of my rest?" We read how magnificent was Solomon's throne. 1 Kings x. 18, 19, 20. "Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best of gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom." But what is the throne of a glow-worm? God does not want skill to make his palace and throne glorious enough to become the majesty and glory of him whose house and seat it is. The builder is God, and there is no want of skill in the architect. How glorious and magnificent was the temple of Solomon, that was built only to be the place of the special symbols of God's presence on earth among his people Israel! How much more

glorious is that heavenly temple which God himself has built, to be the place of his glorious presence among glorified saints and angels throughout all eternity! This is a place contrived on purpose to show the boundless riches of God's grace and love; and therefore, God has not spared as to the delights and glories with which he has adorned the place. God is rich enough to make the place transcend all created glory. Earthly kings build their houses and palaces, and make them magnificent, according to their wealth and ability; but God is infinitely rich, he does not spare for the cost of the treasures to be laid out in adorning heaven, through fear of impoverishing himself. The glory of his residence is what we cannot conceive of; and this is one of those things spoken of in 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Therefore in the descriptions that are given of it in the Scriptures, the images made use of to shadow it forth to us, are the most glorious with which we are conversant in the world. Such is the glorious description of it by John, as represented to him in the apocalyptic vision. Rev. xxi. 10,11-18, 19, 20, 21,22, 23. "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second sapphire; the third a chalcedony; the fourth an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Heaven is here represented by a city, whose very walls were made of precious stones. And the foundations were also all precious stones, and the gates were each a single pearl, and the very streets of the city were of pure gold; and yet it was something so excellent, as it appeared to John, that his comparing it to pure gold did not represent the excellency of it; it

had also the beautiful transparency of clear glass. The apostle could find nothing on earth excellent enough adequately to represent its surpassing beauty. "The streets of the city were pure gold, like unto clear glass." He goes on with the destruction in the beginning of the next chapter. Rev. xxii. 1, 2-5. "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." This glorious place shall be the residence of the saints for ever. They shall dwell in this house of God, as the king's children dwell with him in their father's house; they shall dwell in this house, for it is Christ's house. He is the heir and owner of it, because he is the only-begotten Son of God; and the church shall dwell in it with Christ, because she is "the Lamb's wife. "God has made heaven to be his own peculiar dwelling-place, and the dwelling-place of his children; when he made the world, he made heaven for them, and therefore Christ says to them at the close of their trial, Matt. xxv. 34. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

2. The glory of the bodies of the saints; but this need not be insisted on here; as I have considered it already, when speaking of the resurrection. I would only observe, that however great the glory of the place is, the glory of their bodies will doubtless be far greater; for the place is made to be a dwelling-place for their glorious bodies, and the inhabitants will doubtless be more glorious than the habitation that is made for them; as the end is of greater value than the means. However bright heaven itself shall shine, the bodies of the saints themselves will shine far brighter, and appear far more beautiful.

3. The glory and beauty which God will put upon their souls will as far exceed the beauty of their bodies, as the beauty of their bodies will far exceed the beauty of the place. Here will be their principal ornament, and if their bodies shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, how bright will their souls shine in the glorious image of God, made perfect in them! When they shall be presented to Christ, perfectly free from sin, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; when they shall appear holy and without blemish; their bodies shall not only be made like to Christ's glorious body, but their souls like to his Holy and

glorified soul. They shall then shine with the glory of Christ reflected from them, without any thing to obscure the bright image. Their souls shall be made glorious in wisdom and knowledge; their faculties shall be exceedingly strengthened and enlarged, their eyes made perfectly clear, and divine light shall fill the soul, so that there shall be no darkness within, and perfect love shall reign in the heart. Divine love shall be strong; all the soul shall be as it were love. This love shall be exceedingly great in the principle of it, and shall always be in its highest exercise. Then shall humility also be brought to perfection. None can now express or conceive how pure and holy will be the disposition of the soul of a glorified saint, which shall be, as it were, all love, all sweetness, all humility. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is said to be in the sight of God of great price, in this world; but how precious will such spiritual ornaments be in heaven, when they shall be thus perfected! The souls of the saints are God's jewels; and how bright will God make those his jewels shine in heaven, when he has polished them and fitted them to be gems in his own crown of glory! The soul of man, being spiritual and rational, is susceptible of incomparably greater beauty than the body, because the soul is capable of receiving the image of God, of which the body is not; and the souls of the saints, when God has perfected them, shall appear as the very image of God himself; and in the graces in which they shall shine shall be seen the glory of the divine workmanship in its perfection. And so lovely will they be, that there will be more loveliness and beauty in the soul of one saint than in all the glory and beauty of the place put together.

4. They shall have great delight in the society and enjoyment of one another. We now do not know what enjoyment they will have in conversing together, and in communicating with each other; but doubtless it will be far more perfect than any we have now. The saints in heaven shall all be one society, they shall be united together without any schism, there shall be a sweet harmony, and a perfect union. There the saints shall see and converse with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and Paul, and all the holy martyrs; and *they* shall freely converse with them. It will be a most blessed society; there shall be no jars or contentions, nor breaking out among them; no manner of strife, nor envy, nor jealousy; no ill will, but perfect peace and perfect love through the whole society. Each one shall love every other with a most endeared and strong affection. Each one will be perfectly excellent and lovely, and will appear so in every other's eyes: they will be delighted exceedingly in that lovely and perfect image of God, which each one shall see in every other;

they shall manifest their love to each other in the most becoming and amiable manner, without any thing ever to disturb or interrupt the peace of that blessed society. There shall be no mixture of wicked men among them as it is here in this world, to defile or dishonour their company. Here the visible churches of Christ are often defiled and dishonoured by one wicked man or other, but that church above shall always be perfectly pure. Rev. xxi. 27. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." This blessed family being all united in one body, as having many members, shall all sub-serve and contribute to each other's happiness, as the members of a body that is in perfect health. They shall delight to assist each other in their contemplations, communicating their glorious contemplations one to another. How sweetly will they converse together of the glories of God and Christ, and of God's glorious works of power, and wisdom, and mercy! and how will they convey the bright conceptions and the raptures of joy from one soul to another, imparting to each other the sweet communications which they themselves receive from the glorious King of heaven! and how will they help one another in their praises to God and Christ, each one bearing his part in the heavenly melody, extolling the Most High! And what a glorious harmony of celestial voices without number will that be, when the whole assembly of the upper world shall together lift up the praises of God on high! John had this represented to him at a great distance, and tells us, Rev. xiv. 2. "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers, harping with their harps:" so ardent were they, and so great a multitude. And how will they rejoice in their numbers, to see so great a multitude all united, all perfectly holy, all full of mutual love, all fellow-citizens, all brethren! Here a question may arise, whether the saints, when they go to heaven, have any peculiar comfort in meeting with those who have been their pious friends on earth? I answer in the affirmative, and I think it is evident from 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which

are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Here it is evident,

1. That what the apostle mentions, as a matter of comfort to Christians respecting their departed Christian friends, is that they shall meet them, and see them again. It is not only that their departed friends, though dead, are happy, but they shall see them, and be with them again. This is here plainly asserted. Mourn not for them, says the apostle, as those that have no hope; for when Christ comes, God shall bring them again, and we which are alive shall be caught up with them; and so shall we be ever with the Lord together. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. The apostle therefore must be understood to mean, that they should comfort one another when mourners, with the consideration that they should hereafter be with their departed friends again in a glorious and happy state, and never part more.

2. That there will be something else that will give comfort in meeting them in a future state, than in seeing other saints; otherwise why did the apostle mention it for their comfort, that they should see them again rather than other saints whom they had not seen or heard of? The apostle's speaking thus to the Thessalonians might give them just ground to expect, that the peculiarly strong affection which they had cherished for their departed friends, which was crossed by their departure, would be again gratified by meeting them again; for this crossing of that affection was the ground of their mourning. If the Thessalonians knew, that to see their friends again in another world would be no gratification to the affection which they had for them as their friends, and did no way think or conceive of it as such; then to think of seeing them would be no more comfort to them or remedy to their sorrow, than to think that they should see any other saint that lived or died in another country, or in a past age; and that, because it would be no remedy to the ground and foundation of their mourning, *viz.* the crossing their affection to them as their friends; and if it would be no remedy to their mourning, to think thus respecting it, it never would have been mentioned to them by the apostle as a ground of comfort, or reason why they need not mourn. That was what they mourned for *viz.* that they should not have their affections towards them satisfied by seeing them, and conversing with them again. That for which the heathen here

spoken of, that have no hope, mourned excessively, was that they should never more have that affection gratified again. Hence it follows that the special affection, which the saints have in this world to other saints who are their friends, will in some respects remain in another world. There is no reason why we should suppose that saints that have dwelt together in this world, and have showed kindness to each other, have been affectionate to each other's true happiness, should not love one another with a love of gratitude for it in another world. There is no reason why good ministers whom God had made the instruments of salvation to others, should not have special joy in meeting their converts in heaven. 2

Cor. i. 14.

"As also ye have acknowledged us in part that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." I see no reason why those that love one another with a virtuous love, and from such a love have shown kindness one to another, should not love one another the better for it in another world. There is no reason to think, that the friendship contracted here on earth between saints will be rooted out in another world. All natural affections, so far as founded in animal nature or the infirmity of the present state, will cease in another world; and with respect to any affection that the godly have had to the finally reprobate, the love of God will wholly swallow it up, and cause it wholly to cease.

But I see nothing that argues that one saint in glory may not have a special respect to another, because God made use of that other as an instrument to bring him into being, and thus made him the remote occasion of his happiness; or that, when pious parents lose pious children, they may not comfort themselves with the thought that they shall go to them, as probably David did when he said concerning his child, 2 Sam. xii. 23. "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me:" or that even a former acquaintance with persons and their virtues may not occasion a particular respect in another world. They may go to heaven with a desire to see them upon that very account. The impressions which they have of their amiable qualifications in consequence of their acquaintance with them here, may yet remain in another world.

5. The saints in heaven shall see and converse with Christ. They shall see Christ in a twofold sense.

1. They shall see him, as appearing in his glorified human nature, with their bodily eyes; and this will be a most glorious sight. The loveliness of Christ as thus appearing will be a most ravishing thing to them; for though the bodies of the saints shall appear with an exceeding beauty and glory, yet the body of Christ will without doubt immensely surpass them, as much as the brightness of the sun does that of the stars. The glorified body of Christ will be the masterpiece of all God's workmanship in the whole material universe. There shall be in his glorious countenance the manifestations of his glorious spiritual perfections, his majesty, his holiness, his surpassing grace, and love, and meekness. The eye will never be wearied with beholding this glorious sight. When Christ was transfigured in the mount, Peter was for making three tabernacles, that Christ, and Moses, and Elijah might remain there, and that the heavenly vision might never come to an end. Job had respect to this sight of Christ, and comforted himself with the thoughts of it, when he said, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." This will be the most glorious object that the saints will ever see with their bodily eyes; and there will be far more happiness redounding to the beholders from this sight than from any other; yea, the eyes of the glorified body will be given chiefly that the saints may behold this sight.

2. They shall see him with the eye of the soul. It is said, "They shall see him as he is."¹ John iii. 2. "And they shall know even as they are known."¹ Cor. xiii. 2. They shall have a clear understanding of Christ as Mediator, how he has undertaken from all eternity to accomplish their salvation. They shall understand the glorious covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son; shall see the eternal love Christ had to them before the foundation of the world. They shall in all probability understand the mystery of his incarnation. They shall know and understand the gloriousness of the way of salvation by Christ, "which things the angels desire to look into;" they shall have a full understanding of the infinite wisdom of God in contriving the plan of salvation; shall comprehend the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ to sinners, in undergoing for them the agony of the garden, and the more overwhelming agonies of the cross. Now the heart is dull in the contemplation

of such things. How often are they heard of by the saints on earth with but little affection! How often, when they see them set forth in the Lord's supper, are they cold and lifeless! But then it shall not be so; then the wonderful works of God, and the love of Christ in the work of redemption, will appear as they are: then there will constantly without any interruption be a most lively and full sense of it, without any deadness or coldness; everything in the work of redemption will appear in its true glory, the understanding shall be wonderfully opened, and it shall be perpetually like the clear hemisphere with the sun in the meridian, and there shall never come over one cloud to darken the mind. And then the saints shall see fully how the excellence and loveliness of Christ appear in all that he did and suffered: they shall see the loveliness of those excellencies that appeared in Christ's human nature when on earth; his wonderful meekness and humility, his patience under suffering, his perfect obedience to the Father. And then shall they also see the beauty that appears in Christ's human nature in its glorified state, wherein the excellencies of it shine without a veil. They shall also see the excellence of the divine nature of Christ; they shall behold' clearly and immediately his divine majesty, and his divine and infinite holiness, and grace, and love. They shall see Christ as the perfect image of God, an image wherein all the glory of the divine nature is fully expressed; they shall behold him as the brightness of his Father's glory; and they shall see that bright and perfect image of God which the Father beheld, and was infinitely happy in beholding, from all eternity. But this sight of the glory of Christ in his divine nature belongs to that beatific vision, of which I would speak more particularly hereafter.

2. They shall not only see this glorious person, as at a distance, but they shall be admitted to be near him, and to converse with him. This sight of his glory and loveliness will fill them with the most exalted love, which love will cause them to desire conversation; and they shall be admitted to it, to the full of their desires, and that at all times. Two things may be observed concerning this converse with Christ, to which the saints shall be admitted in heaven.

1. It shall be most free and intimate. There shall be nothing to forbid them or deter them. Though Christ is so glorious a person, in so exalted a state in heaven, being Lord of heaven and earth, yet he will treat them as brethren, and they shall converse with him as friends. He will also honour them and advance them to the dignity of kings, that they may be fit to

converse with so glorious a King. Rev. i. 6. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Christ, when on earth, treated his disciples with great familiarity and freedom, he treated them as friends. John xv. 15. "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I call you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." So in heaven he will not keep them at a greater distance, but admit them nearer; because they shall be fitted to be nearer to him and to converse more intimately with him. O how happy will it render them to have so great and honourable a person treating them with such grace and condescension! Though they shall see the awful majesty of Christ, that will not make them afraid, because they will see his love, and grace, and condescension, equal to his majesty.

2. This converse shall be most full and satisfying. This is evident from that most emphatic expression of the church being "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He will open the infinite and eternal fountain of his love to them, and will pour forth that fountain into their hearts. This love will be as a pure river of water of life, a river of pleasures, constantly flowing into the souls of the saints, that shall be in them as rivers of living water. And they shall also in their converse with Christ manifest their love to him: their hearts shall flow out in an unceasing stream, or ascend continually in a rapturous transport of love. Of those things we can say but little now; yet sometimes when God helps us we can conceive of them a little, but it is but a little at the most.

6. The saints in heaven shall see God. They shall not only see that glorious city, and the saints there, and the holy angels, and the glorified body of Christ; but they shall see God himself. This is promised to the saints. Matt. v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." This is that which is called by divines, "the beatific vision," because this is that in which the blessedness of the saints in glory does chiefly consist. This is the fountain, the infinite fountain of their blessedness. The sight of Christ, which has already been spoken of, is not here to be excluded, for he is a divine person; the sight of him in his divine nature therefore belongs to the beatifical vision. This vision of God is the chief bliss of heaven, and therefore I would speak of it a little more particularly. And, 1. As to the faculty that is the subject of this vision.

It is no sight of anything with the bodily eyes; but it is an intellectual view. The beatific vision of God is not a sight with the eyes of the body, but with the eyes of the soul. There is no such thing as seeing God properly with the bodily eyes because he is a spirit: one of his attributes is, that he is invisible. 1 Tim. i. 17. "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever." Colos. i. 15. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." Heb. xi. 27. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." This highest blessedness of the soul does not enter in at the door of the bodily senses; this would be to make the blessedness of the soul dependent on the body, or the happiness of man's superior part to be dependent on the inferior. The beatific vision of God is not any sight with the bodily eyes, because the separate souls of the saints, and the angels which are mere spirits, and never were united to body, have this vision. Matt. xviii. 10. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." It is not in beholding any form or visible representation, or shape, or colour, or shining light, in which the highest happiness of the soul consists; but it is in seeing God, who is a spirit, spiritually, with the eyes of the soul. We have no reason to think that there is any such thing; as God's manifesting himself by any outward glorious appearance, that is, the symbol of his presence in heaven, any otherwise than by the glorified body of Christ. God was wont in the Old Testament, oftentimes to manifest himself by an outward glory, and sometimes in an outward shape, or the form of a man. But when God manifested himself thus, it was by Christ; it was the second person of the Trinity only that was wont thus to appear to men in an outward glory and human shape. John i. 18. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." But since Christ has actually assumed a human body, there is no need of his assuming any aerial form or shape any more. The Deity now became visible to the bodily eyes in a more perfect manner by his having a real body. The saints that shall see Christ in heaven in his glorified body, much more properly see Christ than if they only saw an assumed shape, or some outward glorious appearance, as the symbol of his presence; for now, that which they see is not only a glorious appearance by which Christ is represented, but the real Christ; it is his own body. The seeing God in the glorified body of Christ, is the most perfect way of seeing God with the bodily eyes that can be; for in seeing a real body, which one of the persons of the Trinity has assumed to be his

body, and in which he dwells for ever as his own, the divine majesty and excellency appear as much as it is possible for them to appear in outward form or shape. The saints do actually see a divine person with bodily eyes, and in the same manner as we see one another. But when God showed himself under outward appearances and symbols of his presence only, that was not so proper a sight of a divine person, and it was a more imperfect way of God's manifesting himself, suitably to the more imperfect state of the church under the Old Testament. But now Christ really subsists in a glorified body; those outward symbols and appearances are done away, as being needless and imperfect. This more imperfect way therefore is altogether needless, seeing Christ there appears as a glorified body.

This seems to be one end of God's assuming a human body, viz. that the saints might see God with bodily eyes; that they may see him, not only in the understanding, but in every way of seeing of which the human nature is capable: that we might see God as a divine person as we see one another. And there is no need of God the Father's manifesting himself in any other glorious form; for he that sees the Son, sees the Father, John xiv. 9. and that because he is the image of the invisible God. Coloss. i. 15. Heb. i. 3. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." But if there be any outward symbol by which God the Father represents himself in heaven; seeing that is not the beatific vision, for that is a far more imperfect way of seeing God than seeing him with the eye of the soul; the soul is capable of apprehending God in a thousand times more perfect and glorious manner than the eye of the body is; the soul has in itself those powers whereby it is sufficiently capable of apprehending spiritual objects without looking through the windows of the outward senses. The soul is capable of seeing God more immediately, and more certainly, and more fully and gloriously, than the eye of the body is.

2. The act of vision. And,

1. It will be an immediate sight, it will be no apprehension of God's excellency by acquiring it from his works; neither will it be such a spiritual sight of God as the saints have in this world, seeing him in his word and making use of his ordinances, which is called seeing "through a glass darkly." Then they shall see him "face to face." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. They shall not only see the glory of God as reflected from other things, but they shall see him as we see the sun, by

his own light in a clear hemisphere. It will be an intuitive view of God. What knowledge the saints have of God in this world is like the twilight before sun-rising; it is not the direct light of the sun, but the light of the sun reflected, and it is comparatively a dim light; but hereafter the saints shall enjoy the perfect day, they shall see God as we immediately behold the sun after it is risen above the horizon, and no cloud or vapour in the heavens to hinder its sight.

2. It shall be, according to men's capacity, a perfect sight. It shall not be a perfectly comprehensive sight, because it is impossible that a saint's mind should comprehend God; but yet it shall be perfect in its kind, it shall be perfectly certain, without any doubt or possibility of doubt. There shall be a view of God in his being, and in his power, and wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, and love, and all-sufficiency that shall be attended with intuitive certainty, without any mixture of unbelief, and with much greater certainty than any sight with the bodily eye. And then it shall be perfectly clear without any view of darkness. Now, how much darkness is there mingled with that spiritual sight, which the saints have of God's glory in this world! But then, there shall be no obscurity, nothing to cloud the understanding, or to hinder the clearness of the view. God shall be hid with no veil, neither shall there be any veil in the heavens. And this sight shall be most enlarged; they shall see vastly more of the glory of God than any of the saints do in this world; the souls of the saints shall be like the angels in extensiveness of understanding.

3. The object of this vision: concerning which I observe,

1. They shall see everything in God that tends to excite and inflame love, *i. e.* everything that is lovely, everything that tends to exalt their esteem and admiration, to warm and endear the heart. They shall behold the infinite excellency and glory of God, shall have a blessed-making sight of his glorious majesty and of his infinite holiness; shall see as those angels do, of whom we read in Isa. vi. 3. "That, standing before the throne, they cry, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," and shall behold the infinite grace and goodness of God. Then shall that glorious fountain and ocean be opened fully to their view; then shall they behold all its excellency and loveliness, they shall have a clear sight of his immense glory and excellency.

2. They shall see everything in God that gratifies love. They shall see in him all that love desires. Love desires the love of the beloved. So the saints in glory shall see God's transcendent love to them; God will make ineffable manifestations of his love to them. They

shall see as much love in God towards them as they desire; they neither will nor can crave any more. This very manifestation that God will make of himself that will cause the beatific vision, will be an act of love in God: it will be from the exceeding love of God to them that he will give them this vision, which will add an immense sweetness to it. When they see God so glorious, and at the same time see how greatly this God loves them, what delight will it not cause in the soul! Love desires union.

They shall therefore see this glorious God united to them, and see themselves united to him. They shall see that he is their Father, and that they are his children. They shall see God gloriously present with them; God with them; and God in them; and they in God. Love desires the possession of its object. Therefore they shall see God, even their own God; when they behold this transcendent glory of God, they shall see him as their own. When they shall see that glory, power, and wisdom of God, they shall see it as altogether engaged for them; when they shall see the beauty of God's holiness, they shall see it as their own, for them to enjoy for ever; when they see the boundless ocean of God's goodness and grace, they shall see it to be all theirs.

4. The manner in which they shall see and enjoy God; and that is as having communion with Christ therein. The saints shall enjoy God, as partaking with Christ of his enjoyment of God; for they are united to him, and are glorified and made happy in the enjoyment of God as his members. As the members of the body partake of the life and health of the head, so the saints in glory shall be happy as partaking of the blessedness of the Son of God; they being in Christ, shall partake of the love of God the Father to Christ. And as the Son knows the Father, so they shall partake with him in his sight of God, as being as it were parts of him. As he is in the bosom of the Father, so are they in the bosom of the Father; as he has immense joy in the love of the Father, so have they, every one of them in their measure, the same joy in the Father's love. Herein they shall enjoy God in a more exalted and excellent manner than man would have done if he had never fallen; for doubtless that happiness, that Christ himself partakes of in his Father's bosom, is transcendently sweet and excellent; and how happy therefore are they who are admitted to partake of that portion of delight with him!

5. The agent by whom this vision of God shall be communicated; viz. the Holy Spirit. As it is by the Holy Spirit that a spiritual sight of God is given in this world, so it is the same Holy Spirit by whom the beatific vision is given of God in heaven. The saints in heaven are as

dependent on God for all their happiness, and all their holiness, and all their light, as those on earth; there all is from God by his Holy Spirit, just as it is here. They shall have the beatific vision of God because they will be full of God, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is the pure river of water of life that proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb, spoken of in Rev. xxii. 1.

6. The effects of this vision. And these are, that the soul shall be inflamed with love, and satisfied with pleasure.

1. It shall be inflamed with love. The soul shall not be an inactive spectator, but shall be most active, and in the most ardent exercise of love towards the object seen. The soul shall be as it were all eyes to behold, and yet all act to love. The soul shall be as full of love as it shall be of light, and of both it shall be as full as it can hold. The understanding will be in its most perfect act in beholding, and the will will be in its most perfect act in loving. This love will be perfectly such as it ought to be. It shall be perfectly humble, the soul shall be in its place at all times, adoring at God's feet, and yet embraced in the arms of his love. This love shall excite them to praise. And therefore, singing praises and hallelujahs shall be that in which they shall unweariedly be employed.

2. This sight of God shall satisfy the soul with pleasure. So great will the joy be that the soul will desire no greater. It shall be as full of grace, as the large desires of the soul can receive. So sweet shall it be, that the soul will desire nothing sweeter. So pure and excellent will it be, that the soul will desire nothing better. Ps. xvii. 15. "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." When the soul beholds the glory and love of God, it shall be at the same time filled with the glory and love of God; it shall receive satisfying pleasure, for it shall receive God. God will communicate, and as it were pour forth, himself into the soul. And with what inexpressible sweetness and complacency will the soul open itself to be thus filled, as the flowers open before the sun to be filled with his light and pleasant influences! Having thus considered wherein the eternal happiness of the saints consists, I proceed next to consider some circumstances of it.

1. It will add sweetness to the happiness of heaven, that it is all the fruit of free grace, and the dying love of Christ. The saints in this world are of that spirit that they choose the way of salvation by free and sovereign grace; and salvation in this way seems better and sweeter by far, than if they could have it by their own works. Much more will this exceedingly heighten

the sweetness of their happiness when they are in heaven, when their love, and their humility, will be perfect, when they will be abundantly more sensible than they are now, what vile creatures they were in this world; and when they consider to what exceeding glory God has advanced them, what a sweet admiration will it excite in them of the free and boundless grace of God! And what a sweetness will it add, that all this glorious blessedness which they possess, is not of themselves, but is the fruit of the love of that glorious person whom they shall then see in his glory, the fruit of his dying love, that it was bought by his own precious blood! It adds greatly to the value of a gift, if we receive it from a dear friend as a token of his love; but how greatly then will heaven be the more prized by the saints, when they consider it as the fruit of his love who is so glorious and excellent, and who is so exceedingly beloved by them!

2. It will give them the greater sense of their own blessedness, when they contemplate the misery of those who are finally lost, and consider how exceedingly different is their own state. The saints will witness the misery of the wicked, they shall see their state at the day of judgment, they shall see them at the left hand with devils, shall hear the sentence pronounced, and see it executed. This shall greatly heighten the sense of their own happy state, when they consider how different their own state is, how differently God has dealt with themselves from what he has done with the wicked; when they see how dreadful the misery is from which they are delivered, and which they must have unavoidably suffered, had not God graciously redeemed them; when they consider that they deserved this misery as well as those that suffer it, but that Christ has of his free grace redeemed them. This will give exalted thoughts of the free grace of God, and cause them exceedingly to admire it, and will greatly heighten their exercises of love to him who has been so gracious to them, and consequently will heighten their joy in his love. As the damned when they contemplate the happiness of the saints in heaven will find their own misery aggravated, so the saints in heaven when they contemplate the misery of the damned in hell, will feel a greater sense of their own happiness.

3. There are different degrees of happiness and glory in heaven. As there are degrees among the angels, viz. thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; so there are degrees among the saints. In heaven are many mansions, and of different degrees of dignity. The glory of the saints above will be in some proportion to their eminency in holiness and good

works here. Christ will reward all according to their works. He that gained ten pounds was made ruler over ten cities, and he that gained five pounds over five cities. Luke xix. 17. 2 Cor. ix. 6. "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." And the apostle Paul tells us that, as one star differs from another star in glory, so also it shall be in the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor. xv. 41. Christ tells us that he who gives a cup of cold water unto a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall in no wise lose his reward. But this could not be true, if a person should have no greater reward for doing many good works than if he did but few. It will be no damp to the happiness of those who have lower degrees of happiness and glory, that there are others advanced in glory above them: for all shall be perfectly happy, every one shall be perfectly satisfied. Every vessel that is cast into this ocean of happiness is full, though there are some vessels far larger than others; and there shall be no such thing as envy in heaven, but perfect love shall reign through the whole society. Those who are not so high in glory as others, will not envy those that are higher, but they will have so great, and strong, and pure love to them, that they will rejoice in their superior happiness; their love to them will be such that they will rejoice that they are happier than themselves; so that instead of having a damp to their own happiness, it will add to it. They will see it to be fit that they that have been most eminent in works of righteousness should be most highly exalted in glory; and they will rejoice in having that done, that is fittest to be done. There will be a perfect harmony in that society; those that are most happy will also be most holy, and all will be both perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But yet there will be different degrees of both holiness and happiness according to the measure of each one's capacity, and therefore those that are lowest in glory will have the greatest love to those that are highest in happiness, because they will see most of the image of God in them; and having the greatest love to them, they will rejoice to see them the most happy and the highest in glory. And so, on the other hand, those that are highest in glory, as they will be the most lovely, so they will be fullest of love: as they will excel in happiness, they will proportionally excel in divine benevolence and love to others, and will have more love to God and to the saints than those that are lower in holiness and happiness. And besides, those that will excel in glory will also excel in humility. Here in this world, those that are above others are the objects of envy, because that others conceive of them as being lifted up with it; but in heaven it will not be so, but those saints in heaven who excel in happiness will also in holiness, and consequently

in humility. The saints in heaven are more humble than the saints on earth, and still the higher we go among them the greater humility there is; the highest orders of saints, who know most of God, see most of the distinction between God and them, and consequently are comparatively least in their own eyes, and so are most humble. The exaltation of some in heaven above the rest will be so far from diminishing the perfect happiness and joy of the rest who are inferior, that they will be the happier for it; such will be the union in their society that they will be partakers of each other's happiness. Then will be fulfilled in its perfection that which is declared in 1 Cor. xii. 22. "If one of the members be honoured all the members rejoice with it."

This happiness of the saints shall never have any interruption. There will never be any alloy to it; there never will come any cloud to obscure their light; there never will be anything to cool their love. The rivers of pleasure will not fail, the glory and love of God and of Christ will for ever be the same, and the manifestation of it will have no interruption. No sin or corruption shall ever enter there, no temptation to disturb their blessedness: the divine love in the saints shall never cool, there shall be no inconsistency in any of them, the faculties of the saints shall never flag from exercise; and they will never be cloyed, their relish for those delights will for ever be kept up to its height, that glorious society shall not grow weary of their hallelujahs. Their exercises, though they are so active and vigorous, will be performed with perfect ease; the saints shall not be weary of loving, and praising, and fearing, as the sun is never weary of shining.

5. And to sum up this whole description, there shall never be any end to their glory and blessedness. Therefore is it so often called eternal life, and everlasting life. We are told that at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall enter into life eternal. Matt. xxv. 46. The pleasures which there are at God's right hand, are said to be for evermore; Psal. xvi. 11. And that this is not merely a long duration, but an absolute eternity, is evident from that which Christ has said, that those who believe on him shall not die. John vi. 50. Rev. xxii. 5. In the description of the new Jerusalem it is said, "And they shall reign for ever and ever." The eternity of this blessedness shall crown all. If the saints knew that there would be an end to their happiness, though at never so great a distance, yet it would be a great damp to their joy. The greater the happiness is, so much the more uncomfortable would the thoughts of an end be, and so

much the more joyful will it be to think that there will be no end. The saints will surely know that there will be no more danger of their happiness coming to an end, than there will be that the being of God will come to an end. As God is eternal, so their happiness is eternal; as long as the fountain lasts, they need not fear but they shall be supplied.

Application

1. Hence we learn how great a mercy conversion is, because it confers upon him who is exposed to eternal misery a right to all this blessedness. Man, as he is naturally, is very far from this blessedness; we came into the world wretched, miserable, undone creatures, in cruel bondage to sin and Satan, under guilt and under wrath, and at enmity against God, the fountain of blessedness, and in a state of condemnation to everlasting destruction. But when a man is converted there is a great change made in his state; he is that day passed from death to life, he is brought out of that state of woe and misery into a sure title to glory, honour, and peace for ever. When once a man is converted all this blessedness that we have heard of is his, he has an absolute right to it, God's word is passed for it, his faithful promise is given. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that promise of God shall not fail, but shall be fulfilled: their witness is in heaven, and their record on high. On that day in which a man is converted he enters into a blessed state, he is sure to be a blessed person as long as he lives; and he has a right to all that blessedness we have heard of, at death, and in a state of separation, and at the day of judgment, and to that glory which the saints have in their state of consummate glory and blessedness. This teaches how great and how blessed a change conversion is in its consequences, and what cause have they who have good ground to think that they have been the subjects of it, to bless, and praise, and extol the name of God, when they consider what a situation they were once in, and what a happy state they are now in; for the bringing them out of that miserable state into so glorious a state is owing only to free and sovereign grace. 1 Cor. iv. 7. "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"

2. Hence we may learn the folly of those that are cold and slack in seeking salvation, seeing that the glory and happiness of those who are saved is so exceedingly great. How

unreasonable is it to expect to obtain that which is so great without effort! Men will seek worldly riches and honours that are worth so little, and cannot make them happy, and will soon vanish away, with great and indefatigable labour and diligence; and shall men expect to obtain such eternal glory and blessedness in a slack and cold way of seeking it? How unlike the nature and importance of this blessedness do men treat it that seek it in a cold and careless manner! and can it be expected that God will also treat it so unlike its value, as to bestow it upon such seekers?

3. Hence we may solve the difficulty of some Christians meeting with so much affliction and darkness in the world. Some godly persons are the subjects of very great outward afflictions, and some are the subjects of great spiritual darkness; some truly godly persons spend great part of their lives in the dark, in exercising doubts, and anxious thoughts, and distressing fears. And oftentimes God's people make this an argument against themselves. They argue that if God loved them, and had made them his children, he would never leave them in such darkness and distress, he would give them more of the light of his countenance. They are ready to say with themselves, if God loves me, why does he not give me more comfort, why does he see me in such darkness, and does not comfort me? But what we have heard may solve all the difficulty. If their happiness throughout all eternity be so great, of how little consequence is it what may be their condition for that short moment they continue in this world! What if they are in the dark, what if they walk in darkness and are exercised with great trouble! how little difference will it make, though it be cast into the scales, when weighed against that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! It will prove lighter than vanity. If God gives eternal happiness to them, that is evident proof of his love, and all the darkness and sorrow they can meet with in this world are not worthy to be mentioned. All this darkness, how long so ever continued, if we compare it with future glory, vanishes into nothing.

4. This subject furnishes solid ground of consolation to the righteous. What can be matter of greater joy and comfort to any person, than to consider that he is entitled to such eternal blessedness?

Here is sufficient consolation under all adversity; whatever changes we meet with in the world, this may be matter of abundant comfort under the greatest and heaviest trials. In these things a Christian may well rejoice, though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there

should be no fruit in the vine. Having this firm support and consolation, a Christian will not fear though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Let these things, therefore, comfort thee, who fearest and lovest God and trustest in Christ. What a glorious hope, and incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading inheritance, are reserved in heaven for thee! Hence I would answer an objection or two, that unbelief in the saint may be ready to make against what has been said.

1. Some may be ready to say, this glory and blessedness are so great and wonderful that it seems too great to be given to such creatures as men are; it seems almost incredible that God should so exalt and advance worms of the dust.

Answer. The death and sufferings of Christ made everything credible that belongs to this blessedness. If God has not thought his own Son too much for us, what will he think too much for us? If God did not spare him, but gave him even to be made a reproach, and a curse, and a victim to death for us, no blessedness, however great, can be incredible which is the fruit of this. Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!" If God would so contrive to show his love in the manner and means of procuring our happiness, nothing can be incredible in the degree of the happiness itself: if nothing be too much to be given to man, and to be done for man in the manner of procuring his happiness, nothing will be too much to be given to him as the happiness procured, and no degree of happiness too great for him to enjoy. If all that God does about it be consistent, his infinite wisdom will also work to make their happiness and glory great in the degree of it.

2. Some Christians may still be ready to object. It is not too great to be bestowed on others, yet it seems to me too great to be bestowed on such an unworthy creature as I; it seems incredible that God should ever give such glory to such an one as I am, that am so mean, and so worthless, and vile. I not only was once unworthy, but I am so unworthy still, I am so blind, I have so much sin, and so little goodness, I commit so much sin, and do so little good, that it appears incredible that I should have a title to such blessedness. I can far more easily think that others will possess it than myself.

Answer. It is no way incredible that infinite grace should bestow it on the meanest and unworthiest. God's design is to glorify his free grace, and this is one way by which free grace

is glorified, viz. by bestowing such great blessedness on the most unworthy. This is of a piece with the rest. Everything in the work of redemption is wonderful, and therefore one of the names by which Christ is called, is Wonderful. As grace is wonderful in the means of procurement, viz. giving Christ to die, and wonderful in the degree of happiness procured; so it is wonderful with respect to the subjects of it, that they are in themselves so mean and unworthy.

5. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to natural men, earnestly to seek this blessedness. And here you may well consider,

1. How poor you are who have no heaven but this world! In this exceeding and eternal glory of which you have heard, you have no lot or portion; you have nothing but a little part of this clod of earth; and what is all that you have worth? If you have a little more land than some of your neighbours, or if you are in a way to make more money than others, if your accommodations are better than others, and you have more worldly conveniences and pleasures than others, or if you are promoted a little higher among men than some others are, what a poor portion is this; and how miserable are you who have no better happiness that you can call your own! How happy do these things make you, what great satisfaction do they yield to you! Are such things as these the rivers of pleasure that you choose for your portion? O, how miserable are you that have your portion in this life! When a few days are passed you must go to the grave and into eternity, and then your glory shall not descend after you; and how wretched are they of whom it may be said, when they have done with worldly enjoyments, that they have received their consolation! Luke vi. 24.

2. To what misery are you exposed! You not only have no lot in this happiness and glory, but you are hanging over endless misery, and are in danger every day of being irrecoverably lost.

3. You have now an opportunity to obtain this blessedness. It is true that now you are exposed to this misery, but yet this glory is offered to you; the time is not past wherein the offer is made; you have yet an opportunity to be made happy for ever. The opportunity you now have to obtain the happiness of another world, is worth ten thousands of this world.

But here I would say something by way of direction in answer to this.

What must I be brought to in order to get to heaven?

Answer. 1. You must be brought entirely to renounce all hope of obtaining heaven by anything that you can do by your own strength, that you cannot do it either directly or indirectly. Many are sensible that they cannot get to heaven by their own strength directly, but yet they hope to do it indirectly; they hope by their own strength to bring themselves to a disposition to close with Christ, and accept of him for a Saviour; they are hoping to bring themselves to a compliance with the terms of salvation. You must be brought off from all confiding in your own strength; and you must also be brought to renounce your own righteousness as the price of heaven. The consideration of what has been said of the glory and happiness of the saints, may show us the exceeding folly of those that think to purchase so great happiness by their own righteousness. What a vain thought have men of their performances to think them a sufficient price to offer to God to purchase such glory of him! How would God dishonour himself, and dishonour such riches of his own goodness, if he should bestow them on men for their righteousness, and should accept their miserable performances as the price of them!

2. Your heart must be brought to close with him who has purchased heaven. Renouncing all other ways, your heart must entirely close with him, and adhere to him, as the way, the truth, and the life. Your heart must be drawn to him, and it must be pleasing and sweet to you to have heaven as a free gift, as the fruit of mercy and saving grace, and you must assuredly believe that Christ is a sufficient Saviour, and your soul must acquiesce in the way of salvation by him, by his blood and his righteousness, as a wise, holy, sufficient, and excellent way. Your heart must incline to Jesus Christ as a Saviour above your own righteousness and all other ways. Your delight must be in this holy way of salvation.

3. You must choose the God of heaven for your portion. You must be of the same temper and disposition with the psalmist, who says, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth whom I desire beside thee." You must esteem and relish the enjoyment of him far above all other things. You must be brought to see that there is that in the enjoyment of God and communion with him that is far better than all the profits or pleasures of the world. It must be so with you, that if you could have your choice of all kinds of happiness you could devise, and have which you would, and in what degree you would, to all eternity, this would be what you would far prefer.

4. Your heart must be brought sincerely to close with the employments of heaven. In heaven they are not idle, but they are continually employed, and their employments are holy employments; they spend their time wholly in holy exercises; in contemplating on God, in praising and serving him. Rev. xxii. 3. "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." If ever you go to heaven, your heart must be brought beforehand to such a temper as freely to choose such employments, you must have a relish of them, and must account them excellent and delightful employments.

5. You must be pure in heart, and clean in hands. The pure in heart alone shall see God. Matt. v. 8. They that shall ascend into God's holy hill are those that are of pure hearts and clean bands. Psal. xxiv. 4. You must hate and abhor all sin, and allow none in your life. Sin must become to you a great burden. You must loathe yourself for it, and fight and strive against it, to purge yourself more and more from it; striving more and more to mortify sin, earnestly desiring and seeking; to be more holy, more conformed to the will of God, and to walk more becoming a Christian.

6. You must be brought to sell all for heaven. Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46. Heaven must be to you like the treasure hid in a field; or like the pearl of great price. If you would have heaven, you must take it as your whole portion; you must in your heart part with all other things for it, and it must be your manner actually to part with them whenever they stand in the way of your getting forward towards heaven. If you would have heaven, you must sell your worldly profit and your credit, and the good will of your neighbours, and your worldly pleasures and conveniences, and whatever stands in your way. Many flatter themselves that they shall obtain heaven without this, and think they have a right to heaven, though they were never brought to this, but they are sure to find themselves disappointed.

7. You must never expect to go to heaven in any other than a strait and narrow way. Some expect to get to heaven who are not walking in a narrow way. The way they are walking in is a way of indulging their ease, and of shifting off the hard and difficult parts of religion. It is not the way of self-denial, and toil, and laboriousness, but they walk in a broad way, a way wherein they are not pinched, but can go on without labour, or watchfulness, or bearing the cross. But such as these, let their hopes be what they may, and their profession what it may, and their pretences to experiences what they may, are not like to get to heaven. To some,

the way that the Scripture has laid out is too narrow and strait; therefore they are endeavouring to get to heaven in a broad way; but it is in vain for you to contrive this. If you can find out any way of getting to heaven that is not a strait and narrow way, it will be a way that you are the first inventor of. If you go thither, you must go in the way of the footsteps of the flock. If you would go to heaven, you must be content to go there in the way of self-denial and sufferings, you must be willing to take up the cross daily and follow Christ, and through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

6. This subject furnishes ground of solemn exhortation to the godly, to strive earnestly after holiness of life. What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, who have received such infinite mercy of God, and entertain such glorious hopes; seeing God has admitted you to such happiness, earnestly labour that you may walk in some measure answerably; seeing God has admitted you to the happiness of children, walk as children. Eph. v. 1. Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children; imitate your heavenly Father; be ye holy, for he is holy. Seeing that you are admitted to the blessedness of disciples and friends of Jesus, walk as the friends of Christ; imitate your glorious Lord and Head. Here consider several things: particularly,

1. What great love God hath bestowed upon you in choosing you to such unspeakable blessedness before the foundation of the world. How wonderful was the love of God in giving his Son to purchase this blessedness for you, and how wonderful was the love of the Son of God in shedding his own blood to purchase such glory for you! how ought you therefore to live to God's glory! Let me therefore beseech, by those great mercies of God, that you give yourself up a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Give the utmost diligence that you may keep all the commandments of God: study that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; study that in all things you may be found approved: seeing God hath so loved you, strive earnestly that you may bring forth the fruits of the love of God; and seeing Christ hath so loved you, see that you love one another; let love be without dissimulation; be ye kindly affectioned one with another with brotherly love; be of the same mind one towards another, in honour preferring one another; have fervent charity among yourselves. Seeing God hath mercy on you, be ye merciful as your Father which is in heaven is merciful. Look not everyone on his

own things; be pitiful, be courteous; be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another. Christ hath thus loved you while an enemy; therefore recompense to no man evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing; do good to them that do evil to you. Such things as these become those that are the heirs of the glory that we have heard of.

2. Consider how much above the world that blessedness is which God has given; how therefore ought you to live above the world. God has redeemed you out of the world, and therefore do not live as though you had your portion in this life. Live as pilgrims and strangers; as those that are not at home; as fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. How dishonourable will it be to you that God had so advanced and entitled you to such glory, to set your heart upon the dust of the earth; how you dishonour the grace of God in giving you such blessedness; and how will you dishonour the blessedness that God has given, no more to set your heart on it, and to set it so much on the world!

3. Consider what a vast difference has God made between you and other men, how vastly different is your relative state from theirs, how much more has God done for you than for them. Seek therefore those things which are above, where God is. Will it not be a shame if one that is entitled to such glory conducts no better than a child of the devil? Consider it seriously; and let it not be asked with reference to you, Matt. v. 47. What do ye more than others? Other men love those that love them; other men do good to those that do good to them: walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; and let it appear that you are of a spirit more excellent than your neighbour; manifest more love, and more meekness, and more humility, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering. Put ye on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another; and let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Seeing God has given you so much, God and men may well expect of you, that you should be greatly distinguished in your life from other men.