

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 181

## HEAVEN

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*“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”*

Psalms 16:11

*“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”*

Psalms 17:15

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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## HEAVEN

# 181

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# THE GLORY TO COME

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

*The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.—Psalm 112:6*

**N**OT only a man's true life, but a man's true history begins with his conversion. Up till that time, he is a being without a history. He has no story to tell. He is but part of a world lying in wickedness, having nothing about him worthy of a record.

## I. GAINING A HISTORY

But from the moment that he is born again and thus taken out of the mass, he receives a *personality*, as well as a dignity, that fits him for having a history—a history that God can own as such and that God Himself will record. From that time, he has a story to tell, wondrous and divine, such as angels listen to, and over which there is joy in heaven.

In that broad ocean, there are millions of drops—yet they are one mingled mass of fluid; no one of them has a history. There may be a history of the ocean, but not of its individual drops. But, see, your drop is beginning to part from the mass. It takes hold of a sunbeam and rises into the firmament.<sup>1</sup> There it gleams in the rainbow or brightens in the hues of sunset. It has now a history. From the moment that it came out of the mass and obtained a personality, it had a story to tell, a story of its own, a story of splendour and beauty.

Such is the case of a saint. From the moment that the hand of the Spirit is laid on him to begin the process of separation, from that moment his history begins. He then receives a conscious, outstanding personality, which fits him for having a history—a history entirely marvelous, a history whose pages are both written and read in heaven, a history that in its divine brightness spreads over eternity. His true dignity now commences. He is fit to take a place in history. Each event in his life becomes worthy of a record.

On earth, this history is one of suffering and dishonour, even as was that of the Master; but hereafter, in the kingdom, it is one of glory and honour. "All the time," says Howe,<sup>2</sup> "from the soul's first conversion, God has been at work upon it, labouring, shaping it, polishing it, spreading His own glory on it, inlaying, enamelling it with glory. Now at last the whole work is revealed, the curtain is drawn aside, and the blessed soul awakes." Then a new epoch in its history begins.

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<sup>1</sup> **firmament** – sky; the earth's atmosphere.

<sup>2</sup> **John Howe** (1630-1705) – non-Conformist Puritan author and preacher; chaplain to Oliver Cromwell; born in Loughborough, England.

What that history is to be, we know not now. That it will be wondrous, we know; how wondrous we cannot conceive. That it will be very unlike our present one, we know—yet still not severed from it, but linked to it, nay, springing out of it as its root or seed. Our present life is the under-ground state of the plant; our future life, the shooting, blossoming, and fruitbearing; but the plant is the same, and the future depends for all its excellency and beauty upon the present.

## II. GLORY

### A. Defined

If life on earth, in all its various forms and unfoldings, be so very beautiful, what will it not be hereafter, when it unfolds itself to the full, transfused throughout all being with an intensity now unknown, as if almost becoming visible by means of the new glory that it then shall spread over all creation? “The wise shall inherit *glory*” (Pro 3:35). “Let the saints be joyful in *glory*” (Psa 149:5). They are “vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto *glory*” (Rom 9:23). That to which we are called is “eternal *glory*” (1Pe 5:10). That which we obtain is “salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal *glory*” (2Ti 2:10). It is to *glory* that God is “bringing many sons” (Heb 2:10); so that as He, through Whom we are brought to it, is “crowned with *glory* and honour,” so shall we be (Heb 2:9). We are to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of *glory*” (1Pe 1:8). We are not only “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, [but] also a partaker of the *glory* that shall be revealed” (1Pe 5:1). So that the word of exhortation runs thus: “Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his *glory* shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1Pe 4:13). And the promise is not only, “if we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2Ti 2:12); but, “if we suffer with him...we may be also *glorified* together” (Rom 8:17).

This glory, then, is our portion. It is the “better thing” that God has provided for us, and because of which He is not ashamed to be called our God. This is the glory that throws all present suffering into the shade, making it to be eternally forgotten.

Glory is the concentrated essence of all that is holy, excellent, and beautiful. All being has its more and its less perfect parts; and its glory is that which is most perfect about it—to which, of course, that which is less perfect has, according to its measure, contributed. Light is the glory of the sun. Transparency is the glory of the stream. The flower is the glory of the plant. The soul is the glory of the man. The face is the glory of the body. And this glory is strangely manifold:<sup>3</sup> “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory” (1Co 15:41).

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<sup>3</sup> **manifold** – of many kinds; numerous and varied.

What is really glorious is so hidden, so blighted, so intermixed with deformity and corruption here, that Scripture always speaks as if the whole glory were yet in reserve, none of it yet revealed—so that when He came to earth Who was “the brightness of LORD’s glory” (Eze 10:4; Heb 1:3), He was not recognized as the possessor of such glory; it was hidden, it shone not. Few eyes saw any glory at all in Him; none saw the extent or greatness of it. Even in His case, it did not appear what He was, nor what He shall be when He comes “to be glorified in his saints” (2Th 1:10).

## B. From God

All that is glorious, whether visible or invisible, material or immaterial, natural or spiritual, must have its birth-place in God. “Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be *glory* for ever” (Rom 11:36). All glorious things come forth out of Him, and have their seeds, gems, or patterns in Himself. We say of that flower, “How beautiful!”; but the type of its beauty—the beauty of which it is the faint expression—is in God. We say of the star, “How bright!”; but the brightness that it represents or declares is in God. So of every object above and beneath. And so especially shall it be seen in the objects of glory that shall surround us in the kingdom of God. Of each thing there, as of the city itself, it shall be said, “it has the glory of God” (Rev 21:11).

Glory, then, is our inheritance. The best, the richest, the brightest, the most beautiful of all that is in God—of good, rich, bright, and beautiful—shall be ours. The glory that fills heaven above, the glory that spreads over the earth beneath, shall be ours. But while the glory of the *terrestrial* shall be ours, yet in a truer sense “the glory of the *celestial*” shall be ours (1Co 15:40). Already by faith we have taken our place amid things celestial: God “hath quickened<sup>4</sup> us together with Christ...and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in *heavenly* places” (Eph 2:5-6). Thus we have already claimed the celestial as our own; and having risen with Christ, we set our “affection upon things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). Far-ranging dominion shall be ours. With all varying shades and kinds of glory shall we be encompassed, circle beyond circle stretching over the universe. But it is the *celestial* glory that is so truly ours, as the redeemed and the risen; and in the midst of that celestial glory shall be the family mansion, the Church’s dwelling-place and palace—our true home for eternity.

## III. HEAVEN

All that awaits us is glorious. There is...“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1Pe 1:4). There is a rest, a sabbath-keeping in store for us (Heb 4:9); and this “rest shall be glorious” (Isa 11:10). The kingdom that we claim is a glorious kingdom. The crown that we are to

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<sup>4</sup> **quickened** – made alive by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, called the “new birth.”

wear is a glorious crown. The city of our habitation is a glorious city. The garments that shall clothe us are garments “for glory and for beauty” (Exo 28:2). Our bodies shall be glorious bodies, fashioned after the likeness of Christ’s “glorious body” (Phi 3:21). Our society shall be that of the glorified. Our songs shall be songs of glory. And of the region which we are to inhabit, it is said that “the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev 21:23).

The hope of this glory cheers us. From under a canopy of night, we look out upon these promised scenes of blessedness and we are comforted. Our dark thoughts are softened down even when they are not wholly brightened—for day is near and joy is near, the warfare is ending, the tear shall be dried up, and the shame [shall] be lost in the glory. We shall be presented “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

Then the fruit of patience and of faith shall appear, and the hope we have so long been clinging to shall not put us to shame. Then shall we triumph and praise. Then shall we be avenged on death, pain, and sickness. Then shall every wound be more than healed. Egypt enslaves us no more. Babylon leads us captive no more. The Red Sea is crossed, the wilderness is passed, Jordan lies behind us, and we are in Jerusalem! There is no more curse; there is no more night. The tabernacle of God is with us; in that tabernacle He dwells, and we dwell with Him.

It is “the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal *glory* by Christ Jesus” (1Pe 5:10). It is “when the chief Shepherd shall appear,” that we “shall receive a crown of *glory* that fadeth not away” (1Pe 5:4). And this after we “have suffered a while,” and by suffering have been made perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled (1Pe 5:10)—so that suffering is not lost upon us: it prepares us for the glory. And the hope of that glory, as well as the knowledge of the discipline through which we are passing, and of the process of preparation going on in us, sustains us; nay, teaches us to “glory in tribulation.”

This comfort—nay, it is happiness—[is] strange in the world’s eye, but not strange in ours! All that the world has is but a poor imitation of happiness and consolation; ours is real, even now—how much more hereafter! Nor will a brief delay and a sore conflict lessen the weight of coming glory. Nay, they will add to it; and it is worth waiting for, it is worth suffering for, it is worth fighting for. It is so sure of coming, and so blessed when it comes.

“The mass of glory,” says Howe, “is yet in reserve; we are not yet so high as the highest heavens.” All this is hanging over us, inviting us on, stirring us up, loosening us from things present, so that the pain of loss, sickness, or bereavement falls more gently on us, and tends but to make us less vain and light—more thoroughly in earnest.

#### IV. THE GLORY OF CHRIST

“That they may behold *my glory*,” the Lord pleaded for His own (Joh 17:24). This is the sum of all. Other glories there will be, as we have seen, but this is the sum of all. It is the very utmost that even “the Lord of glory” could ask for them. Having sought this, He could seek no more; He could go no further. And our response to this is, “Shew me thy glory” (Exo 33:18); yes, and the glad confidence in which we rest is this, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). This is our ambition, divine and blessed ambition, in which there is no pride, no presumption, and no excess! Nothing less can satisfy than the directest, fullest vision of incarnate glory. Self-emptied before the Infinite Majesty, and conscious of being wholly unworthy even of a servant’s place, we yet feel as if drawn irresistibly into the innermost circle and center, satisfied with nothing less than the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

“The glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (Joh 17:22). No less than this—both in kind and amount—is the glory in reserve according to the promise of the Lord. The glory given to Him, He makes over to them! They “are made partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14), and all that He has is theirs. Nay, and He says, “I *have* given”; as if it were already theirs by His gift, just as truly as it was His by the Father’s gift. He receives it from the Father only for the purpose of immediately<sup>5</sup> handing it over to them! So that even here they can say, This glory is already mine, and I must live as one to whom such infinite glory belongs. “Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [they] are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2Co 3:18). To fret or despond is sad inconsistency in one who can say, even under sorest pressures, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom 8:18). Look at them by themselves, and they do seem at times most overwhelming; place them side by side with the eternal glory, and they disappear.

From *The Morning of Joy*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**Horatius Bonar (1808-1889):** Scottish Presbyterian minister and prolific author of tracts, books, and hymns. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland.




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<sup>5</sup> **immediately** – directly; without anything in between.

# HEAVEN, A WORLD OF LOVE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—1 Corinthians 13:8-10*

**T**HE apostle speaks in the text of a state of the Church when it is perfect in heaven, and therefore a state in which the Holy Spirit shall be more perfectly and abundantly given to the Church than it is now on earth. But the way in which it shall be given when it is so abundantly poured forth, will be in that great fruit of the Spirit: holy and divine love in the hearts of all the blessed inhabitants of that world. So that the heavenly state of the Church is a state that is distinguished from its earthly state, as it is that state which God has designed especially for such a communication of His Holy Spirit, and in which it shall be given perfectly—whereas, in the present state of the Church, it is given with great imperfection. And it is also a state in which this holy love shall be, as it were, the only gift or fruit of the Spirit, as being the most perfect and glorious of all, and which, being brought to perfection, renders all other gifts that God was wont to bestow on His Church on earth, needless. And that we may the better see how heaven is thus a world of holy love, I would consider,

## I. THE CAUSE AND FOUNTAIN OF LOVE IN HEAVEN

Here I remark that the God of love Himself dwells in heaven. Heaven is the palace or presence-chamber of the high and holy One, Whose name is love, and Who is both the cause and source of all holy love. God, considered with respect to His essence, is everywhere—He fills both heaven and earth. But yet He is said, in some respects, to be more especially in some places than in others. He was said of old to dwell in the land of Israel, above all other lands; and in Jerusalem, above all other cities of that land; and in the Temple, above all other buildings in the city; and in the Holy of Holies, above all other apartments of the Temple; and on the mercy seat, over the Ark of the Covenant, above all other places in the Holy of Holies. But heaven is His dwelling-place above all other places in the universe; and all those places in which He was said to dwell of old, were but types<sup>1</sup> of this. Heaven is a part of creation that God has built for this end, to be the place of His glorious presence, and

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<sup>1</sup> types – symbols representing other things with similar characteristics.



it is His abode forever. Here will He dwell and gloriously manifest Himself to all eternity.

This renders heaven a world of love, for God is the fountain of love, as the sun is the fountain of light. And therefore the glorious presence of God in heaven fills heaven with love, as the sun, placed in the midst of the visible heavens in a clear day, fills the world with light. The apostle tells us that “God is love” (1Jo 4:16); and therefore, seeing He is an *infinite* being, it follows that He is an infinite fountain of love. Seeing He is an *all-sufficient* being, it follows that He is a full and over-flowing, an inexhaustible fountain of love. And in that He is an *unchangeable* and *eternal* being, He is an unchangeable and eternal fountain of love.

There, even in heaven, dwells the God from Whom every stream of holy love, yea, every drop that is, or ever was, proceeds. There dwells God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit, united as one in infinitely dear, incomprehensible, mutual, and eternal love. There dwells God the Father, Who is the Father of mercies, and so the Father of love, Who so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son to die for it (Joh 3:16). There dwells Christ, the Lamb of God, the Prince of peace and of love, Who so loved the world that He shed His blood and poured out His soul unto death for men...There dwells Christ in both His natures, the human and the divine, sitting on the same throne with the Father. And there dwells the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of divine love, in Whom the very essence of God, as it were, flows out and is breathed forth in love, and by whose immediate influence all holy love is shed abroad in the hearts of all the saints on earth and in heaven.

There, in heaven, this infinite fountain of love, this eternal Three in One, is set open without any obstacle to hinder access to it as it flows forever. There this glorious God is manifested and shines forth in full glory, in beams of love. And there this glorious fountain forever flows forth in streams, yea, in rivers of love and delight. These rivers swell, as it were, to an ocean of love, in which the souls of the ransomed may bathe with the sweetest enjoyment, and their hearts, as it were, be deluged with love!

## II. THE OBJECTS OF LOVE IN HEAVEN

Again, I would consider heaven with regard to the objects of love that it contains. Here I would observe three things.

**1. *There are none but lovely objects in heaven.*** No odious, unlovely, or polluted person or thing is to be seen there. There is nothing there that is wicked or unholy. “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination” (Rev 21:27). And there is nothing that is deformed with any natural or moral deformity; but everything is beautiful to behold, and amiable and excellent in itself. The God that dwells and gloriously manifests Himself there, is infinitely lovely—gloriously lovely, as a heavenly Father, as a divine Redeemer, and as a holy Sanctifier.

All the persons that belong to the blessed society of heaven are lovely. The Father of the family is lovely, and so are all His children; the Head of the body lovely, and so are all the members. Among the angels, there are none that are unlovely, for they are all holy. No evil angels are suffered to infest heaven as they do this world, but they are kept forever at a distance by that great gulf which is between them and the glorious world of love. And among all the company of the saints, there are no unlovely persons. There are no false professors or hypocrites there; none that pretend to be saints, and yet are of an unchristian and hateful spirit or behavior, as is often the case in this world; none whose gold has not been purified from its dross; none who are not lovely in themselves and to others. There is no one object there to give offense, or at any time to give occasion for any passion or emotion of hatred or dislike, but every object there shall forever draw forth love. And not only shall all objects in heaven be lovely, but,

**2. They shall be perfectly lovely.** There are many things in this world that in the general are lovely, but yet are not perfectly free from that which is the contrary. There are spots on the sun; and so there are many men that are most amiable and worthy to be loved, who yet are not without some things that are disagreeable and unlovely. Often there is in good men some defect of temper, character, or conduct, that mars the excellence of what otherwise would seem most amiable. Even the very best of men are, on earth, imperfect.

But it is not so in heaven. There shall be no pollution, or deformity, or unamiable defect of any kind seen in any person or thing; but everyone shall be perfectly pure and perfectly lovely in heaven. That blessed world shall be perfectly bright, without any darkness; perfectly fair, without any spot; perfectly clear, without any cloud. No moral or natural defect shall ever enter there. There nothing will be seen that is sinful, weak, or foolish; nothing, the nature or aspect of which is coarse or displeasing, or that can offend the most refined taste or the most delicate eye. No string shall there vibrate out of tune to cause any jar in the harmony of the music of heaven; and no note be such as to make discord in the anthems of saints and angels.

The great God, Who so fully manifests Himself there, is perfect with an absolute and infinite perfection. The Son of God, Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, appears there in the fullness of His glory, without that garb of outward meanness<sup>2</sup> in which He appeared in this world. The Holy Ghost shall there be poured forth with perfect richness and sweetness, as a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. And every member of that holy and blessed society shall be without any stain of sin, imperfection, weakness, imprudence, or blemish of any kind. The whole Church, ransomed and purified, shall there be presented to

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<sup>2</sup> **meanness** – that which is common; that which is considered “normal” among men.

Christ as a bride, clothed in fine linen, clean and white, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

**3. *In heaven there shall be all those objects*** that the saints have set their hearts upon, and which they have loved above all things while in this world. There they will find those things that appeared most lovely to them while they dwelt on earth, the things that met the approbation<sup>3</sup> of their judgments, captivated their affections, and drew away their souls from the most dear and pleasant of earthly objects. There they will find those things that were their delight here below, on which they rejoiced to meditate, and with the sweet contemplation of which their minds were often entertained. And there, too, [will be] the things which they chose for their portion, and which were so dear to them that they were ready for the sake of them to undergo the severest sufferings—and to forsake even father, mother, kindred, friends, wife, children, and life itself (Luk 14:26, 33).

All the truly great and good, all the pure, holy, and excellent from this world and, it may be, from every part of the universe, are constantly tending toward heaven. As the streams tend to the ocean, so all these are tending to the great ocean of infinite purity and bliss. The progress of time does but bear them on to its blessedness; and us, if we are holy, to be united to them there. Every gem that death rudely tears away from us here is a glorious jewel forever shining there; every Christian friend who goes before us from this world is a ransomed spirit waiting to welcome us in heaven. There will be the infant of days that we have lost below, through grace to be found above; there the Christian father, mother, wife, child, and friend, with whom we shall renew the holy fellowship of the saints, which was interrupted by death here, but shall be commenced again in the upper sanctuary, and then shall never end. There we shall have company with the patriarchs, fathers, and saints of the Old and New Testaments—and those of whom the world was not worthy, with whom on earth we were only conversant by faith. And there, above all, we shall enjoy and dwell with God the Father, Whom we have loved with all our hearts on earth; and with Jesus Christ, our beloved Savior, Who has always been to us the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely; and with the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter—and [we] shall be filled with all the fullness of the Godhead forever!

### III. THE SUBJECTS OF LOVE IN HEAVEN

And such being the objects of love in heaven, I pass to its subjects; and these are the hearts in which it dwells. In every heart in heaven, love dwells and reigns.

The heart of God is the original seat or subject of love. Divine love is in Him, not as in a subject that receives it from another, but as in its original seat, where it is of itself. The love of God the Father flows out toward Christ

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<sup>3</sup> **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

the head, and to all the members through Him, in Whom they were beloved before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), and in Whom the Father's love was expressed toward them in time by His death and sufferings, as it now is fully manifested in heaven.

The saints and angels are secondarily the subjects of holy love, not as those in whom it is as in an original seat, as light is in the sun, but as it is in the planets, which shine only by reflected light. And the light of their love is reflected in the first place, and chiefly, back to its great source. As God has given the saints and angels love, so their love is chiefly exercised towards God its fountain, as is most reasonable. They all love God with a supreme love. There is no enemy of God in heaven; but all, as His children, love Him as their Father. They are all united with one mind, to breathe forth their whole souls in love to God their eternal Father, and to Jesus Christ their common Redeemer, head, and friend.

Christ loves all His saints in heaven. His love flows out to His whole Church there, and to every individual member of it. And they all, with one heart and one soul, unite in love to their common Redeemer. Every heart is wedded to this holy and spiritual husband, and all rejoice in Him, while the angels join them in their love. And the angels and saints all love each other. All the members of the glorious society of heaven are sincerely united. There is not a single secret or open enemy among them all. Not a heart is there that is not full of love, and not a solitary inhabitant that is not beloved by all the others. And as all are lovely, so all see each other's loveliness with full complacence<sup>4</sup> and delight. Every soul goes out in love to every other; and among all the blessed inhabitants, love is mutual, full, and eternal.

From *Charity and Its Fruits*, "Heaven, A World of Charity or Love";  
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** Massachusetts Congregational preacher. Regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening, along with George Whitefield. Author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, and numerous other titles. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



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<sup>4</sup> **complacence** – pleasure; satisfaction.

# THE HOLY OF HOLIES: A TYPE OF HEAVEN

Charles Simeon (1759-1836)

*Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.—Hebrews 9:24*

**I**T appears, at first sight, unworthy of God to appoint with such precision every minute<sup>1</sup> circumstance relating to the Tabernacle and its services. Provided He were worshipped and served, it should seem a matter of no importance whether the place wherein He was worshipped were of such or such an exact form, or whether the ceremonies observed in His worship were exactly of such or such a kind. But God intended to prefigure<sup>2</sup> everything relating to the Messiah and His kingdom; and therefore it was necessary not only that a model of everything should be given to Moses (Heb 8:5), but that these patterns of heavenly things, made by Moses according to that model, should undergo a purification by the blood of carnal<sup>3</sup> sacrifices—so that the heavenly things themselves, which were to be purified by the great Sacrifice, might be the more evidently prefigured (v. 23). These types having been given, Christ accomplished them on earth in part, and is now perfecting the accomplishment of them in heaven—whither He is gone, as the high-priests went into the Holy of Holies,<sup>4</sup> to appear before God on behalf of His people.

## I. THE HOLY OF HOLIES TYPIFIED HEAVEN

It is our intention to shew in what respect heaven was typified by the Holy of Holies. The whole edifice of the Tabernacle or Temple was a figure of Christ's human nature, in which the Godhead dwelt; and of the Church also, in which God resides (Joh 2:19, 21; 1Co 3:16-17). But the Most Holy Place,<sup>5</sup> which is also called "the tabernacle" (v. 3), eminently represented heaven.

1. *It was the immediate residence of the Deity.* The Shechinah, the bright cloud, which was the symbol of the Deity, dwelt between the cherubims upon the mercy-seat; and there God manifested<sup>6</sup> Himself more than in any oth-

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<sup>1</sup> **minute** – small detail.

<sup>2</sup> **prefigure** – picture beforehand.

<sup>3</sup> **carnal** – animal; fleshly.

<sup>4</sup> **Holy of Holies** – inner part of the Tabernacle and Temple, where God dwelt above the mercy seat.

<sup>5</sup> **Most Holy Place** – inner part of the Tabernacle and Temple; the Holy of Holies.

<sup>6</sup> **manifested** – made clear or evident; showed plainly; revealed.

er place on earth (Exo 25:22). Thus also, but in an infinitely brighter manner, does He display His glory in heaven. He is indeed on earth...[but] neither can the heaven of heavens contain Him, for He pervades all space...Though He is on our right hand, we cannot see Him; nor, if we look for Him on the left hand, can He be found by us (Job 23:8-9). But in heaven, He is seen face to face, and all the heavenly hosts behold Him shining forth in all the brightness of His glory.

2. *It was inaccessible, except with the blood of sacrifices.* No person whatever was to enter into the sanctuary except the high-priest; nor could he, except on the great day of annual expiation;<sup>7</sup> nor even then, except with the blood of beasts that had been offered in sacrifice to God (v. 7, “not without blood”). Thus is there no admittance into heaven but through the blood of our great Sacrifice. Not even our great High-priest Himself, when He had become the Surety<sup>8</sup> and Substitute of sinners, could enter there without His own precious blood (v. 12). Heaven itself needed, as it were, to be purified from the defilement it contracted through the admission of sinners into it; even as the sanctuary, with all the vessels of it, were purified from the pollutions they had contracted through the ministrations of sinful man (vv. 21, 23; with Lev 16:16).

3. *It was the repository of all the principal memorials of God’s power and grace.* The apostle<sup>9</sup> enumerates the various things that were deposited in the Holy of Holies (vv. 4-5). The apostle does not say that the censer, or altar of incense, was *in* the Holy of Holies (for it was on the outside of the veil), but that the Holy of Holies *had* it, being of very distinguished use, when the high-priest entered within the veil—all of them either memorials of God’s providential care or exhibitions of His covenant love. And are they not all in heaven, concentrated and combined in the person of Christ? Christ is the true Ark<sup>10</sup> in which the Law is kept and fulfilled; and while He makes intercession for His people, He is also the food<sup>11</sup> of their souls, and the performer of all those miracles of grace that are wrought on their behalf. We cannot behold Him but we must immediately be persuaded, that God is able and willing to accomplish for us all that our necessities may require.

## II. WHY CHRIST ASCENDED TO THE HEAVENLY TABERNACLE

But while we see that the true tabernacle, even heaven itself, was prefigured by the holy places made with hands, let us consider the end for which our Lord ascended thither. Our Lord could not go into the earthly Tabernacle-

<sup>7</sup> **expiation** – “Expiation has reference to the guilt of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

<sup>8</sup> **Surety** – one who assures the fulfillment of something; a guarantor.

<sup>9</sup> The author assumes that the apostle Paul wrote the book of Hebrews.

<sup>10</sup> **Ark** – Ark of the Covenant, in which the tables of the Ten Commandments were kept.

<sup>11</sup> **food** – A jar of manna, the miraculous desert food, was kept in the Ark of the Covenant.

le, because He was not of that tribe to which the priesthood belonged. But into the heavenly sanctuary He went,

1. *As our Forerunner.* God has ordained that all His people should one day dwell with Him around His throne. All true penitents now are priests unto God, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, male or female (Rev 1:6); and Jesus is gone, as He Himself tells us, to prepare a place for them (Joh 14:2-3). He is expressly said to be gone within the veil as our Forerunner (Heb 6:20). Let us, then, contemplate Him in this view; and look forward to the time when we shall follow Him within the veil, and be presented “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

2. *As our Head and Representative.* It was not as an individual merely that Christ ascended into heaven, but as the Head and Representative of His redeemed people. All that He did and suffered was in their place and stead. Hence they are said to be “circumcised in him,” to be “buried with him in baptism,” and to be “crucified with him.” In the same capacity also He went within the veil to appear in the presence of God for us. Hence we are said to be “raised...up together,” yea, to be already sitting with Him “in heavenly places” (Eph 2:6). And on this our hope greatly depends; for, because our “life is hid with Christ in God,” we may be assured that when He shall appear, we also shall “appear with him in glory” (Col 3:3-4).

3. *As our Advocate and High-priest.* It is in this view that the apostle principally speaks of Him in the text. The end for which the high-priest entered into the typical<sup>12</sup> sanctuary, was to present the blood of the sacrifice and to cover the mercy-seat with the clouds of incense. It was precisely thus that Jesus went into the heaven of heavens for us. He is gone to present His own blood before the throne of God, and to plead the merit of that blood on behalf of sinful men. And it is on this very account that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, namely, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb 7:25).

### III. APPLICATIONS OF THIS DOCTRINE

1. *How excellent is the gospel salvation!* The Mosaic economy was excellent in comparison of the state of heathens, because it provided a way of acceptance with God, a way, too, that was of divine appointment. But the gospel points out to us a far greater Priest, officiating in a nobler tabernacle, presenting an infinitely richer sacrifice, and offering a more powerful intercession on our behalf (Heb 9-10). Let us then value this gospel, search into its contents, and seek its blessing with our whole hearts.

2. *What encouragement have all to embrace and to hold fast this gospel!* Were any thing wanting<sup>13</sup> to complete the work of salvation for us, we might well hesitate before we embraced the overtures of the gospel. But a view of

<sup>12</sup> **typical** – representing something else as a symbol with similar characteristics.

<sup>13</sup> **wanting** – lacking.

Christ as our High-priest dissipates our fears, and encourages both the weakest and the vilest to come to God through Him. “If any man sin,” says the apostle, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation<sup>14</sup> for our sins” (1Jo 2:1-2). Again it is said, “Seeing we have a great High-priest, *that is passed into the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb 4:14): and again, “Having...boldness *to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus...and having an high priest over the house of God*; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:19, 21-22). Let us then make this improvement<sup>15</sup> of the subject; so shall we, each in his appointed order, appear before God for ourselves, and dwell in His immediate presence forever and ever.

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**Charles Simeon (1759-1836):** Anglican preacher and writer who had a lasting influence on English evangelical thought. He preached for three purposes: “to humble the sinner, to exalt the Savior, to promote holiness”; born in Reading, England.



Eternal life is imparted by grace through faith. When it first enters the soul, it comes as God’s free gift. The dead cannot earn life; the very supposition is absurd. Eternal life enjoyed on earth comes to us as a gift. “What!” saith one, “do you mean to say that eternal life comes into the soul here?” I say yes, here, or else never. Eternal life must be our possession now; for if we die without it; it will never be our possession in the world to come, which is not the state of probation, but of fixed and settled reward. When the flame of eternal life first drops into a man’s heart, it is not as the result of any good works of his that preceded it, for there were none; nor as the result of any feelings of his, for good feelings were not there till the life came. Both good works and good feelings are the fruit of the heavenly life that enters the heart, and makes us conscious of its entrance by working in us repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. “Eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:23). By faith we come consciously into Christ. We trust Him, we rest upon Him, we become one with Him, and thus eternal life manifests itself. Has He not said, “I give unto them eternal life” (Joh 10:28); and again, “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (Joh 6:47)?—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

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<sup>14</sup> **propitiation** – “Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382)

<sup>15</sup> **improvement** – profitable use.



# THE HEAVEN OF HEAVEN

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*They shall see his face.—Revelations 22:4*

**I**T is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there *see Jesus*. There will be other things to see: who dare despise those foundations of chrysolite, chrysolite and jacinth? Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels, seraphim, and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors, together with those whom we have walked with and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here and dear to us still, “not lost, but gone before.” But still, for all this, the main thought that we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fullness of it when we shall come there, is just this: we shall see Jesus!

We shall care little for any of those imaginary occupations, which have such charms for a certain class of minds that they could even find a heaven in them. I have read fanciful periods in which the writer has found celestial joys to consist in an eternal progress in the knowledge of the laws of God’s universe. Such is not my heaven. Knowledge is not happiness, but on the contrary, is often an increase of sorrow. Knowing, of itself, does not make men happy nor holy. For mere knowing’s sake, I would as soon not know as know, if I had my choice: better to love an ounce than to know a pound; better a little service than much knowledge. I desire to know what God pleases to teach me; but beyond that, even ignorance shall be my bliss. Some have talked of flitting from star to star, seeing the wonders of God throughout the universe—who He rules in this province of His wide domain, [and] how He governs in that other region of His vast dominion. It may be so, but it would be no heaven to me.

## I. WHAT IT IS TO SEE CHRIST

### A. Seeing Christ

So far as I can at present judge, I would rather stop at home and sit at the feet of Christ forever, than roam over the wide creation.

*The spacious earth and spreading flood  
Proclaim the wise and powerful God,  
And Thy rich glories from afar  
Sparkle in every rolling star.*

*Yet in Christ's looks a glory stands,  
The noblest wonder of God's hands;  
He, in the person of His Son,  
Has all His mightiest works outdone.*<sup>1</sup>

If Jesus were not infinite we should not speak so; but since He is in His person divine, and as to His manhood so nearly allied to us that the closest possible sympathy exists between us, there will always be fresh subjects for thought, fresh sources for enjoyment, for those who are taken up with Him. Certainly, brethren and sisters, to no believer would heaven be desirable if Jesus were not there, or, if being there, they could not enjoy the nearest and dearest fellowship with Him. A sight of Him first turned our sorrow into joy; renewed communion with Him lifts us above our present cares, and strengthens us to bear our heavy burdens: what must heavenly communion be? When we have Christ with us, we are content on a crust and satisfied with a cup of water; but if His face be hidden, the whole world cannot afford a solace, we are widowed of our Beloved, our sun has set, our moon is eclipsed, our candle is blown out. Christ is all in all to us here, and therefore we pant and long for a heaven in which He shall be all in all to us forever—and such will the heaven of God be. The paradise of God is not the Elysium<sup>2</sup> of imagination, the Utopia<sup>3</sup> of intellect, or the Eden of poetry; but it is the heaven of intense spiritual fellowship with the Lord Jesus—a place where it is promised to faithful souls that “they shall see his face.”

In the beatific vision, it is Christ Whom they see; and further, it is His face that they behold. They shall not see the skirts of His robe, as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah (Exo 33:22-23); they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of His garment, or to sit far down at His feet where they can only see His sandals, but they “shall see his face.” By [this] I understand two things: first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart, soul, and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before. They shall literally, I say, see His face; for Christ is no phantom; and in heaven, though divine and therefore spiritual, He is still a man, and therefore material like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven; the hand that was pierced with the nail, now, at this moment, grasps the scepter of all worlds; that very head which was bowed down with anguish, is now

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<sup>1</sup> “Now to the Lord a Noble Song,” hymn by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), English non-conformist pastor, essayist, and hymnwriter; born in Southampton, England.

<sup>2</sup> **Elysium** – place or state of ideal happiness; maintained in Greek mythology as the happy place of afterlife.

<sup>3</sup> **Utopia** – place of near perfection, with happiness for all; first created in Sir Thomas More's book *Utopia* (1516), about an ideal society on an imaginary island in the Atlantic Ocean.

crowned with a royal diadem; and the face that was so marred, is the very face that beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven. Into that selfsame countenance we shall be permitted to gaze. O what a sight! Roll by, ye years; hasten on, ye laggard months and days—to let us but for once behold Him, our Beloved, our hearts' care, Who “redeemed us to God by [his] blood” (Rev 5:9), Whose we are, and Whom we love with such a passionate desire, that to be in His embrace we would be satisfied to suffer ten thousand deaths! They shall actually see Jesus.

## **B. Knowing**

Yet the spiritual sight will be sweeter still. I think the text implies that in the next world our powers of mind will be very different from what they are now. We are, the best of us, in our infancy as yet and know but in part; but we shall be men then, we shall “put away childish things” (1Co 13:11). We shall see and know even as we are known; and amongst the great things that we shall know will be this greatest of all: that we shall know Christ—we shall know the heights, depths, lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge (Eph 3:18-19). O how delightful it will be then to understand His everlasting love; how, without beginning or ever the earth was, His thoughts darted forward towards His dear ones, whom He had chosen in the sovereignty of His choice, that they should be His forever (Eph 1:4)!

What a subject for delightful meditation will the covenant be, and Christ's suretyship engagements in that covenant when He undertook to take the debts of all His people upon Himself, to pay them all, and to stand and suffer in their room! And what thoughts shall we have then of our union with Christ—our federal,<sup>4</sup> vital, conjugal oneness! We only talk about these things now, we do not really understand them. We merely plough the surface and gather a topsoil harvest, but a richer subsoil lies beneath. Brethren, in heaven we shall dive into the lowest depths of fellowship with Jesus. We “shall see his face,” that is, we shall see clearly and plainly all that has to do with our Lord (*see* 1Co 13:12); and this shall be the topmost bliss of heaven.

## **C. Always**

In the blessed vision, the saints see Jesus, and they see Him clearly. We may also remark that they see Him *always*; for when the text says “They shall see his face,” it implies that they never at any time are without the sight. Never for a moment do they unlock their arm from the arm of their Beloved. They are not as we are—sometimes near the throne, and anon afar off by backslidings; sometimes hot with love, and then cold with indifference; sometimes bright as seraphs, and then dull as clods—but forever and ever they are in closest association with the Master, for “they shall see his face.”

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<sup>4</sup> **federal** – legally representative.

## D. As He Is

Best of all, they see His face as it is now in all its glory. John tells us what that will be like: In his first chapter [of the Revelation,] he says, “His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow” (v. 14), to mark His antiquity, for He is the Ancient of days. “And his eyes were as a flame of fire...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (v. 14, 16). Such is the vision that the redeemed enjoy before the throne: their Lord is all brightness, and in Him there is nothing to weep over, nothing to mar His glory.

Traces there doubtless are upon that wondrous face of all the griefs He once endured, but these only make Him more glorious. He looks like a lamb that has been slain and wears His priesthood still; but all that has to do with the shame and the spitting and slaughter, has been so transformed that the sight is all blissful, all comforting, all glorious—in His face there is nothing to excite a tear or to beget a sigh. I wish my lips were unloosed and my thoughts were free, that I could tell you something more of this sight, but indeed it is not given unto mortal tongues to talk of these things. And I suppose that if we were caught up to see His face and should come back again, yet should we have to say, like Paul, that we had heard and seen that which it was not lawful for us to utter (2Co 12:4). God will not as yet reveal these things fully to us, but He reserves His best wine for the last. We can but give you a few glimpses; but O beloved, wait a little; it shall not be long ere you also shall see His face!

## II. HOW WE SHALL SEE CHRIST

“They shall see his face.” The word *see* sounds in my ears with a clear, full, melodious note. Methinks we see but little here. This, indeed, is not the world of sight: “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Co 5:7). Around us all is mist and cloud. What we do see, we see only as if men were trees walking (Mar 8:24). If ever we get a glimpse of the spirit-world, it is like yonder momentary lightning-flash in the darkness of the tempest, which opens for an instant the gates of heaven; and in the twinkling of an eye they are closed again, and the darkness is denser than before, as if it were enough for us poor mortals to know that there is a brightness denied to us as yet.

The saints see the face of Jesus in heaven because they are *purified from sin*. The pure in heart are blessed: they shall see God, and none others (Mat 5:8). It is because of our impurity which still remains that we cannot as yet see His face, but their eyes are touched with eye-salve and therefore they see. Ah, brethren, how often does our Lord Jesus hide Himself behind the clouds of dust that we ourselves make by our unholy walking. If we become proud, selfish, or slothful, or fall into any other of our besetting sins,<sup>5</sup> then our eye

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<sup>5</sup> **besetting sins** – those sins to which we are most easily tempted and which are constantly attacking us.

loses its capacity to behold the brightness of our Lord; but up yonder they not only do not sin, but they cannot sin. They are not tempted; there is no space for the tempter to work upon, even could he be admitted to try them. They are without fault before the throne of God; and, surely, this alone is a heaven: to be rid of inbred sin and the plague of the heart, and to have ended forever the struggle of spiritual life against the crushing power of the fleshly power of death. They may well see His face when the scales of sin have been taken from their eyes, and they have become pure as God Himself is pure.

They surely see His face the more clearly because *all the clouds of care are gone* from them. Some of you while sitting here today have been trying to lift up your minds to heavenly contemplation, but you cannot; the business has gone so wrong this week; the children have vexed you so much; sickness has been in the house so sorely; you yourself feel in your body quite out of order for devotion—these enemies break your peace. Now they are vexed by none of these things in heaven, and therefore they can see their Master's face. They are not cumbered with Martha's cares; they still occupy Mary's seat at His feet (Luk 10:41-42). When shall you and I have laid aside the farm, the merchandise, the marrying, and the burying, which come so fast upon each other's heels, and when shall we be forever with the Lord,

*Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in?*<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, as they have done with sins and cares, so have they *done with sorrows*. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4). We are none of us quite strangers to grief, and with some of us pain is an inseparable companion; we dwell in the smoky tents of Kedar still (Psa 120:1, 5). Perhaps it is well that we should so be tried while we are here, for sanctified sorrow refines the soul; but in glory there is no affliction, for the pure gold needeth not the furnace. Well may they then behold Christ when there are no tears to dim their eyes, no smoke of this world to rise up between them and their Beloved; but they are alike free from sin, care, and sorrow. They see His face right gloriously in that cloudless atmosphere and in the light which He Himself supplies.

Moreover, the glorified see His face the more clearly because there are *no idols* to stand between Him and them. Our idolatrous love of worldly things is a chief cause of our knowing so little of spiritual things. Because we love this and that so much, we see so little of Christ. Thou canst not fill thy lifecup from the pools of earth, and yet have room in it for the crystal streams of heaven. But they have no idols there—nothing to occupy the heart, no rival for the Lord Jesus. He reigns supreme within their spirits, and therefore they see His face.

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<sup>6</sup> From "Ye Waiting Souls Arise," hymn by Charles Wesley (1707-1788).

They have *no veils of ignorance or prejudice* to darken their sight in heaven. Those of us who most candidly endeavour to learn the truth, are nevertheless in some degree biased and warped by education. Let us struggle as we may, yet still our surroundings will not permit us to see things as they are. There is a deflection in our vision, a refraction in the air, a something everywhere which casts the beam of light out of its straight line, so that we see rather the appearance than the reality of truth. We see not with open sight; our vision is marred; but up yonder, among the golden harps, they know even as they are known (1Co 13:12). They have no prejudices, but a full desire to know the truth; the bias is gone, and therefore they are able to see His face. O blessed thought! One could almost wish to sit down and say no more, but just roll that sweet morsel under one's tongue, and extract the essence and sweetness of it. "They see his face." There is no long distance for the eye to travel over, for they are near Him; they are in His bosom; they are sitting on His throne at His right hand. No withdrawals there to mourn over: their sun shall no more go down. Here He stands behind our wall; He showeth Himself through the lattices; but He hides not Himself in heaven. O when shall the long summer days of glory be ours, and Jesus our undying joy forever and ever? In heaven they never pray, "Oh may no earthborn cloud arise To hide thee from thy servant's eyes";<sup>7</sup> but forever and for aye they bask in the sunlight, or rather, like Milton's angel, they live in the sun itself. They come not to the sea's brink to wade into it up to the ankles, but they swim in bliss forever. In waves of everlasting rest, in richest, closest fellowship with Jesus, they disport<sup>8</sup> themselves with ineffable delight.

From *The Heaven of Heaven*, 1868; Sermon 824; Vol. 14, 433.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential Baptist minister in England; history's most widely read preacher (apart from those found in Scripture). Today, there is available more material written by Spurgeon than by any other Christian author, living or dead. Born at Kelvedon, Essex.



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<sup>7</sup> From "Sun of My Soul, Thou Savior Dear," by John Keble (1792-1866).

<sup>8</sup> **disport** – to divert, amuse, or exercise oneself in a sporting manner.

# THE SAINTS' LOVE IN HEAVEN

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*Charity never faileth.—1 Corinthians 13:8*

## I. THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE IN HEAVEN

By the principle of love in heaven I mean the love itself that fills and blesses the heavenly world, and that may be noticed both as to its nature and degree.

**1. As to its nature.** In its nature, this love is altogether holy and divine. Most of the love that there is in this world is of an unhallowed nature. But the love that has place in heaven is not carnal<sup>1</sup> but spiritual. It does not proceed from corrupt principles or selfish motives, nor is it directed to mean and vile purposes and ends. As opposed to all this, it is a pure flame directed by holy motives, and aiming at no ends inconsistent with God's glory and the happiness of the universe. The saints in heaven love God for His own sake, and each other for God's sake—and for the sake of the relation that they have to Him, and the image of God that is upon them. All their love is pure and holy. We may notice this love, also,

**2. As to its degree.** In degree, it is perfect. The love that dwells in the heart of God is perfect, with an absolutely infinite and divine perfection. The love of angels and saints to God and Christ, is perfect in its kind, or with such a perfection as is proper to their nature. It is perfect with a sinless perfection, and perfect in that it is commensurate<sup>2</sup> to the capacities of their nature. So it is said in the text that “when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.” Their love shall be without any remains of any contrary principle, having no pride or selfishness to interrupt it or hinder its exercises. Their hearts shall be full of love. That which was in the heart on earth as but a grain of mustard-seed, shall be as a great tree in heaven...

In heaven there shall be no remaining enmity, distaste, coldness, or deadness of heart towards God and Christ. Not the least remainder of any principle of envy shall exist to be exercised toward angels or other beings who are superior in glory; nor shall there be aught like contempt or slighting of those who are inferiors. Those that have a lower station in glory than others, suffer no diminution of their own happiness by seeing others above them in glory. On the contrary, all the members of that blessed society rejoice in each other's happiness, for the love of benevolence is perfect in them all...

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<sup>1</sup> **carnal** – fleshly; worldly; unspiritual; self-centered.

<sup>2</sup> **commensurate** – of corresponding extent or magnitude; proportionate.

There is undoubtedly an inconceivably pure, sweet, and fervent love between the saints in glory...Those that are highest in glory are those that are highest in holiness, and therefore are those that are most beloved by all the saints—for they most love those that are most holy, and so they will all rejoice in their being the most happy. And it will not be a grief to any of the saints to see those that are higher than themselves in holiness and likeness to God, more loved also than themselves, for all shall have as much love as they desire, and as great manifestations of love as they can bear; and so all shall be fully satisfied; and where there is perfect satisfaction, there can be no reason for envy...

And the superior in glory will be so far from slighting those that are inferior, that they will have most abundant love to them—greater degrees of love in proportion to their superior knowledge and happiness. The higher any are in glory, the more they are like Christ in this respect, so that the love of the higher to the lower will be greater than the love of the equals of the latter to them.

And what puts it beyond all doubt that seeing the superior happiness of others will not be a damp to the happiness of the inferior, is this: that their superior happiness consists in their greater humility and in their greater love to them, to God, and to Christ, than the inferior will have in themselves. Such will be the sweet and perfect harmony among the heavenly saints, and such the perfect love reigning in every heart toward every other, without limit, alloy, or interruption. No envy, malice, revenge, contempt, or selfishness shall ever enter there, but all such feelings shall be kept as far away as sin is from holiness, and as hell is from heaven!

## II. THE EXCELLENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF HEAVEN

Let us next consider, The excellent circumstances in which love shall be exercised, blessed, and enjoyed in heaven.

**1. Love in heaven is always mutual.** It is always met with answerable returns of love, with returns that are proportioned to its exercise. Such returns love always seeks; and just in proportion as any person is beloved, in the same proportion is his love desired and prized. And in heaven, this desire of love, or this fondness for being loved, will never fail of being satisfied. No inhabitants of that blessed world will ever be grieved with the thought that they are slighted by those that they love, or that their love is not fully and fondly returned.

As the saints will love God with an inconceivable ardency of heart and to the utmost of their capacity, so they will know that He has loved them from all eternity, and still loves them, and will continue to love them forever. And God will then gloriously manifest Himself to them, and they shall know that all that happiness and glory which they are possessed of, are the fruits of His love...



**2. *The joy of heavenly love shall never be interrupted or damped by jealousy.*** Heavenly lovers will have no doubt of the love of each other. They shall have no fear that the declarations and professions of love are hypocritical; but shall be perfectly satisfied of the sincerity and strength of each other's affection, as much as if there were a window in every breast so that everything in the heart could be seen. There shall be no such thing as flattery or dissimulation<sup>3</sup> in heaven, but there perfect sincerity shall reign through all and in all. Every one will be just what he seems to be, and will really have all the love that he seems to have. It will not be as in this world, where comparatively few things are what they seem to be, and where professions are often made lightly and without meaning. But there every expression of love shall come from the bottom of the heart, and all that is professed shall be really and truly felt.

The saints shall know that God loves them, and they shall never doubt the greatness of His love. They shall have no doubt of the love of all their fellow inhabitants in heaven, and they shall not be jealous of the constancy of each other's love. They shall have no suspicion that the love which others have felt toward them is abated,<sup>4</sup> or in any degree withdrawn from themselves for the sake of some rival, or by reason of anything in themselves which they suspect is disagreeable to others, or through any inconstancy in their own hearts or the hearts of others. Nor will they be in the least afraid that the love of any will ever be abated toward them...

**3. *There shall be nothing within themselves to clog or hinder the saints in heaven in the exercises and expressions of love.*** In this world, the saints find much to hinder them in this respect. They have a great deal of dullness and heaviness. They carry about with them a heavy-molded body, a clod of earth, a mass of flesh and blood that is not fitted to be the organ for a soul inflamed with high exercises of divine love; but which is found a great clog and hindrance to the spirit, so that they cannot express their love to God as they would, and cannot be so active and lively in it as they desire...

But in heaven, they shall have no such hindrance. There they will have no dullness and unwieldiness, and no corruption of heart to war against divine love and hinder its expressions; and there no earthly body shall clog with its heaviness the heavenly flame. The saints in heaven shall have no difficulty in expressing all their love. Their souls being on fire with holy love shall not be like a fire pent up, but like a flame uncovered and at liberty...Nothing shall hinder them from communing with God, and praising and serving Him just as their love inclines them to do. Love naturally desires to express itself; and in heaven the love of the saints shall be at full liberty to express itself as it desires, whether it be towards God or to created beings.

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<sup>3</sup> **dissimulation** – concealment of one's true feelings or intentions; hypocrisy.

<sup>4</sup> **abated** – reduced in intensity.

**4. In heaven, love will be expressed with perfect decency and wisdom.** Many in this world that are sincere in their hearts, and have indeed a principle of true love to God and their neighbor, yet have not discretion to guide them in the manner and circumstances of expressing it. Their intentions, and so their speeches, are good, but often not suitably timed nor discreetly ordered as to circumstances, but are attended with an indiscreetness that greatly obscures the loveliness of grace in the eyes of others. But in heaven, the amiableness and excellence of their love shall not be obscured by any such means. There shall be no indecent, unwise, or dissonant speeches or actions—no foolish and sentimental fondness, no needless officiousness, no low or sinful propensities of passion, and no such thing as affections clouding or deluding reason, or going before or against it. But wisdom and discretion shall be as perfect in the saints as love is, and every expression of their love shall be attended with the most amiable and perfect decency, discretion, and wisdom.

**5. There shall be nothing external in heaven to keep its inhabitants at a distance from each other,** or to hinder their most perfect enjoyment of each other's love. There shall be no wall of separation in heaven to keep the saints asunder, nor shall they be hindered from the full and complete enjoyment of each other's love by distance of habitation, for they shall all be together, as one family, in their heavenly Father's house. Nor shall there be any want of full acquaintance to hinder the greatest possible intimacy...

**6. In heaven all shall be united together in very near and dear relations.** Love always seeks a near relation to the one who is beloved; and in heaven they shall all be nearly allied and related to each other. All shall be nearly related to God the supreme object of their love, for they shall all be His children. And all shall be nearly related to Christ, for He shall be the head of the whole society, and the husband of the whole Church of saints, all of whom together shall constitute His spouse. And they shall all be related to each other as brethren, for all will be but one society, or rather but one family, and all members of the household of God.

**7. In heaven all shall have property and ownership in each other.** Love seeks to have the beloved its own; and divine love rejoices in saying, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16). And in heaven, all shall not only be related one to another, but they shall *be* each other's and belong to each other. The saints shall be God's. He brings them home to Himself in glory as that part of the creation that He has chosen for His peculiar treasure. And on the other hand, God shall be theirs, made over to them in an everlasting covenant in this world, and now they shall be forever in full possession of Him as their portion.

And the saints shall be Christ's, for He has bought them with a price; and He shall be theirs, for He that gave Himself *for* them will have given Himself

to them. In the bonds of mutual and everlasting love, Christ and the saints will have given themselves to each other...

**8. In heaven they shall enjoy each other's love in perfect and uninterrupted prosperity.** What often on earth alloys<sup>5</sup> the pleasure and sweetness of worldly pleasure is that, though persons live in love, yet they live in poverty, or meet with great difficulties and sore afflictions whereby they are grieved for themselves and for one another. Though in such cases love and friendship in some respects lighten the burden to be borne, yet in other respects they rather add to its weight, because those that love each other become, by their very love, sharers in each other's afflictions—so that each has not only his own trials to bear, but those also of his afflicted friends. But there shall be no adversity in heaven to give occasion for a pitiful grief of spirit, or to molest or disturb those who are heavenly friends in the enjoyment of each other's friendship. But they shall enjoy one another's love in the greatest prosperity, in glorious riches and comfort, and in the highest honor and dignity, reigning together in the heavenly kingdom—inheriting all things, sitting on thrones, all wearing crowns of life, and being made kings and priests unto God forever...

**9. In heaven all things shall conspire to promote their love, and give advantage for mutual enjoyment.** There shall be none there to tempt any to dislike or hatred; no busybodies or malicious adversaries to make misrepresentations, create misunderstandings, or spread abroad any evil reports; but every being and everything shall conspire to promote love and the full enjoyment of love. Heaven itself, the place of habitation, is a garden of pleasures, a heavenly paradise, fitted in all respects for an abode of heavenly love; a place where they may have sweet society and perfect enjoyment of each other's love. None are unsocial or distant from each other. The petty distinctions of this world do not draw lines in the society of heaven, but all meet in the equality of holiness and of holy love.

**10. The inhabitants of heaven shall know that they shall forever be continued in the perfect enjoyment of each other's love.** They shall know that God and Christ shall be forever with them as their God and portion, and that His love shall be continued and fully manifested forever, and that all their beloved fellow-saints shall forever live with them in glory, and shall forever keep up the same love in their hearts which they now have. And they shall know that they themselves shall ever live to love God and love the saints, and to enjoy their love in all its fulness and sweetness forever. They shall be in no fear of any end to this happiness, or of any abatement from its fulness and blessedness, or that they shall ever be weary of its exercises and expressions, or cloyed<sup>6</sup> with its enjoyments, or that the beloved objects shall ever grow old or disagreeable, so that their love shall at last die away.

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<sup>5</sup> **alloys** – debases, impairs, or reduces in value by admixture.

<sup>6</sup> **cloyed** – wearied with excess of anything.

All in heaven shall flourish in immortal youth and freshness. Age will not there diminish anyone's beauty or vigor; and their love shall abide in everyone's heart as a living spring perpetually springing up in the soul, or as a flame that never dies away. And the holy pleasure of this love shall be as a river that is forever flowing clear and full, and increasing continually...

### III. THE FRUITS OF THE LOVE OF HEAVEN

Of the many blessed fruits of it, I would at this time mention but two.

**1. *The most excellent and perfect behavior of all the inhabitants of heaven toward God and each other.*** Divine love is the sum of all good principles, and therefore the fountain whence proceed all amiable and excellent actions. And as in heaven this love will be perfect, to the perfect exclusion of all sin consisting in enmity against God and fellow creatures, so the fruit of it will be a most perfect behavior toward all. Hence life in heaven will be without the least sinful failure or error. None shall ever come short or turn aside from the way of holiness in the least degree, but every feeling and action shall be perfect in itself and in all its circumstances...

**2. *Perfect tranquillity and joy in heaven.*** Holy and humble Christian love is a principle of wonderful power to give ineffable<sup>7</sup> quietness and tranquillity to the soul. It banishes all disturbance, and sweetly composes and brings rest to the spirit, and makes all divinely calm, sweet, and happy. In that soul where divine love reigns and is in lively exercise, nothing can cause a storm or even gather threatening clouds.

There are many principles contrary to love that make this world like a tempestuous sea. Selfishness, envy, revenge, jealousy, and kindred passions keep life on earth in a constant tumult; and make it a scene of confusion and uproar, where no quiet rest is to be enjoyed except in renouncing this world and looking to another. But oh! what rest is there in that world which the God of peace and love fills with His own gracious presence, and in which the Lamb of God lives and reigns, filling it with the brightest and sweetest beams of His love; where there is nothing to disturb or offend, and no being or object to be seen that is not surrounded with perfect amiableness and sweetness; where the saints shall find and enjoy all that they love, and so be perfectly satisfied; where there is no enemy and no enmity, but perfect love in every heart and to every being; where there is perfect harmony among all the inhabitants, no one envying another, but everyone rejoicing in the happiness of every other; where all their love is humble and holy, and perfectly Christian, without the least carnality or impurity; where love is always mutual and reciprocated to the full; where there is no hypocrisy or dissembling, but perfect simplicity and sincerity; where there is no treachery, unfaithfulness, inconstancy, or jealousy in any form; where there is no clog or hindrance to the exercises or expressions of love, no imprudence or indecency in express-

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<sup>7</sup> **ineffable** – incapable of being expressed; indescribable.

ing it, and no influence of folly or indiscretion in any word or deed; where there is no separation wall, and no misunderstanding or strangeness, but full acquaintance and perfect intimacy in all; where there is no division through different opinions or interests, but where all in that glorious and loving society shall be most nearly and divinely related, and each shall belong to every other, and all shall enjoy each other in perfect prosperity and riches, and honor, without any sickness, grief, persecution, sorrow, any enemy to molest them, or any busybody to create jealousy or misunderstanding or mar the perfect, holy, and blessed peace that reigns in heaven!

And all this in the garden of God—in the paradise of love, where everything is filled with love, and everything conspires to promote and kindle it, and keep up its flame; and nothing ever interrupts it, but everything has been fitted by an all-wise God for its full enjoyment under the greatest advantages forever! And all, too, where the beauty of the beloved objects shall never fade, and love shall never grow weary nor decay, but the soul shall more and more rejoice in love forever!...

And oh! what joy will there be, springing up in the hearts of the saints after they have passed through their wearisome pilgrimage, to be brought to such a paradise as this! Here is joy unspeakable indeed, and full of glory (1Pe 1:8)—joy that is humble, holy, enrapturing, and divine in its perfection!...All shall stand about the God of glory, Who is the great fountain of love, opening, as it were, their very souls to be filled with those effusions of love that are poured forth from His fullness, just as the flowers on the earth, in the bright and joyous days of spring, open their bosoms to the sun to be filled with his light and warmth, and to flourish in beauty and fragrancy under his cheering rays.

From *Charity and Its Fruits*, “Heaven, a World, of Charity or Love.”

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** Massachusetts Congregation preacher. Regarded as America’s greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening, along with George Whitefield. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



# CROSSING TO THE CELESTIAL CITY

**John Bunyan (1628-1688)**

*An allegory from The Pilgrim's Progress in which Christian and Hopeful cross over the River of Death to enter into heaven itself.*

**N**OW I saw in my dream that, by this time, the Pilgrims were got over the Enchanted Ground and entering into the country of Beulah (Isa 62:4), whose air was very sweet and pleasant. The way lying directly through it, they solaced<sup>1</sup> themselves there for a season.

## I. BEULAH

Yea, here they heard continually the singing of birds, and saw every day the flowers appear in the earth, and heard the voice of the turtle in the land (Song 2:10-12). In this country the sun shineth night and day; wherefore this was beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and also out of the reach of Giant Despair, neither could they from this place so much as see Doubting Castle.

Here they were within sight of the city they were going to, also here met them some of the inhabitants thereof; for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked, because it was upon the borders of heaven. In this land also the contract between the bride and the bridegroom was renewed; yea, here, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa 62:5). Here they had no want of corn and wine; for in this place they met with abundance of what they had sought for in all their pilgrimage (v. 8). Here they heard voices from out of the city, loud voices, saying, "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him" (v. 11)! Here all the inhabitants of the country called them, "The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord...Sought out," etc. (v. 12).

Now, as they walked in this land, they had more rejoicing than in parts more remote from the kingdom to which they were bound; and drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was builded of pearls and precious stones, also the street thereof was paved with gold; so that by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick. Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease. Wherefore, here they lay by it a while, crying out, because of their pangs, "If ye find my beloved...tell him, that I am sick of love" (Song 5:8).

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<sup>1</sup> **solaced** – comfort after a time of distress or disappointment.

But being a little strengthened and better able to bear their sickness, they walked on their way and came yet nearer and nearer, where were orchards, vineyards, and gardens, and their gates opened into the highway. Now, as they came up to these places, behold, the gardener stood in the way, to whom the Pilgrims said, Whose goodly vineyards and gardens are these? He answered, They are the King's, and are planted here for His own delight and also for the solace of pilgrims. So the gardener had them into the vineyards and bid them refresh themselves with the dainties (Deu 23:24). He also showed them there the King's walks and the arbours where He delighted to be, and here they tarried and slept.

Now, I beheld in my dream that they talked more in their sleep at this time than ever they did in all their journey; and being in a muse<sup>2</sup> thereabout, the gardener said even to me, Wherefore musest thou at the matter? It is the nature of the fruit of the grapes of these vineyards to go down so sweetly, as to cause the lips of them that are asleep to speak.

So I saw that when they awoke, they addressed themselves to go up to the city. But as I said, the reflection of the sun upon the city (for "the city was pure gold," Rev 21:18), was so extremely glorious that they could not, as yet, with open face behold it, but through an instrument made for that purpose (2Co 3:18). So I saw that, as they went on, there met them two men in raiment that shone like gold; also their faces shone as the light.

These men asked the Pilgrims whence they came, and they told them. They also asked them where they had lodged, what difficulties and dangers, what comforts and pleasures they had met in the way; and they told them. Then said the men that met them, You have but two difficulties more to meet with, and then you are in the city.

Christian then, and his companion, asked the men to go along with them; so they told them they would. But, said they, you must obtain it by your own faith. So I saw in my dream that they went on together, until they came in sight of the gate.

## II. THE RIVER OF DEATH

Now, I further saw, that betwixt them and the gate was a river, but there was no bridge to go over; the river was very deep. At the sight, therefore, of this river, the Pilgrims were much stunned: but the men that went with them said, You must go through, or you cannot come at the gate.

The Pilgrims then began to inquire if there was no other way to the gate; to which they answered, Yes; but there hath not any—save two, to wit, Enoch and Elijah—been permitted to tread that path, since the foundation of the world, nor shall, until the last trumpet shall sound (1Co 15:51-52). The Pilgrims then, especially Christian, began to despond in their minds,

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<sup>2</sup> **muse** – meditation upon some subject in silence.

and looked this way and that, but no way could be found by them, by which they might escape the river. Then they asked the men if the waters were all of a depth. They said, No; yet they could not help them in that case; for, said they, you shall find it deeper or shallower, as you believe<sup>3</sup> in the King of the place.

They then addressed themselves to the water; and entering, Christian began to sink, and crying out to his good friend Hopeful, he said, I sink in deep waters; the billows go over my head, all His waves go over me (Psa 42:7)! Selah! Then said the other, Be of good cheer my brother, I feel the bottom and it is good. Then, said Christian, Ah! my friend, “the sorrows of death [have] compassed me about” (2Sa 22:6); I shall not see the land that flows with milk and honey—and with that, a great darkness and horror fell upon Christian, so that he could not see before him. Also here, he in great measure lost his senses, so that he could neither remember, nor orderly talk of any of those sweet refreshments that he had met with in the way of his pilgrimage. But all the words that he spake still tended to discover that he had horror of mind, and heart fears that he should die in that river, and never obtain entrance in at the gate. Here also, as they that stood by perceived, he was much in the troublesome thoughts of the sins that he had committed, both since and before he began to be a pilgrim. It was also observed that he was troubled with apparitions of hobgoblins and evil spirits; forever and anon he would intimate so much by words.

Hopeful, therefore, here had much ado to keep his brother’s head above water; yea, sometimes he would be quite gone down, and then, ere awhile, he would rise up again half dead. Hopeful also would endeavour to comfort him, saying, Brother, I see the gate, and men standing by to receive us; but Christian would answer, It is you, it is you they wait for; you have been Hopeful ever since I knew you. And so have you, said he to Christian. Ah, brother! said he, surely if I were right, He would now arise to help me; but for my sins He hath brought me into the snare, and hath left me. Then said Hopeful, My brother, you have quite forgot the text where it is said of the wicked, “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men” (Psa 73:4-5). These troubles and distresses that you go through in these waters are no sign that God hath forsaken you; but are sent to try you, whether you will call to mind that which heretofore you have received of His goodness, and live upon Him in your distresses (Job 2:10).

Then I saw in my dream, that Christian was as in a muse a while. To whom also Hopeful added this word, Be of good cheer, “Jesus Christ maketh thee whole” (Act 9:34); and with that Christian brake out with a loud voice, O! I see Him again, and He tells me, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa

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<sup>3</sup> **as you believe** – according to the degree of your faith.



43:2). Then they both took courage; and the enemy was after that as still as a stone, until they were gone over. Christian therefore presently found ground to stand upon, and so it followed that the rest of the river was but shallow. Thus they got over.

### III. THE CELESTIAL CITY

Now, upon the bank of the river, on the other side, they saw the two Shining Men again, who there waited for them. Wherefore, being come out of the river, they saluted them, saying, We are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those that shall be heirs of salvation. Thus they went along towards the gate. Now, you must note that the city stood upon a mighty hill, but the Pilgrims went up that hill with ease, because they had these two men to lead them up by the arms; also, they had left their mortal garments behind them in the river, for though they went in with them, they came out without them. They, therefore, went up here with much agility and speed, though the foundation upon which the city was framed was higher than the clouds. They, therefore, went up through the regions of the air, sweetly talking as they went, being comforted, because they safely got over the river, and had such glorious companions to attend them.

The talk they had with the Shining Ones was about the glory of the place; who told them that the beauty and glory of it was inexpressible. There, said they, is the “Mount Zion...the heavenly Jerusalem...an innumerable company of angels...the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb 12:22-24). You are going now, said they, to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity (Rev 2:7; 3:4; 22:5). There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower region upon the earth, to wit: sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death, “for the former things are passed away” (Rev 21:4). You are now going to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets—men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in His righteousness (Isa 57:1-2; 65:17).

The men then asked, What must we do in the holy place? To whom it was answered, You must there receive the comforts of all your toil, and have joy for all your sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers, and tears, and sufferings for the King by the way (Gal 6:7). In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for there you “shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). There also you shall serve Him continually with praise, with shouting and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing, the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that are gone thither before you;

and there you shall with joy receive even every one that follows into the holy place after you. There also shall you be clothed with glory and majesty, and put into an equipage fit to ride out with the King of glory. When He shall come with sound of trumpet in the clouds, as upon the wings of the wind, you shall come with Him; and when He shall sit upon the throne of judgment, you shall sit by Him; yea, and when He shall pass sentence upon all the workers of iniquity, let them be angels or men, you also shall have a voice in that judgment, because they were His and your enemies (1Th 4:13-17; Jude 1:14; Dan 7:9-10; 1Co 6:2-3). Also, when He shall again return to the city, you shall go too, with sound of trumpet, and be ever with Him.

Now, while they were thus drawing towards the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet them; to whom it was said by the other two Shining Ones, These are the men that have loved our Lord when they were in the world, and that have left all for His holy name; and He hath sent us to fetch them, and we have brought them thus far on their desired journey, that they may go in and look their Redeemer<sup>4</sup> in the face with joy. Then the heavenly host gave a great shout, saying, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev 19:9). There came out also at this time to meet them several of the King's trumpeters, clothed in white and shining raiment, who, with melodious noises, and loud, made even the heavens to echo with their sound. These trumpeters saluted Christian and his fellow with 10,000 welcomes from the world; and this they did with shouting, and sound of trumpet.

This done, they compassed them round on every side; some went before, some behind, and some on the right hand, some on the left (as it were to guard them through the upper regions), continually sounding as they went, with melodious noise, in notes on high; so that the very sight was to them that could behold it, as if heaven itself was come down to meet them. Thus, therefore, they walked on together; and as they walked, ever and anon these trumpeters, even with joyful sound, would, by mixing their music with looks and gestures, still signify to Christian and his brother how welcome they were into their company, and with what gladness they came to meet them

And now were these two men, as it were, in heaven, before they came at it, being swallowed up with the sight of angels, and with hearing of their melodious notes. Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that forever and ever. O by what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! And thus they came up to the gate.

Now, when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may

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<sup>4</sup> **Redeemer** – one who pays a ransom to obtain others' release from captivity; one who delivers from sin by paying the penalty; here: Jesus Christ.

have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev 22:14). Then I saw in my dream, that the Shining Men bid them call at the gate; the which, when they did, some looked from above over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, and Elijah, etc., to whom it was said, These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction, for the love that they bear to the King of this place; and then the pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate,<sup>5</sup> which they had received in the beginning; those, therefore, were carried into the King, Who, when He had read them, said, Where are the men? To Whom it was answered, They are standing without the gate. The King then commanded to open the gate, “That the righteous nation,” said He, “which keepeth the truth, may enter in” (Isa 26:2).

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate; and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them—the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, “ENTER [YE] INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD” (Mat 25:21). I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, “BLESSING, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB, FOR EVER AND EVER” (Rev 5:13).

Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and, behold, the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, “Holy, holy, holy [is the] Lord God Almighty” (Rev 4:8). And after that, they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them.

From *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Part One; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**John Bunyan (1628-1688):** English minister, preacher, and one of the most influential Christian writers of the seventeenth century. Beloved author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *The Holy War*, *The Acceptable Sacrifice*, and many others. Born at Elstow near Bedford, England.



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<sup>5</sup> **certificate** – probably a “birth certificate” for new birth in Christ (Joh 3:3).

# HEAVEN'S EFFECTS IN THIS WORLD

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—1 Corinthians 13:9-10*

## I. SIN DARKENS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HEAVEN

If heaven be such a world as has been described, then we may see a reason why contention and strife tend to darken our evidence of fitness for its possession. Experience teaches that this is the effect of contention. When principles of malignity and ill-will prevail among God's people, as they sometimes do through the remaining corruption of their hearts, and they get into a contentious spirit, or are engaged in any strife whether public or private, and their spirits are filled with opposition to their neighbors in any matter whatever, their former evidences for heaven seem to become dim or die away; and they are in darkness about their spiritual state, and do not find that comfortable and satisfying hope that they used to enjoy. And so, when converted persons get into ill frames in their families, the consequence commonly, if not universally, is that they live without much of a comfortable sense of heavenly things or any lively hope of heaven. They do not enjoy much of that spiritual calm and sweetness that those do who live in love and peace. They have not that help from God, that communion with Him, and that near intercourse<sup>1</sup> with heaven in prayer, that others have.

The apostle seems to speak of contention in families as having this influence. His language is "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [i.e., your wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1Pe 3:7). Here he intimates that discord in families tends to hinder Christians in their prayers. And what Christian, who has made the sad experiment, has not done it to his sorrow, and in his own experience does not bear witness to the truth of the apostle's intimation? Why it is so—that contention has this effect of hindering spiritual exercises and comforts and hopes, and of destroying the sweet hope of that which is heavenly—we may learn from the doctrine we have considered. For heaven being a world of love, it follows that, when we have the least exercise of love and the most of a contrary spirit, then we have the least of heaven, and are farthest from it in the frame of our mind. Then we have the least of the exercise of that wherein consists a conformity to heaven, and of a preparation for it,

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<sup>1</sup> **intercourse** – communion; close, intimate communication and fellowship.

and of what tends to it; and so, necessarily, we must have least evidence of our title to heaven, and be farthest from the comfort which such evidence affords. We may see, again, from this subject,

## II. HAPPINESS OF THOSE BOUND FOR HEAVEN

How happy those are who are entitled to heaven. There are some persons living on earth to whom the happiness of the heavenly world belongs as much, yea, much more than any man's earthly estate belongs to himself. They have a part and interest in this world of love, and have a proper right and title to it, for they are of the number of those of whom it is written, "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" (Rev 22:14). And, doubtless, there are such persons here amongst us. And oh! how happy are all such, entitled as they are to an interest in such a world as heaven! Surely they are the blessed of the earth; and the fullness of their blessedness no language can describe, no words express.

But here some may be ready to say, "Without doubt, they are happy persons that have a title to such a blessed world, and are soon to enter on the eternal possession of its joys. But who are these persons? How shall they be known, and by what marks may they be distinguished?" In answer to such an inquiry, I would mention three things that belong to their character.

*a. First*, they are those that have had the principle or seed of the same love that reigns in heaven implanted in their hearts, in this world, in the work of regeneration. They are not those who have no other principles in their hearts than natural principles, or such as they have by their first birth, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh" (Joh 3:6)...

And so they are changed and, from being earthly, have become heavenly in their dispositions. The love of the world is mortified, and the love of God implanted. Their hearts are drawn to God and Christ, and for their sakes flow out to the saints in humble and spiritual love. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1Pe 1:23); "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (Joh 1:13).

*b. Second*, they are those who freely have chosen the happiness that flows from the exercise and enjoyment of such love as is in heaven, above all other conceivable happiness. They see and understand so much of this as to know that it is the best good. They do not merely yield that it is so from rational arguments that may be offered for it, and by which they are convinced that it is so; but they know it is so from what little they have tasted of it. It is the happiness of love, and the beginning of a life of such love—holy, humble, divine, and heavenly love. Love to God, love to Christ, and love to saints for God and Christ's sake, and the enjoyment of the fruits of God's love in holy communion with God, Christ, and holy persons—this is what they have a relish for...

c. *Third*, they are those who, from the love that is in them, are, in heart and life, in principle and practice, struggling after holiness. Holy love makes them long for holiness. It is a principle that thirsts after growth. It is in imperfection, in a state of infancy in this world, and it desires growth. It has much to struggle with. In the heart in this world, there are many opposite principles and influences; and it struggles after greater oneness, more liberty, more free exercise, and better fruit. The great strife and struggle of the new man is after holiness...

And his hands struggle as well as his heart. He strives in his practice. His life is a life of sincere and earnest endeavor to be universally and increasingly holy. He feels that he is not holy enough, but far from it; and he desires to be nearer perfection, and more like those who are in heaven. And this is one reason why he longs to be in heaven: that he may be perfectly holy. And the great principle that leads him thus to struggle, is love. It is not only fear; but it is love to God, love to Christ, and love to holiness.

From *Charity and Its Fruits*, "Heaven, a World, of Charity or Love."

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** Massachusetts Congregational preacher. Author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, and numerous other titles. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.



We have life *eternal*, too, never ending. Whatever else may end, this never can. It can neither be killed by temptation, nor destroyed by trial, nor quenched by death, nor worn out by the ages. The gift of the eternal God is eternal life. Those who talk about a man having everlasting life, and losing it, do not know the force of language. If a man has eternal life, it is eternal, and cannot therefore end or be lost.

When we get to heaven, and the eternal life shall there be developed as a bud opens into a full-blown rose; when our life shall embrace God's life and God's life shall encompass ours; when we shall be abundantly alive to everything that is holy, divine, heavenly, blessed, and eternally glorious; oh, then we shall confess that our life was all of the grace of God, the free gift of God in Jesus Christ our Lord! I am sure that our heavenly education will only make us know more and more fully that while death is the well-earned wages of sin, eternal life is from beginning to end the gift of infinite grace.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

# GLORY HERE AND HEREAFTER

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.—Psalm 30:5*

## I. DESCRIPTIONS OF GLORY

“The *riches* of his glory,” says the apostle in one place (Rom 9:23); “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,” writes he in another (Eph 1:18). Strange expressions these! They carry us up to a height of such infinite glory and joy that we feel bewildered and overwhelmed. Just as there are riches of grace, riches of mercy, riches of love, and riches of wisdom (Eph 1:7; Rom 9:23; 11:33), so there are riches of glory: glory in abundance, such as shall make us rich indeed. Glory spreads over our whole inheritance, so that we shall “have all, and abound” (Phi 4:18). Nay, this glory is that which God counts His riches, that which He reckons the perfection of His inheritance—the very essence of its beauty and its blessedness.

“The glorious *liberty* of the children of God,” writes the apostle (Rom 8:21), thereby telling us that there is a glory which is the peculiar property of the saints—a glory of which they can say, It is our own, thereby marking it out from the glory of all other creatures. This glory contains *liberty*. It sets free those who possess it. Corruption had brought with it chains and bondage; glory brings with it divine liberty! It is not the liberty that brings the glory; it is the glory that brings the liberty. Blessed liberty! Freedom from every bondage! Not only the bondage of corruption, sin, and death, but the bondage of sorrow! For is not sorrow a bondage? Are not its chains sharp and heavy? From this bondage of tribulation the glory sets us eternally free. It is the last fetter, save that of the grave, that is struck from our bruised limbs; but when it is broken, it is broken forever!

And this liberty, which the glory brings to us, is one that shall extend to the unconscious creation around us. We brought that creation into bondage, covering it with dishonour, and making it the prey of corruption. It now groans and travails under this sore bondage. But as it has shared our bondage, it is also to share our liberty; and that same glory which brings liberty to us shall introduce the oppressed and dishonoured creation into the same blessed freedom! O longed-for consummation! O joyful hope! O welcome day, when the Bringer of this glory shall arrive, and the voice be heard from heaven, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

Nor is it liberty only that this glory contains in it, but *power* also, as it is written, “strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power”—this glory has, even now, a power giving energy whereby we are strengthened “to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (Col 1:11). Thus rejoicing

“in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2), we are fitted for all manner of tribulation and endurance. Though still among the things “not seen,” it not only flings forward a radiance that brightens our path, but sheds down a strength that enables us to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb 12:1). And so, in an unholy world, we “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1Th 2:12), having that prayer fulfilled in us, “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal *glory* by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10).

“Christ in you, the *hope* of glory” (Col 1:27). An indwelling Christ is our earnest,<sup>1</sup> our pledge, our hope of glory. Having Him, we have all that is His, whether present or to come. He is the link that binds together the *here* and the *hereafter*. We died with Him, we went down into the tomb with Him, we rose with Him, and our life is now hid with Him in God; but “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

The *joy* with which we rejoice is a joy “unspeakable and full of glory,” or more literally, a “glorified joy”; a joy such as Paul had when caught up into paradise; a joy such as John’s when placed in vision within sight of the celestial city; a joy into whose very essence the thoughts of glory enter; a joy that makes the soul which possesses it feel as if it were already compassed about with glory, as if it had “come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven” (Heb 12:22-23).

“The glorious *gospel* of Christ,” says the apostle (2Co 4:4); and again, “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Ti 1:11); or, more literally, “the gospel of the glory of Christ,” that is, “the good news about the glory of Christ” and “the good news about the glory of the blessed God.” As it is “the gospel of the kingdom,” or good news about “the kingdom,” that is preached, so it is good news about “the glory.” This good news God has sent, and is still sending, to this world. In believing them, and receiving God’s record concerning the glory, we become partakers of it—and continue to be so “if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14). This good news most fully meets our case, however sad or sinful, and sheds light into our souls, even in their darkest and most desponding hours.

## II. SUFFERING

Our present “light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Co 4:17)—so that glory is not merely the issue of tribulation, but in some sense its product. Tribulation is the soil, and glory is the blossom and the fruit. The soil is rough and

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<sup>1</sup> **earnest** – pledge of anything afterwards to be received in greater abundance.



unseemly, but the produce is altogether perfect. It may seem strange that out of such a field there should spring verdure<sup>2</sup> so fresh and fruit so divine; yet we know that such is the case. How much we owe to that unlikely soil! Not only do all things work together for good to us, but they as truly work together for *glory*.

Faith lays hold of this and prizes tribulation, nay, glories in it; so realizing the joy as to lose sight of the sorrow, save as contributing to the joy; so absorbed in the glory as to forget the shame, excepting in so far as it is the parent and precursor of the glory.

Most needful is it that we should realize these prospects, these glimpses that God has given us of what we are yet to be. It is not merely lawful to do so for the relief of the laden spirit, but it is most vitally important to do so for the health of our soul, for our growth in grace, and for enabling us to press on with cheerful energy in the path of service towards God, and of usefulness to our brother saints or fellow men.

The Man of Sorrows had joy set before Him. And it was for this that He endured the cross, despising the shame (Heb 12:2). He needed it, and so do we; for He Who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. He found in it strength for the bearing of the cross and the endurance of the shame. So may we, for as the path He trod is the same that is given us to tread in, so the strength is to be found where our Forerunner found it. There is joy in store for us even as for Him; joy not only like His, but His very own joy (Joh 15:11). This makes us willing to bear the cross in all its weight and sharpness; nay, it lightens it so that oftentimes we do not feel its pressure. We can glory both in the cross and the shame. We have less of these than He had, and we have all His consolation, all His joy to the full.

When this is lost sight of, selfish melancholy<sup>3</sup> often fastens on us. We brood over our griefs till they engross us entirely, to the shutting out of all else. We magnify them; we spread them out and turn them over on every side in order to find out the gloomiest. We take credit to ourselves for endurance, and thus feed our pride and self-importance. We fret under them, and at the same time grow vain at being the objects of so much sympathy—at having so many eyes upon us, and so many words of comfort addressed to us.

Nothing can be more *unhealthy* than this state of soul, nor more unlike that in which God expects a saint to be. It shuts us into the narrow circle of self. It contracts as well as distorts our vision. It vitiates our spiritual tastes, it lowers our spiritual tone, it withers and shrivels up our spiritual being—unfitting us for all offices of calm and gentle love; nay, hindering the right discharge of plain and common duty. It is in itself a sore disease, and is the source of other diseases without number.

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<sup>2</sup> **verdure** – thriving green vegetation.

<sup>3</sup> **melancholy** – feelings of thoughtful sadness; dejection.

### III. GOD'S SOLUTION TO DESPAIR

#### A. Christ versus Self

To meet this unhealthy tendency, God seeks to draw us out of ourselves. He does so in holding up the *cross* for us to look upon and be healed, but He also does this by exhibiting the crown and throne. The cross does not annihilate man's natural concern for self, but it loosens our thoughts from this, by showing us, upon the cross, One to Whose care we may safely entrust self with all its interests, and in Whose pierced hands it will be far better provided for than in our own. So the vision of the glory does not make away with self, but it absorbs it and elevates it, by revealing the kingdom in which God has made such blessed and enduring provision for us, as to make it appear worse than folly in us to brood over our case and make *self* the object of our sad and anxious care. If we are to have glory as surely and as cheaply as the lilies have their clothing, or the ravens their food, why be so solicitous about self? Or why think about self at all, save to remember and to rejoice that God has taken all our concerns into His own keeping for eternity?

#### B. Think upon Glory

Thus God beguiles us away from our griefs by giving us something else to muse over, something more worthy of our thoughts. He allures us from the present, where all is dark and uncomely, into the future, where all is bright and fair. He takes us by the hand and leads us, as a father his child, out from the gloomy region which we are sadly pacing—with our eye upon the ground, bent only upon nourishing our sorrows—into fields where all is fresh and Eden-like; so that, ere we are aware, joy, or at least the faint reflection of it, has stolen into our hearts and lifted up our heavy eyes. He would not have us abiding always in the church-yard, or sitting upon the turf beneath which love is buried, as if the tomb to which we are clinging were our hope, not resurrection beyond it. He would have us to come forth; and having allured us away from that scene of death, He bids us look upwards, upbraiding us with our unbelief and folly, and saying to us, "They whom you love are yonder; ere long He Who is their life and yours shall appear, and you shall rejoin each other, each of you embracing, not a weeping, sickly fellow mortal, but a glorified saint, set free from pain and sin."

There is nothing more healthy and genial for the soul than these anticipations of the morning, and of morning-glory. They are not visionary, save in the sense in which faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). They transfuse the *life of heaven* through our frame, either, on the one hand, making our languid<sup>4</sup> pulse to beat more swiftly, or, on the other, our feverish pulse to throb more calmly and evenly. They act as regulators of the soul in its wild and inconstant movements, neither allowing us to sink too low nor to soar too high. They tend to steady our

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<sup>4</sup> **languid** – showing a disinclination for physical exertion or effort.

extreme impulses by acting as a counterpoise<sup>5</sup> to the weight of grief that so crushes us with its pressure.

They withdraw us from self and self-broodings, they widen the circle of our sympathies, and throw back into the distance the fence of exclusiveness that, in times of suffering, we are apt to throw up around ourselves. They check mere sentimentality, and forbid us to indulge the flow of grief for its own luxury. They prohibit morbid gloom, which loves to shun out society and chooses loneliness. They fill us with energy for facing the toils, and with ready courage for braving the dangers of the night. They animate us with the calm but indomitable<sup>6</sup> confidence of hope, a hope that expands and brightens as its object approaches.

The morning! That is our watchword. It gives the hue to life, imparting colour to that which is colourless and freshening that which is faded. It is the sum and term of our hopes. Nothing else will do for us or for our world—a world over which the darkness gathers thicker as the years run out. Stars may help to make the sky less gloomy, but they are not the sun; and besides, clouds have now wrapped them so that they are no longer visible. The firmament is almost without a star. Torches and beacon-lights avail not. They make no impression upon the darkness; it is so deep, so real, so palpable.<sup>7</sup> We might give up all for lost, were we not assured that there is a sun, and that it is hastening to rise. The Church's pilgrimage is nearly done. Yet she is not less a pilgrim as its end draws nigh. Nay, more so: the last stage of the journey is the dreariest for her. Her path lies through the thickest darkness that the world has yet felt. It seems as if it were only by the fitful blaze of conflagrations<sup>8</sup> that we can now shape our way. It is the sound of falling kingdoms that is guiding us onward. It is the fragments of broken thrones lying across our path that assures us that our route is the true one, and that its end is near—that end, the morning with its songs; and in that morning, a kingdom; and in that kingdom, glory; and in that glory, the everlasting rest: the sabbath of eternity.

From *The Morning of Joy*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



<sup>5</sup> **counterpoise** – counter-balancing weight; equal and opposing power.

<sup>6</sup> **indomitable** – unconquerable.

<sup>7</sup> **palpable** – easily observed.

<sup>8</sup> **conflagrations** – great destructive fires; infernos.

# PREPARING FOR HEAVEN

Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

**A**RE you a child of God and an heir of the kingdom? Endeavour, by a conscientious attendance on all the public means of grace,<sup>1</sup> and by maintaining communion with your heavenly Father in every private duty, to make a swift progress in vital religion and in real holiness; remembering that holiness is the health, the beauty, and the glory of your immortal mind. Seek after it, therefore, as a divine privilege and as a heavenly blessing. Watch and pray against the insurrections of indwelling sin, the solicitations of worldly pleasure, and the assaults of Satan's temptations. Watch, especially, against spiritual pride and carnal security.

As to the former, rejoice not in your knowledge, gift, or inherent excellencies; no, nor yet in your Christian experiences. Be thankful for them, but put them not in the place of Christ, or the Word of His grace, so as to make them the ground of your present confidence or the source of your future comfort. For so to do is not to rely on the promise of God and to live by faith in Jesus Christ, but to admire your own accomplishments by which you differ from other men, and to live upon your own frames. The consequence of which most commonly is either pharisaical pride, imagining ourselves to be better than others; or desponding fears, as if, when our frames are flat and our spirits languid, there were no salvation for us. The peace and comfort of such professors<sup>2</sup> must be uncertain to the last degree.

But as a guilty, perishing sinner—as having no recommendation nor any encouragement to believe in Jesus or to look for salvation by Him, but what is contained in the Word of grace—depend upon Him, live by Him. The more you behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the more will you see of your own vileness. The more you grow in real holiness, the more sensible you will be of the power of your own corruptions, and of the imperfections attending all your duties. You will be more and more convinced that if the gospel did not warrant your dependence on Christ, under the character of a sinner, you could have no hope, even after ever so long and zealous a profession of religion. You should live under a continual remembrance that you are still an unworthy, guilty, damnable creature; but [yet] accepted in Christ and freed from every curse. That will keep you truly humble and provoke to self-abhorrence: this will make you really happy and excite to praise and duty.

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<sup>1</sup> **means of grace** – instruments that God is pleased to use in order to accomplish salvation and sanctification in the hearts of men: the preaching of the Word, Bible reading and study, prayer, baptism, the Lord's Supper, family worship, singing, and godly fellowship with believers.

<sup>2</sup> **professors** – those who profess to believe in Christ, who may or may not be actually saved.

Watch against carnal security and spiritual sloth. Forget not that you have many enemies. Be sober, therefore; be vigilant (1Pe 5:8). Time is short and absolutely uncertain. Husband<sup>3</sup> well your precious moments. Lay them out for God. Be careful that the fruits of gratitude to your infinite Benefactor may adorn your whole behaviour. Make the holiness and usefulness of the life of Jesus your fair example; copy after that brightest of patterns.

Remember that the eyes of God, angels, accursed spirits, and men are all upon you. Both friends and enemies inspect your conduct and mark your steps. How necessary then is watchfulness and circumspection!—lest, falling into sin, your spiritual joys be impaired, your friends and allies be grieved, and your adversaries triumph. Having received the earnest of your future inheritance (Eph 1:14); having had some joyful foretastes of that immense bliss of which you, O Christian, are an heir; make it your constant business, as it is your indispensable duty, to live above the world, whether your temporal circumstances be affluent or penurious,<sup>4</sup> prosperous or adverse. Let your conversation be in heaven as becomes a citizen of the new Jerusalem. It is your duty and blessing to live in the prospect of the world to come and as on the confines of it. Converse much with the Eternal Mind, in prayer, praise, and holy meditation; so shall you contract a blessed intimacy with that sublime Being Whose favour is better than life, Whose frown is worse than destruction.

By such an intercourse with God, you will taste more exquisite delights than all the pleasures of sin can boast, than all the riches of the world can bestow. Yes, believer, by such converse with God, you shall find your mercies sanctified and your afflictions alleviated, your holy dispositions invigorated and your corrupt affections weakened. Be it your constant endeavour that, whenever your fair, glorious, heavenly Bridegroom shall come, He may find you ready; having your loins girt, your lamp burning, and waiting for His glorious advent. So shall your soul be peaceful, your life useful, and your death triumphant.

From *The Reign of Grace*.

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**Abraham Booth (1734-1806):** English Baptist preacher; a man of great integrity and devoutness; considered one of most learned men of his day; author of *A Defense for the Baptists*, *Paedobaptism Examined*, and others. Born in Blackwell, Derbyshire, England.




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<sup>3</sup> **husband** – cultivate.

<sup>4</sup> **penurious** – having extreme poverty.

# OUR RESPONSE TO HEAVEN

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—1 Corinthians 13:10*

## I. TO THE IMPENITENT

This subject [of heaven] may well awaken and alarm the impenitent,

**A. First, by putting them in mind of their misery**, in that they have no portion or right in this world of love. You have heard what has been said of heaven, what kind of glory and blessedness is there, and how happy the saints and angels are in that world of perfect love. But consider that none of this belongs to you. When you hear of such things, you hear of that in which you have no interest. No such person as you, a wicked hater of God and Christ, and one that is under the power of a spirit of enmity against all that is good, shall ever enter there. Such as you are never belong to the faithful Israel of God, and shall never enter their heavenly rest. It may be said to you, as Peter said to Simon “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God” (Act 8:21); and as Nehemiah said to Sanballat and his associates “Ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem” (Neh 2:20).

If such a soul as yours should be admitted into heaven, that world of love, how nauseous would it be to those blest spirits whose souls are as a flame of love; and how would it discompose that loving and blessed society, and put everything in confusion! It would make heaven no longer heaven if such souls should be admitted there. It would change it from a world of love to a world of hatred, pride, envy, malice, and revenge as this world is! But this shall never be; and the only alternative is, that such as you shall be shut out with “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Rev 22:15); that is, with all that is vile, unclean, and unholy.

**B. Secondly, [this may alarm the impenitent] by showing them that they are in danger of hell**, which is a world of hatred. There are three worlds. One is this, which is an intermediate world—a world in which good and evil are so mixed together as to be a sure sign that this world is not to continue forever. Another is heaven, a world of love, without any hatred. And the other is hell, a world of hatred, where there is no love, which is the world to which all of you who are in a Christless state properly belong. This last is the world where God manifests His displeasure and wrath, as in heaven He manifests His love. Everything in hell is hateful. There is not one solitary object there that is not odious and detestable, horrid and hateful. There is no

person or thing to be seen there that is amiable or lovely; nothing that is pure, holy, or pleasant; but everything abominable and odious. There are no beings there but devils and damned spirits that are like devils. Hell is, as it were, a vast den of poisonous hissing serpents: the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and with him all his hateful brood.

In that dark world there are none but those whom God hates with a perfect and everlasting hatred. He exercises no love, and extends no mercy, to any one object there, but pours out upon them horrors without mixture. All things in the wide universe that are hateful shall be gathered together in hell, as in a vast receptacle provided on purpose, that the universe which God has made may be cleansed of its filthiness by casting it all into this great sink of wickedness and woe. It is a world prepared on purpose for the expression of God's wrath. He has made hell for this; and He has no other use for it but there to testify forever His hatred of sin and sinners, where there is no token of love or mercy. There is nothing there but what shows forth the divine indignation and wrath. Every object shows forth wrath. It is a world all overflowed with a deluge of wrath, as it were, with a deluge of liquid fire, so as to be called a lake of fire and brimstone, and the second death.

There are none in hell but what have been haters of God, and so have procured His wrath and hatred on themselves; and there they shall continue to hate Him forever. No love to God will ever be felt in hell; but everyone there perfectly hates Him, and so will continue to hate Him, and without any restraint will express their hatred to Him, blaspheming and raging against Him while they gnaw their tongues for pain. And though they all join together in their enmity and opposition to God, yet there is no union or friendliness among themselves—they agree in nothing but hatred and the expression of hatred. They hate God, Christ, angels, and saints in heaven; and not only so, but they hate one another, like a company of serpents or vipers, not only spitting out venom against God, but at one another, biting and stinging and tormenting each other.

The devils in hell will hate damned souls. They hated them while in this world, and therefore it was that, with such subtlety and [tireless] temptations, they sought their ruin. They...longed to get them in their power to torment them...therefore, they flew upon their souls like hell-hounds as soon as ever they were parted from their bodies, full of eagerness to torment them. And now they have them in their power; they will spend eternity in tormenting them with the utmost strength and cruelty that devils are capable of...

In hell, all those principles will reign and rage that are contrary to love, without any restraining grace to keep them within bounds. Here will be unrestrained pride, malice, envy, revenge, and contention in all its fury and without end, never knowing peace. The miserable inhabitants will bite and devour one another, as well as be enemies to God, Christ, and holy beings. Those who, in their wickedness on earth, were companions together and had

a sort of carnal friendship one for another, will here have no appearance of fellowship; but perfect, continual, and undisguised hatred will exist between them. As on earth they promoted each other's sins, so now in hell they will promote each other's punishment...

Now consider, all ye that are out of Christ, and that were never born again, and that never had any blessed renovation of your hearts by the Holy Spirit implanting divine love in them, and leading you to choose the happiness that consists in holy love as your best and sweetest good, and to spend your life in struggling after holiness—consider your danger, and what is before you. For this is the world to which ye are condemned; and so the world to which you belong through the sentence of the Law; and the world that every day and hour you are in danger of having your abode everlastingly fixed in; and the world to which, if you repent not, you will soon go, instead of going to that blessed world of love of which you have now heard.

Consider, oh! consider, that it is indeed thus with you. These things are not cunningly-devised fables, but the great and dreadful realities of God's Word, and things that, in a little while, you will know with everlasting certainty are true. How, then, can you rest in such a state as you are in, and go about so carelessly from day to day, and so heedless and negligent of your precious, immortal souls? Consider seriously these things, and be wise for yourself before it is too late; before your feet stumble on the dark mountains and you fall into the world of wrath and hatred, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, with spiteful malice and rage against God, Christ, and one another, and with horror and anguish of spirit forever. Flee to the stronghold while ye are prisoners of hope, before the door of hope is closed, and the agonies of the second death shall begin their work, and your eternal doom is sealed!

## **II. SEEKING HEAVEN**

### **A. Seeking Heaven**

If heaven be such a blessed world, then let it be our chosen country, and the inheritance that we look for and seek. Let us turn our course this way and press on to its possession. It is not impossible but that this glorious world may be obtained by us. It is offered to us. Though it be so excellent and blessed a country, yet God stands ready to give us an inheritance there, if it be but the country that we desire, and will choose and diligently seek. God gives us our choice (Joh 1:12; Mat 11:28-30). We may have our inheritance wherever we choose it, and may obtain heaven if we will but seek it by patient continuance in well-doing...

Let what we have heard of the land of love stir us all up to turn our faces toward it and bend our course thitherward. Is not what we have heard of the happy state of that country and the many delights that are in it, enough to make us thirst after it, and to cause us, with the greatest earnestness and steadfastness of resolution, to press towards it, and spend our whole lives in



traveling in the way that leads thither? What joyful news might it well be to us when we hear of such a world of perfect peace and holy love, and to hear that it is possible, yea, that there is full opportunity, for us to come to it, and spend an eternity in its joys!

## **B. How to Seek Heaven**

***First, let not your heart go after the things of this world as your chief good.*** Indulge not yourself in the possession of earthly things as though they were to satisfy your soul. This is the reverse of seeking heaven; it is to go in a way contrary to that which leads to the world of love. If you would seek heaven, your affections must be taken off from the pleasures of the world. You must not allow yourself in sensuality, worldliness, or the pursuit of the enjoyments or honors of the world, or occupy your thoughts or time in heaping up the dust of the earth. You must mortify the desires of vain-glory, and become poor in spirit and lowly in heart.

***Second, you must, in your meditations and holy exercises, be much engaged in conversing with heavenly persons,*** objects, and enjoyments. You cannot constantly be seeking heaven without having your thoughts much there. Turn, then, the stream of your thoughts and affections towards that world of love, and towards the God of love that dwells there, and toward the saints and angels that are at Christ's right hand. Let your thoughts, also, be much on the objects and enjoyments of the world of love. Commune much with God and Christ in prayer, and think often of all that is in heaven, of the friends who are there, and the praises and worship there, and of all that will make up the blessedness of that world of love. Let your conversation<sup>1</sup> be in heaven (Phi 3:20).

***Third, be content to pass through all difficulties in the way to heaven.*** Though the path is before you, and you may walk in it if you desire, yet it is a way that is ascending and filled with many difficulties and obstacles. That glorious city of light and love is, as it were, on the top of a high hill or mountain, and there is no way to it but by upward and arduous steps. But though the ascent be difficult and the way full of trials, still it is worth your while to meet them all for the sake of coming and dwelling in such a glorious city at last. Be willing, then, to undergo the labor, meet the toil, and overcome the difficulty. What is it all in comparison with the sweet rest that is at your journey's end? Be willing to cross the natural inclination of flesh and blood, which is downward, and press onward and upward to the prize (Phi 3:14). At every step it will be easier and easier to ascend; and the higher your ascent, the more will you be cheered by the glorious prospect before you, and by a nearer view of that heavenly city where in a little while you shall forever be at rest.

***Fourth, in all your way let your eye be fixed on Jesus,*** Who has gone to heaven as your forerunner (Heb 6:20). Look to Him (Heb 12:1). Behold His

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<sup>1</sup> **conversation** – conduct; behavior; lifestyle.

glory in heaven, that a sight of it may stir you up the more earnestly to desire to be there. Look to Him in His example. Consider how, by patient continuance in well-doing, and by patient endurance of great suffering, He went before you to heaven. Look to Him as your mediator, and trust in the atonement<sup>2</sup> that He has made, entering into the holiest of all in the upper temple. Look to Him as your intercessor, Who forever pleads for you before the throne of God (Rom 8:34). Look to Him as your strength, that by His Spirit He may enable you to press on and overcome every difficulty of the way. Trust in His promises of heaven to those that love and follow Him, which He has confirmed by entering into heaven as the head, representative, and savior of His people. And,

***Fifth, if you would be in the way to the world of love, see that you live a life of love***—of love to God and love to men. All of us hope to have part in the world of love hereafter, and therefore we should cherish the spirit of love, and live a life of holy love here on earth...Only in this way can you be like them in excellence and loveliness; and like them, too, in happiness, rest, and joy. By living in love in this world you may be like them, too, in sweet and holy peace, and thus have on earth the foretastes of heavenly pleasures and delights. Thus, also, you may have a sense of the glory of heavenly things, as of God, Christ, and holiness; and your heart be disposed and opened by holy love to God, and by the spirit of peace and love to men, to a sense of the excellence and sweetness of all that is to be found in heaven. Thus shall the windows of heaven be as it were opened, so that its glorious light shall shine in upon your soul. Thus you may have the evidence of your fitness for that blessed world, and that you are actually on the way to its possession.

And being thus made meet,<sup>3</sup> through grace, for the inheritance of the saints in light, when a few more days shall have passed away, you shall be with them in their blessedness forever. Happy, thrice happy those, who shall thus be found faithful to the end, and then shall be welcomed to the joy of their Lord! There “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; 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 waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev 7:16-17).

From *Charity and Its Fruits*, “Heaven, a World, of Charity or Love.”



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<sup>2</sup> **atonement** – reconciliation with God by removing or covering the guilt of sin.

<sup>3</sup> **meet** – fit; qualified; suitable.